



The Maimed

Hermann Ungar , Kevin Blahut (Translator) , Pavel R?t (illustrator)

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Set in Prague, *The Maimed* relates the story of a highly neurotic, socially inept bank clerk who is eventually impelled by his widowed landlady into servicing her sexual appetites. At the same time he must witness the steady physical and mental deterioration of his lifelong friend who is suffering from an unnamed disease. Part psychological farce, Ungar tells a dark, ironic tale of chaos overtaking one's meticulously ordered life.

One of only two novels Ungar wrote, this translation marks the first time this important novel and any of his work has been translated into English. Ungar's novellas and short stories are collected in *Boys & Murderers* .

The Maimed Details

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ISBN : 9788086264134

Author : Hermann Ungar , Kevin Blahut (Translator) , Pavel R?t (illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Maimed for online ebook

Cheryl Anne Gardner says

I read the Maimed two years ago, and it's one of those rare books that I return to over and over again. This is from my Amazon review:

Franz Polzer, a pitiable, wretched man, lives out his ordinary days in solitude and poverty ... the mundane tasks carving out his time and his life. Tortured by sick and demented hallucinations of his father and aunt, Polzer suffers an immense sense of self-loathing as well as a loathing of women and children. He also suffers endless nights in cold sweat, paralyzed by the death grip of imaginary thieves and murderers, only to suffer the hours of his days in ceaseless toil, a slave, mercilessly at the beck and call of his obsessive compulsive disorder - everything must be counted and counted again ... and again.

Yes, Herr Polzer is a sad soul, desperately trying to live his life the way he wishes. But an easy mark, even his paranoia and compulsive behaviour cannot save him from the evil of others, who wish nothing more than to take advantage of any situation that might come along. And where one feels empathy for Polzer, there is nothing to feel but revulsion for the other characters in the story ... even his crippled childhood friend whose mind has been devoured by leprosy invokes no sense of pity.

This is a masterful piece of work. As we read the confessions of Polzer's twisted mind, Unger leaves more than enough to the imagination, and yet, without telling every gory detail, he still manages to set your flesh crawling. Polzer's entire identity is in turmoil throughout most of the book: his abusive childhood, his own sexual ambiguity, and his religious prejudices and superstitions fill every terror filled thought in his mind. I couldn't put this book down. In twenty-four hours, I read it cover to cover, on the edge of my seat. And even after finishing, the story continued to claw at my mind.

And kudos to the translator for finding it appropriate to include the final chapter, which was omitted in the original version. It in now way ruined the intentional ambiguous ending that the author desired. It only made me wonder more.

This book was put out by a small press in Prague, and their focus is on translations, specifically of Czech writers. Being a Kafka fan, I was instantly drawn to Hermann Ungar's writing style, which leans more towards the ambiguous. I like to wonder. I like to guess my way through a story. I don't like to be bludgeoned with character motivations, and Ungar is so subtle in this work, it's terrifying. Even the moments of exposition are beautifully done. I noticed as I was preparing to post that the book is out of print. If you can find a copy, I highly recommend it for anyone who likes macabre psychological stories.

Malcolm says

Franz Polzer, at the centre of this book, is a seriously neurotic, messed up bank clerk in early 20th century Prague whose paranoia, insecurity, social incompetence, and assorted lack of social skills makes this an unsettling, disturbing, and utterly marvellous book. Polzer's ineptness means that he passively watches his school friend whom he idolises waste away from some unknown rot-the-body disease, allows himself to be coerced into a sexual relationship with his landlady, and attempts to control his world by keeping all his possessions in order and preventing change. None of these is a successful tactic.

Ungar has successfully taken us into Polzer's distressed world, even more so by the almost flat writing style – which although flat is thoroughly engaging: a feat, given the generally dislikeable characters. It is a book that cries out for some sort of psychoanalytic analysis – and that should be resisted: the obviousness of such an interpretation means that there is almost certainly some other authorial intent here. The climax is violent and quite horrific, but unresolved: this edition includes a short fragment initially published elsewhere after deletion from the manuscript that explains who, but not why. All in all, thoroughly fabulous and totally unsettling.

