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From the author of the highly acclaimed Trieste, a fierce novel about history, memory, and illness

Andreas Ban, a psychologist who no longer psychologizes, a writer who no longer writes, lives alone in a coastal town in Croatia. His body is failing him. He sifts through the remnants of his life—his research, books, medical records, photographs—remembering old lovers and friends, the tragedies of WWII, the breakup of Yugoslavia. Ban's memories of Belgrade (which he thought he had left behind) and of Amsterdam (a different world and life) alternate with meditations on hole-ridden time (ebbing away through its perforations), on his measly pension, on growing old and fragile, on the intelligence of rats and the agelessness of lobsters, on deadly nightshade. He tries to push the past away, "to land on a little island of time in which tomorrow does not exist, in which yesterday is buried." Drndić leafs through the horrors of history with a cold unflinching wit. "The past is riddled with holes," she writes. "Souvenirs can't help here." And they don't.

Belladonna Details

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From Reader Review Belladonna for online ebook

Richard says

I appreciated the anti-fascist sentiments and Sebaldian textual affectations but it was all a bit heavy-handed and long-winded. Could easily have been about 100 pages shorter.

Ian Scuffling says

In my ignorance of Croatian literature, I'm going to make a claim that I'm completely unqualified making: Daša Drndić is one of their finest, most artful writers. This book is a timespanning journey and mediation on time, history, the human body and heredity.

History is heredity is culture. History repeats itself because it's a genetic inheritance that deteriorates us as we try to push back against it. The body rejects our history and writes new history carried forward. All humans are a physical bearing of all history before them, and the future can only be inscribed by the past, therefore there is no past and there is no future.

In the novel, Drndić uses her protagonist, Andreas Ban, a deteriorating retiree, to tell the history of Croatia, it's bloodied past, marred by fascism and antisemitism, and holocaust. It tells a side of history I was not intimately familiar, a side that often goes unnoticed, untaught in America (to my experience), and so therefore it is ever more vital to see it, to learn it, to experience it. The book works by building layers and layers of metaphor into Andreas's body and mind. His experience of Europe is the experience of European history. His body and shape and poor health is defined by Croatia's history. He feels the culpability for the dead Jewish children whose names are inscribed on memorial sculpture in a park.

I feel like I'm failing to capture the essence of this book, but in some ways it works like a rubik's cube, trying to unlock the pattern of history and humanity. Being progeny of the horrors our ancestors wrought, how can we even begin to correct them? The book wrecks you over and over viscerally, intellectually, emotionally. It is existential and fatalistic. There is no optimism here as Drndić clearly sees the great, looping chain of history coming back around. Belladonna is one of the most moving reads I've experience so far this year, and I imagine will be a hard one to top.

Madison Holt says

This would've been a helluva lot easier if I were Croatian, or had a better understanding (or any understanding, actually) of Croatian/German/Eastern Europe history. This, being a novel translated from Croatian, is not a flaw in itself. Actually, it's a flaw on MY part because I'm not a scholar of such topics. That being said, I was confused on a lot of things, but I don't think Drndić had to/should have described what stuff such as Ustasha were. It's a Croatian book, and Croatian people (not me) probably know about Ustasha. (Although, just for the record, I DID figure out that Ustasha were a fascist, racist, super-nationalist, radical group in Croatia, a bit like Nazis I guess. *pats myself on the back because critical thinking*).

Nooow, here for actual review-ish stuff that isn't so specific towards me, even though this is decently subjective as well (but that's criticism, eh?). While I'm super into "lavender prose" (like "purple prose", but diluted and without the bad connotation), this was like word soup. My eyes were slipping around the page, as

if I was sleepy and reading a history textbook. It was soupy, and while it TOTALLY goes along with the novel's themes of mortality/decaying/aging/memory and forgetting/degeneration, it made it kind of hard to get through.

Plot-wise, I have absolutely nothing to say because there was no plot. It was our main man Andreas Ban remembering things from his past, mostly about sociopolitical problems in Croatia and its neighboring places, a little about his personal life, and some war. This was a very slow-paced read because of that, and maybe it would be different if I understood the subject matter, but this was overall boring to me. It read like a history text, but formatted like memories.

What I DID like was the ending. Even though it was bleak and bland, it was SOMETHING HAPPENING. It's left unclear what happens to Andreas (even though morbid me likes to believe he died), and then we enter the first-person POV of his son, Leo, who Andreas briefly mentioned throughout the book. The fact that all of the remembering led up to an EVENT, be it action-packed or not, was satisfactory. Also I like the cover. Minimalism but its actually good haha (but there was a surprising lack of rats in the novel)

Paul Fulcher says

Now the worthy winner of the 2018 Warwick Prize for Women in Translation.

