

HISTORICAL NOVELS REVIEW

This intelligent crime novel begins a new series following the experiences of Martin Bora, a captain in the Wehrmacht. The novel begins in October 1939; the Germans have taken over Poland, and Bora is sent to Cracow to investigate the murder of a nun, the abbess Mother Kazimierza, who has been shot dead in her convent garden. Considered a saint by many, she has made many prophecies and the title lumen (light) is connected with these foretellings which may have inspired the Germans to get rid of her, but on the other hand, they can do such a deed far more openly if they wish.

The whole idea of light and darkness forms an important theme within the novel. The atmosphere, ideas and inclusion of the Catholic faith remind the reader of Graham Greene, and certainly it is in many ways not an easy read. The reader is left with a lot to do working out the attitudes and interior motives and feelings of the characters. This is very much a show rather than tell novel. Politics and ethics are mixed together as they are within the soul of Bora, who is conflicted between his duty as a captain and potential father of the German race and his conscience as a human being and lapsed Catholic. The foreknowledge by the reader of the horrific events of the Holocaust to come add real poignancy and cast a black shadow over the events described, some of which are disturbing enough already. It is far from being a cheerful book, but it is thought provoking and powerful. I am very grateful I didn't have to live through such a terrible conflict of soul and body.

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