Ungar, a German speaking Moravian, wrote, as far as I know, one other novel, one play, and one collection of short stories – this is the only one in English, so all power to the marvellous Twisted Spoon Press for publishing this (they have one of the finest small press lists there is).

Monica Carter says

The Maimed by Hermann Ungar wonderfully terrifying descent into paranoia, perversity and the power of abuse. Well-written and captivating from the opening sentence, this novel tells the depressing story of Franz Polzer. Ungar leads us with a perfect narrative through a tale that offers no lasting happiness for the tortured soul of Franz or those around him. Thematically, we are dealing with repression, abuse, madness, homosexuality and sadism.

Doesn't that sound like fun? Read on, brave ones.

Franz Polzer's life starts off badly and never quite recovers even though for a time, he learns to maintain a routine through his systematic organization and superstitions. After losing his mother and being repeatedly beaten at the hands of his father while his aunt held him down, Franz becomes a timid and withdrawn fellow fearing most everything and everyone. Then one night he sees his father leaving his aunt's room and believes that they are having an affair. Franz develops an intense aversion to her which is impressed upon his memory the part in her black hair contrasted with the whiteness of her scalp. This imagery sticks with him and shows up later in the book causing him paralyzing anxiety as he thinks of his landlady, Frau Porges:

As soon as the shadow of his aunt fell across the lighted door, Polzer had known that a woman's nakedness was something horrid. Even before seeing his aunt's shadow, he was tormented by the horrible thought that her naked body was not closed. He felt the same way in the presence of Frau Porges--like he was plunging endlessly into a terrible slit. Like open flesh, like the folds as the edge of a wound. In galleries, he never wanted to see the pictures and statues of naked women. He wanted to touch the body of a naked woman. He felt it was the locus of impurity and a disgusting smell. He only saw Frau Porges during the day, when she was fully clothed. Yet he was tormented by the thought of her fat, naked body.

The one thing that saves Franz from his miserable existence is his success in his studies and the meeting of Karl Fanta, a rich boy who attends the Gymnasium with him. Ungar describes a homosexual relationship between Karl and Franz even from the beginning, "Karl Fanta saw that Polzer was unhappy, and often both boys embraced, kissing each other while they cried." In 1923, this was quite a daring work and when Ungar submitted it to Kafka's publisher at the time, although liking it, thought he would be brought up on obscenity charges if he published it. Interestingly, the relationship between Franz and Karl is the only relationship, at least for Franz, where physical intimacy is an expression of love not a an act of compliance stemming from fear. Of course, in true Eastern European style, any happiness derived from his relationship with Karl is

thwarted. Karl becomes ill and is sent away for treatment. Karl's father had agreed to pay Franz's way through his University studies, but once Karl is sick, Franz is forced to leave his studies and take a clerk position in a bank.

Due to his meager finances, he is forced to rent a room from Klara Porges, the fat and 'hairy' widow. He is frightened of her and repulsed by her. He consistently obsesses over her fat and the part in her black hair that reminds him of his aunt. Even though he avoids her, she manipulates him into spending more time with her as well as sleeping with her which turns out to be a humiliating and disgusting experience:

The breasts beneath her loose blouse were already touching his body. He lifted his hands to push her away, but his fingers only grasped the heavy mass of flesh.

That evening he was able to do it.

She had put out the light and was sleeping beside him. Her arm was around his shoulders.

That night Franz Polzer was seized by a great, incomprehensible and horrible thought.

It happened suddenly. The white line made by the part in her hair shimmered palely. Her body seemed soft and dark. He longed for this body, and suddenly he remembered it was the body of his sister.