Andreas Ban had read somewhere that wars are orgies of forgetfulness. The twentieth century as archived vast catacombs, subways of information in which researchers get lost and in the end abandon their research, catacombs which ever fewer people enter. Stored away - forgotten. The twentieth century, a century of great tidying that ends in cleansing; the twentieth century, a century of cleansing, a century of erasure.

Daša Drndić's *Belladonna* continues the project of combating this erasure from her IFFP prize shortlisted Trieste, the translation by Ellen Elias-Bursac of Drndić's *Sonnenstein*. The narrator of that novel, Haya Tedeschi, concluded:

I have arranged a multitude of lives, a pile of the past, into an inscrutable, incoherent series of occurrences... I have dug up all the graves of imagination and longing... I have rummaged through a stored series of certainties without finding a trace of logic.

Belladonna is narrated by Andreas Ban, a recently retired Croatian psychologist, who similarly digs into the past of his family, those he meets and the troubled 20th Century history of his country (or countries). But he is simultaneously someone who refuses to let people forget and yet desperately wants to himself.

Andreas Ban torments himself with all of these bits of information he digs up, rummages through, which seem like unimportant facts, like desiccated data rotted in time, but they enter his rooms, sit at his table, knock into him in the street, and that is another reason why he goes out less and less, why he refuses to listen and to hear.

The present-day story follows Ban's travails with his health - he is diagnosed with male breast cancer as the novel opens, alongside multiple other conditions.

As time goes on, new cracks in the history of the Ban family open up, benign cracks, admittedly, painless, yet nonetheless gaps which once again confirm that our existence is more invented and imagined than real, and so now Andreas Ban does not know what to do with his present state, confused, chaotic and tiring, now that he is beset by all kinds of major health issues that deposit the alluvium of a suppressed, unspoken and rigged

reality.

As his health deteriorates generally and he finds himself shunted from one doctor to another, it is difficult not to see both the analogy to the deterioration of humanity in the 20th Century, but also Ban's inability to find a home in the shifting borders and conflicts in the area. As another character says, he has *multiple identities with which he lives in the wrong places*.

Ban had been living in Serbia until the Serbian-Croatian conflict began in 1991, when he found himself, as a Croatian, forced to moving to Croatia for his own safety, but then finding himself equally not at home there:

When he arrives in this town from hostile Belgrade ... he has forty-five years of a past which those inside these walls knew nothing about ... a potentially dangerous past which would need first to be investigated and then eradicated.

And he is equally alienated by the nationalistic Tu?man regime and its apparent harking back to the Ustashe puppet regime of Ante Paveli? during World War II. One section of the book documents in detail, with footnotes, various historical figures, the crimes they committed in the 1940s and their apparent rehabilitation decades later.

He also struggles with the provincialism of the "small town" where he finds himself, drawing on Filosofija palanke ("The Philosophy of the Province") by the Serbian philosopher Radomir Konstantinovi?:

the impulse to exclude, by mocking, by negating what is outside the norm is strong in the provincial spirit. The provincial spirit register everything, every difference, linguistic, ethical, physical, cultural, it remembers everything and does not acknowledge any variation

a provincialism that is increasingly a key and alarming political force in the West.

The narrative is far from linear, as Ban's thoughts roam back through his life and even into history. And he follows in detail the stories of those he meets, often finding intersections with his own life:

And so for the nth time Andreas Ban confirmed that we are travelling along parallel tracks, tracks that touch for only an instant through the crazed sparks that scatter from under the wheels of an eternally rushing train.

This is a W.G. Sebaldian project - a collage of 20th Century history, particularly centred around WW2, infused with literature, fictionalised in the narration but deeply rooted in fact (per the author *literature is a m?lange of experienced events, proven facts, and "invented" detail which exploits language that is supposed to give it flavor, depth, spice it up, mold it, Botoxize it.*), with black and white photographs as well as sheet music and testimony - but written not with his melancholy but with Thomas Bernhardian excoriating prose.

Although the sheet music, testimonies and photographs are less prominent in Belladonna than Trieste, as the author has explained in an interview:

They do not help me, they are supposed to help the reader. The reader who has lost the capacity to imagine, to rely on the word, on language, and its immense possibilities that are less and less recognized and abused. Language has turned into tweeting, ideas are blogged, so, accordingly, the process of thinking has become shamefully simplified. But I've decided to give up. In my latest book, there are few photographs and hardly any documents. The word is there to fight for its rite of passage.

