

Ben Pastor, who is an Italian woman writing in English about a German World War II officer called upon to investigate crimes as well as to conduct his part in the war. Much of the conversation in this second “Martin Bora” novel is between the now-Major Bora and an Italian policeman, Guidi, pulled together to investigate the murder of a local plutocrat in Verona in late 1943. Bora seems at times like the German officer played by Erich von Stroheim in Jean Renoir’s wonderful *Grand Illusion*: as the film progresses, von Stroheim has lost more and more body parts, until he’s practically a cyborg. Bora has, just before the novel begins, been the victim of a partisan bomb and has lost a hand and almost lost a leg.

The quality of the dialogue in the book forces us to see Bora as a person, rather than a Nazi stereotype, in spite of his stiff German attitude and the willingness with which he seems to support atrocities perpetrated by his army. As the novel progresses we learn a bit more about his role in the atrocities that may (as the series progresses) change how we see Bora (there was little hint of any mitigation in the first Bora novel, *Lumen*. Bora is somehow both unlikable and sympathetic, and it will be interesting to see how he develops as a character through what is characterized as an ongoing series. *Liar Moon*, considered on its own, is a very interesting and unconventional portrait of a complex era of Italian history (now that Bora has been sent to northern Italy after the Polish setting of *Lumen*), and the conclusion, reached after much digression in action and conversation, includes an interesting double-reverse and depends on the correct interpretation of the book’s title, whose basis in folklore is finally explained.

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