He knew the thought had no foundation. He had never had a sister. But the idea was too powerful and immediate for him to dispel it.

Franz Polzer rose and wrapped himself in his coat. He sat down at the table. It was as though he had slept with his sister. He remembered the nights at home when his father's heavy steps would creak over the rotten floorboards, and he would lie in bed, overcome by horror as he listened.

As his relationship with Frau Porges progresses, it becomes more humiliating. Karl, who is now married and has a teenage son, becomes prominent once more in Franz's life. Now a paraplegic and rotting away from some unknown disease, he has become a hostile and paranoid man. He confides in only in Franz and the weight of this is unpleasant and intimidating for Franz. But because of his feelings and loyalty to Karl, Franz never questions or objects. He does what is asked of him. At one point, Karl becomes so verbally abusive to his wife and son that the son, also named Franz, confides in Polzer providing another sexually confusing moment:

Polzer pulled him close. He pressed the boy's head to his chest. Franz's question had touched him. For a moment his hand lay on Franz's soft hair. He pulled quickly away, struck by indistinct memories of the boy's father, of the work from the assignment book, of tears of distant affection.

"I'm sure you won't get sick," he said.

"It bothers us," said Franz, "me and my mother. Mother thinks you could help us."

Polzer held Franz tight. He felt his thin limbs against his body, felt the way Franz's chest rose and fell as he breathed.

The boy looked at Franz Polzer.

Polzer avoided his eyes. He felt the boy's heartbeat. It was a face he had seen before. Dora was right. Forgotten similarities filled Polzer with consternation and anguish.

Franz Fanta said:

"Do you love me, Polzer?"

Shocked, Polzer let go of the boy.

Ungar gives us such a repressed story of homosexuality that it's difficult for the reader to ever think that Franz will find happiness. An infusion of oppression and desperation leads us from page to page, hoping that relief is soon to be found. But each of the characters in this book is truly tragic. Polzer is the ultimate victim-abuse brought on by others and fueled by his own defense mechanisms. But the others are sorrowful victims of their own self-imposed cages grasping for quickest way to feel powerful in hopes of garnering even the smallest moment of happiness. Abuse begets abuse and it was never more true than in this twisted and tragic tale of Franz Polzer.

What adds to this tragedy, are the eerily exquisite drawings by Pavel Rut. It's as if Rut has given us pencil drawings of all the people who are from the same town as the figure in Edvard Munch's The Scream. These illustrations merely enhance the sorrowful aesthetic. Hermann Ungar should be better known than he is and thanks to Twisted Spoon Press for putting this novel back in print. I am for sure going to check out the Ungar's other book, Boys and Murderers.

Kobe Bryant says

If Mann thought this was a 'sexual hell' then what would he think about my search history haha

João says

Franz Polzer é um obstinado com a ordem, os seus papéis no banco têm de estar arrumados, faz um inventário do seu quarto todas as noites, evita tudo o que perturbe a "normalidade" do seu mundo, o que se vem a provar uma tarefa impossível, face à ambição da sua senhoria, Klara Porges, que o transforma num escravo sexual, e à degradação física e mental do seu maior e talvez único amigo, Karl Fanta, por quem terá tido uma ligeira paixão de adolescente.

Trata-se de um romance quase kafkiano, muito subtil, expondo sem descobrir nem explicar completamente, que acaba com um crime que fica por desvendar, ou fica para cada leitor desvendar.

João Reis says

Um verdadeiro freak show.

O livro de Ungar tem como grande qualidade a palatabilidade do estilo: é de leitura rápida e quase compulsiva. No entanto, e mesmo tendo em conta o simbolismo da obra e o tom expressionista (de que, aliás, gosto por norma), Ungar exagerou. Não no sentido de cada personagem ser demasiado perversa, mas porque todas elas são, no fundo, taradas de uma ou outra maneira.