Literature and fiction is key to Ban's exploration of the world:

What had been important to him he had registered and in his imagination touched at a distance, in the

distance: old friendships, dead loves, abandoned towns, books, books, real and unreal characters, spending more and more time with writers, mostly deceased but some living ones as well.

and this includes meta-fictional touches. Ban reads Sonnestein, and even meets its (fictional) narrator Haya Tedeschi, and later (see below) meets the English translator of that book.

But the book is also filled with real life names - those of the guilty, whose crimes should not be forgotten, but also of the victims. As in Trieste, Drndić powerfully interrupts her narration in two places with simple but haunting lists of names. Asked in an interview

What do you think this act of naming accomplishes in your writing?

she replied

I do not think, I know what I want to say. However, I do not know how such an “act” resonates with an impatient reader. It is not only the names of the victims of war that I list. Now, almost fanatically, although for literature onerously—that is, needlessly—I obsessively name people, because I see more and more clearly that their names are perhaps the last cobwebby thread which singles them out from the overall chaos of the world, from the cauldron of soggy, stale mash we are immersed in. Besides, if football—soccer—fanatics can memorize teams of players through time, it is polite at least to scan through a list of victims for whose destinies all of us bear responsibility.

Here the lists are the 2,061 children deported from the Netherlands to concentration camps in 1938-1945, which Ban sees when he visits the Joods Kindermemorial in Den Haag (https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joods_K...) where many of the names are engraved into the climbing frames of a children's playground, a playground he is taken to in the novel by Ellen Elias-Bursac, the translator of Trieste (although not acknowledged as such in the novel).

and the list of the Šabac Jewish refugees killed in Zasavica in October 1941.

This second list is an example of the novel's complex narrative approach. In the novel, Ban is consulted by a friend of his, a psychiatrist, about one of his patients who suffers psychological torments than manifest themselves physically (e.g. in excessive scratching of an anal itch). Together they trace the patient's history back to his childhood in Šabac in Serbia. The real-life story now comes into play. In November 1939, the Kladovo Transport was an illegal (because of British laws preventing settlement) attempt to get refugees from Vienna to Palestine, which was thwarted by the early freezing of the Danube.

The refugees eventually found sanctuary in Šabac, where they lived peacefully with the local population, including in the book Ban's patient who was a child at the time. Peacefully, that is, until the Nazi occupation of the country, which led to increased persecution culminating in the men being shot, in retaliation for partizan actions (1 German life = 100 Jewish executions) and the women and children taken to concentration camps and killed. In the novel, Ban's patient fears his father, who was pro-Nazi, may well have assisted with the round-up.

And in a follow up, Ban reflects on two contrasting legacies. First the idyllic nature today of the forest where the men were shot and lay for many years undiscovered in a mass grave, now the Zasavica Nature Reserve, home to both the famous milk-producing donkey herds responsible for the world's most expensive cheese, pule, and also the last surviving Mangalica woollen pigs

and on the other, the, in the book's view, lack of justice for those involved in the crimes, such as the concentration camp commander and his deputy, both eventually arrested in the 1960s but given 2.5 years in prison and a 1.5 year sentence, not actually served due to ill-health, respectively.
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sajmi%C...>).

Overall, not always a particularly easy or enjoyable read, but a vital book for our times, and one that shows the vital importance of translated fiction. A surprise omission from last year's MBI longlist but perhaps a function of its publication date which came at the end of the cycle.

Interview with author:

<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2...>

External reviews:

<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/t...>

<http://quarterlyconversation.com/bell...>

<http://www.musicandliterature.org/rev...>

Ivan Flis says

Izrazito mu?an roman od kojeg se plašim starenja. Svaka stranica odaje dojam bjesomu?nog hodanja kroz sje?anje ?ovjeka koji propada i kopa po sje?anju kao što kopa po svojim knjigama i nakupljenim stvarima.

Lisa says

Belladonna conceals its poison in beautiful mauve-black berries, and in its leaves and roots. The berries are full of dark inky juice, bitter-sweet, the size of cherries, and are as refreshing as a vitamin drink, so they tempt passers-by: pick me, pick me and fly away to the land of dreams. Those poisonous berries nestle comfortably in little green, five-pointed cups and sway in them quietly in the summer and autumn breeze. If eaten, just a few berries can kill a child, while an adult needs about twenty to begin to lose himself or herself, to set off for fantastical landscapes, because belladonna has a powerful hallucinogenic effect. (p.381)

Daša Drndić has named her third novel Belladonna because she fears that the poison of nationalism is again affecting Europe, and this book is a wake-up call that identifies the resonances with the evils of the twentieth century. The book has been shortlisted for the EBRD Prize for Translation, and this is the place to say that the translation is brilliant: the text is fluent, passionate and powerful in its evocation of a man at the end of his tether.