Assim, Polzer, o protagonista, sofre de uma espécie de obsessão-compulsão, de masoquismo (por causa do

modo como foi criado pelo pai e pela tia), de superstição religiosa e tem, ainda, uma homossexualidade latente que tenta rejeitar. O corpo feminino é-lhe invariavelmente repelente. Fanta, amigo de infância de Polzer e a sua paixão secreta, é um mutilado em virtude de uma doença não especificada que, já «pouco homem», se dedica ao voyeurismo e ao «complexo do corno», por meio do qual ora quer ver a sua mulher com outros, ora teme que tal aconteça. A viúva Porges, senhoria de Polzer, faz tudo por dinheiro e despe-se/deita-se com qualquer homem, envolvendo-se com Polzer contra vontade deste. O enfermeiro Sonntag é um tarado do pior, um assassino que acredita na expiação através da repetição do pecado; bem, um tarado de primeira. Dora, mulher de Fanta, pode ou não querer ver o marido morto, mas é certo que o traiu com o tenor... Até o jovem Franz Fanta, o filho do casal, padece já dos princípios da doença paterna e paga à viúva para que ceda aos seus instintos voyeuristas. Kamilla, uma personagem secundária, é também ela uma tarada... etc.

Em suma: o livro é todo um circo de aberrações, no qual esperamos de antemão que qualquer personagem tenha alguma tara. O facto de recorrer a um narrador ausente talvez não tenha ajudado (ficaria melhor narrado pelo próprio Fanta) e a completa falta de humor leva a que esteja ausente do livro a típica relação entre grotesco/ picaresco presente em «livros de Praga», e que poderia funcionar bem, a fim de evitar o tom de quem se leva demasiado a sério.

O último terço do livro parece, inclusive, ter sido metido a martelo, e o «Fragmento»/ epílogo deveria ter sido completamente cortado de tão mau que é.

Guille says

Otro de esos libros que muerden y pican, que diría Kafka. Novela perturbadora por la fría exposición de las debilidades, de las crueldades, por la continua sensación de drama inminente. Personas atormentadas y atormentadoras, mutiladas física y/o mentalmente. Traumas familiares (mucho Freud), sentimientos patológicos, cobardías enfermizas que incitan al sometimiento y a la humillación, violencia, sexo, fanatismo religioso.

Dice Ricardo Menéndez Salmón en el prólogo que el libro debe leerse de una sola vez, como en estado de apnea. No es que se deba, es que da rabia tener que dejar de leer, un placer malsano y morboso te empuja hasta descubrir cuál será el fin de este ser hipocondríaco de la maldad ajena que es su protagonista.

Un protagonista que, marcado por su niñez en la que fue víctima de malos tratos y origen de un serio trauma sexual (hay incesto aunque él no es el protagonista), se va desdibujando poco a poco en un trabajo anodino, en una monotonía estricta, y en una soledad obsesiva. Un protagonista débil y cobarde hasta extremos patéticos que, cuando no consigue la invisibilidad ansiada, es manejado y humillado por todos, en un mundo intrínsecamente perverso y enfermo. Una vida automanejada como si de un feo y pesado reloj se tratara y en cuya maquinaria se va a introducir un mínimo grano de arena que lo desajustará por completo.

El estilo de Ungar es sobrio; el ritmo, in crescendo; el ambiente, sórdido; el efecto que produce, desagradable; su conclusión “nada se arregla, nada ha quedado atrás”.

Muy recomendable.

Mariel says

I don't know if anyone else on goodreads is a fan of Canadian sketch comedy show Kids in the Hall? If you were this would be the easiest review ever to write. My favorite Kid, Bruce McCulloch, wrote and starred in

some bits that I consider to be inspired. He has a dark and twisted mind that I adore. It could have gone anywhere and those guys let them go in all these different places in those years. Anyway, I love the "Huh" feeling at the end and all uncomfortable laughter in the dark. The kids would dress up as women and they had this great sexless thing going on. Because they weren't really women they were a distorted idea of women (best of all was when they'd transcend that. I particularly like Dave Foley in this skit). There was another side of Bruce too. I remember coming home from work as a teenager to watch reruns on Comedy Central during my lunch breaks. It was a bad day if it was the "Bar fight" episodes. "Oh, fuck. Bar fight again. This thing goes on forever and ever!" I would sit there and watch Bar Fight and wish it would end already because I didn't feel like it could go anywhere. (I guess they could take it inside or outside, like men or women.) Hermann Ungar's *The Maimed* is like that. It starts out with me feeling at home in this deeply paranoid mind. Ungar has chairs to sit in and watch the wallpaper fade. I bet I would know every crack in that ceiling given enough time. The paintings would have eyes that seem to follow your every move. Polzer is twisted up inside to where he's sexless because he doesn't leave that room for anyone else. He doesn't touch himself. He doesn't even know it any better than when he first got there (too scared of the eyes). It's the kind of sexless that thinks about sex all of the time (and missing the point). What a nightmare! The widowed landlady could have been played by a man in my mind. Predatory and not about sex either. I bet I would be able to feel the sweat on the collar. Days old perspiration. Not strong enough for a woman. But it is not the worn in feeling at home but it couldn't go anywhere (or at least would not be afraid to if it was going to go that way). Polzer meets his childhood companion, a richie Karl, when he is fat and abscessed into an early death bed. This part reminded me soooo much of a great short story in the Edogawa Rampo short story collection that I read in 2011. The story was about a wife who takes begrudging care of her impotent amputee of a husband (I'd wonder if he read *The Maimed* but that's gotta be one of those timeless things). I was worn down too, of the en passe. Fear is hard to sustain before it turns into something else. Like the stale odor of an old dog fart. This was like a combination of the short effects of being scared or horny and taken waaaay too long. It became being tired. Polzer never sleeps but I do. But when it was good it was good. (My favorite part was the longing that Polzer felt for the childhood kisses from Karl. How he notices that Karl's innocent son Franz looks as his father used to. The way he had to cry and look confused to get them. This guy doesn't get any love he can ask for.)

It is really too bad if no one knows what I'm talking about. That could have been the best ever comparison I've ever made on goodreads. (I'm gonna look so dumb! Everyone else probably said Kafka. Fuck!) There was a murder and someone was beaten to death. Fight! Fight!

knig says

At first I thought Ungar had been to see Tod Browning's *Freaks*, and directly plagiarised modelled 'The Maimed' on it. But no: he wrote it in 1923 and *Freaks* came out in 1932. Lynch's *Boxing Helena* came out in 1993, one big massive nod to Ungar as well.

The centrefold here is a Karl, and he has Aspergers. Ungar doesn't say so, not least because Aspergers wasn't identified til 1944, but nevertheless, what we have here is a portrait of the artist as an Aspergers man. Like Sheldon in the *Big Bang Theory* only more so. It is extremely well rendered. So meticulously laid out I began acquiring neurotic baggage as the book went along: towards the end I was a pulsing vibrating hive of all kinds of neurosis, phobias and tics.

Writing simulataneously during this period, and in German as well, was Elias Canetti, another Jewish author, crafting Kien in *Auto-Da-Fe*: the similarities are astonishing. Both protags are socially inept recluses who fall sexual prey to malevolent fat older women housekeepers.

What is this with the fat evil women? It doesn't tally. Cognitive association gives us 'jolly' to go with 'fat woman', (and hag or witch goes with dried up stick thin old women).

Now the rounded woman has been a goddess associated with fertility and life since the Babylonians (at least).

I suppose if one has to become a sexual slave it might as well be to a fat woman. Or, alternatively, if one hates women (and Karl does,), then maybe on a scale of one to ten where ten is the most hideous prospect, the fat woman scores. But what do I know? I'm only semi-fat and semi-old and semi-evil so my point of reference is skewed.

So, this kooky book is about freaks. Everyone is 'maimed' in some way: physical or psychological. The narrative crests on a wave of building paranoia (echoes of Kraznakohai to be found), with multiple layers of symbolism, expressionism and dreamworks in the spanner, revolving, of course, around Karl, the Aspergers sexual slave. Everything hangs together with mesmerising glue: I couldn't put the rummy thing down.

amapola says

***"bisogna amare questo libro con terrore"* (Stefan Zweig)**

Avete presente la celeberrima citazione di Kafka: *"Un libro dev'essere un'ascia. per il mare ghiacciato che è dentro di noi"*? Ecco, con *I mutilati* Hermann Ungar assesta un colpo tale da mandare in frantumi un bel po' di quel ghiaccio.

Qualcuno ha detto che questo romanzo psicologicamente inquietante fa sembrare le opere di Kafka una piacevole passeggiata nel parco. Chiunque fosse, aveva ragione. La Praga magica dei primi anni del Novecento era anche questo.

Per chi fosse interessato all'autore, in rete ho trovato questo articolo su Hermann Ungar:

<https://cafegolem.wordpress.com/2012/...>

Rafa says

Con una escritura intachable nos muestra un conjunto de seres humanos socialmente al límite. Todo un descubrimiento gracias a Offuscato.

Teresa Proença says

A propósito do que escreveu Thomas Mann sobre esta obra: *"Um inferno sexual, pleno de depravação"*, há uma opinião no Goodreads que diz, mais ou menos, assim: "Se Mann pensava que isto é um inferno sexual, que pensaria ele se tivesse conhecido a minha história, ahahah!". Esta opinião (a do Kobe Bryant, não a de Mann) foi o que mais gostei nesta leitura, ahahah!

Andy says

This was a unique, weird read. This book has a deep sense of helplessness and sexual and social humiliation, it's queasily gross at times and by the end almost every character seems to have gone insane. Combining all of that with unpredictability and a potent mood, I was quite impressed.

Franz Polzer is a meek bank clerk, who allows himself to be sexually abused by his domineering landlady because he is so socially inept and neurotic that he cannot venture outside of his daily routine. While this is happening Franz must also contend with his oldest friend Karl who is slowly dying of a disease that is wasting away both his body and mind. Karl suspects his wife of having affairs and planning his murder.

The feel of this novel is very unique, but other authors did come to mind. Early on the mood of this book reminded me somewhat of Dostoevsky or Kafka, but by the end things get so surreal that the works of Meyrink came to mind. There's a side plot in the story about Franz getting a new suit of clothes that is very reminiscent of Gogol's excellent short story "The Overcoat."

Few characters here seem entirely sane. Franz is paranoid about having his possessions stolen, so much so that he often counts his sheets of paper to ensure no one has stolen one. He also fears something being stolen which he will later not even realize he's missed. It is obvious early on that Franz is almost certainly homosexual. It's hinted that this was explored with Karl at one time, but now Franz can only watch as Karl raves, suffers and slowly dies.

I found this book darkly, and intensely funny at times, even though it felt really strange to laugh at what was happening. For example, an attendant named Sonntag is hired to take care of Karl. The paranoid Karl fears that Sonntag is in a conspiracy with various other people and plans to murder him in his sleep. Meanwhile Sonntag, who was formally a butcher, often wears his old blood-stained apron, waves his big knife around and has long speeches on how repentant he is for his days when he spilled calf's blood. The scenes are quite funny in their ironic effect of horrifying Karl. Karl himself is a cruel character, driven half-mad by his disease, and yet several of his rambling, paranoid or sexually obsessed monologues are quite funny as well.

That said, this is certainly a grim, bleak book. Franz seems to dread everything in life so intensely, and often his worst suspicions come true. And the madness and paranoia of each character feeds off of one another into a shocking climax.

Armin says

Schwere literarische Kost, wollte das Buch schon seit über 30 Jahren lesen, im Anschluss an die enthusiastischen Schilderungen einer Komilitonin. Seinerzeit waren die Verstümmelten schwer aufzutreiben und hätten mich vermutlich mehr beeindruckt. Inzwischen erscheint mir das ganze Geschehen, trotz etlicher verdienstvoller Passagen doch ziemlich derbe zusammen gefügt.

Lebensuntüchtiger Bankbeamter, den die kleinste Verletzung seiner Ordnung aus dem Konzept bringt, gerät in einen psychopathischen Abwärtsstrudel mit blutigem Finale. Seine promiskuitive dicke Vermieterin zwingt Franz Polzer ins Bett und verprügelt ihn auch immer wieder wie einst der Vater und die Tante in dunklen Kinderzeiten. Nächtliche Eindrücke von Vater und Tante erwecken beim kleinen Polzer inzestuöse Eindrücke und einen Ekel vor Sexualität.

Als Frau Porges hochschwanger ist, eskaliert die Situation. Bis dahin ziehen sein Invalider Jugendfreund

Karl Fanta und dessen sektiererischer Pfleger Sonntag in seine Wohnung ein, Fantas ständig gedemütigte Frau und der Sohn Franz spielen in der Geschichte ebenso eine Rolle. Es gibt zahlreiche Elemente aus dem Bereich des Sadismus und Masochismus: Polzer und Fantas Frau Dora, müssen klaglos ziemlich viel physische und psychische Grausamkeiten einstecken, der verkrüppelte, aber intellektuell weit überlegene Karl Fanta und Frau Porges übernehmen dominante Rollen.

Ein wenig erinnert der Erstling des Anwalts aus dem Kafka-Umkreis an einen Cocktail aus Dostojewskis Armen Leuten (Polzer), den religiösen Gesprächen aus den Brüdern Karamasow und den Idioten (Sonntags Reflexionen über Jesus und das eigene Erweckungserlebnis bzw. den Anspruch des früheren Metzgers als Prediger) mit kakfaesker-grotesken Partien bei der Schilderung des Zusammenbruchs der bürgerlichen Ordnung nach dem ersten Weltkrieg.

Ich kann nicht sagen, dass mir die Lektüre wirklich Spaß gemacht hat, Dostojewskis Arme Leute sind auch in Sachen Lesevergnügen die ideale Vergleichsgröße, aber die Verstümmelten sind ein interessantes literarisches Dokument aus einer Umbruchszeit.

Javier Avilés says

Indiscutible obra maestra eclipsada por las obras de sus coetáneos.

Todavía estoy dándole vueltas al abrupto final.

Hay algo en los personajes de Ungar (junto a los de Kafka, Musil, Broch...incluso Walser) que muestran el signo de un tiempo, cuyas consecuencias han conformado nuestro presente. Se puede pensar que son avisos que preludian el advenimiento del nazismo, pero son un reflejo de los que se ha convertido nuestra sociedad occidental. Hay algo de preclaro en todos esos escritores en lengua alemana que han sido más certeros que la mayor parte del pensamiento razonado, filosófico, para mostrar nuestra condición. Y no es nada halagüeña. Somos carne en un matadero a punto de ser despiezados... o algo así.

No, nuestra sociedad no tiene sentido.

Esta novela de Unger es una clara influencia para Canetti a la hora de escribir Auto de fe. Pero creo que su influencia va mucho más allá. La infidencia del relato, la forma en que conocemos los hechos a través de los comentarios de los personajes implicados en la trama, la forma en que el narrador permanece sabiamente al margen únicamente plasmando acontecimientos y conversaciones, la irracionalidad de los personajes y el apocamiento del principal, convierten a Los mutilados en una especie de pesadilla literaria que nos arrastra al patetismo carnal del ser humano.

Una maravilla.