Andreas Ban is a writer and a psychologist, who retires on an inadequate pension from a university that he despises for its intellectual dishonesty and its evasions of history. Ban the man is a metaphor for Croatia, because he has failed to interrogate his past until it is too late, and now the cancers have taken hold. The book begins with an unedifying catalogue of all his ills, detailing the degeneration of his body and the dispiriting round of tests and evasive doctors (which reminded me momentarily of Wayne Macauley's

satirical Some Tests – but that was written with an entirely different purpose in mind). The tone of the novel is excoriating. This scene is from when Andreas is at a conference entitled ‘Intellectuals and War, 1939-1947’ and he attends a session where a woman participant had interviewed intellectuals who had fled to Argentina after the war. Andreas asks a question because the presenter had condemned no one, concluded nothing, and, when he wants to know whether any of those intellectuals or their descendants

[had] apologised to the victims of their Ustasha fathers and grandfathers, because this woman scholar had talked with those bigoted ninety-year-old women, she, the scholar, shook her head in denial and everyone in the audience immediately screeched at him, Andreas Ban, That’s not the subject now, and he asked, What is the subject then and what’s all this for? (p.112)

The answer comes in a different session about journalists who had supported cultural cooperation with the enemy in order to retain their journalistic functions. Critique of their ethics

... was not important [...] because those who were concerned with the essential aspects of literature, aesthetics, narrative technique and so on, they did not stick their heads in the sand, maintained that university scholar, they concerned themselves with their profession, because literary criticism was not a free space for the expression of opinions of all kinds, it was for opinions about literature. (p.113)

To read the rest of my review please visit <https://anzlitlovers.com/2018/03/10/b...>

carissa says

Join Andreas Ban as he remembers his life (and the brutal history of the Balakan states) and looks at the world around him in dejected rejection.

Chöd in book form.

In Andreas' own words: "*Forget it, forget me.*"

As we all learn, that is impossible.

Each of us are "*le belle donne, blinded fools.*"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSoUc...>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EN1uu...>

Kobe Bryant says

Good effort but you can only feel bad for so long

Katya Kazbek says

I don't think any other book has affected me as much in recent history. Yes, it's a lot of work to read it, especially in the beginning, but once you accept Andreas Ban's invitation to navigate the narrow post-WWII post-Soviet post-Yugoslav war space that is Croatia, in all its decrepitude, ambiguity and hopelessness, it captivates completely. Maybe I found it easier to relate to it because I'm from Eastern Europe and in myself carry the duality of being both from Russia and Ukraine, and being Jewish, but I have honestly never taken in a fictional book that would reflect my angst so well. And despite the fact that unlike the retiree Andreas Ban, I am a 30-year old woman with no ailments, I felt the claustrophobia of growing old, and being in this world, just as well as he did.

It's a dangerously honest book, intellectual anxiety in the form of a novel.

Terence says

This came after a recommendation from Jeff Vandermeer, he had posted something about it and it sounded interesting, plus the cover was really commanding. I am so glad I followed him on it. It's a bit in line with WG Sebald, who is one of my favorites, and contains a lot of images and video stills, kind of like a more wry "Austerlitz", there's a definite deadpan humor to some things that then transition right into lengthy discussions about the holocaust. Even listening all the jews who were on a boat that got stuck in a Croatian town and were murdered. Anyway, it is about Andreas Ban who is falling apart, and recollecting his life and his health meandering into the lives and histories of others. Not just to the relationship that Croatia had with the third reich but with its ugly resurgence in the 1990s. It's haunting, funny, direct, fantastic and utterly unique.

Neil Griffin says

I read this one right after *The Emigrants*, due to how I'd heard Drndic compared to Sebald in her style, but part of me wishes I'd spaced the books further apart. That being said, this should be a book that is taught in every school in the world: the world would be a better place if people were exposed to the radical empathy of Drndic.

Her project seems to be similar to Sebald not just in style, although I've read some reviews that rightly note that she has more anger, which contrasts with Sebald's more melancholic approach, but also in the goal to unearth almost forgotten stories of the past, so that we don't repeat them in the future. The fragility of memory is a concern here and is really brought home by having her protagonist be an elderly man on the decline who is not only sifting through memories of his own life, but also recalling other stories of people who lived through WW2 or the more recent Balkan Wars of the 90s. These stories are unbearable to read and some of them will be with the reader for the rest of their life--they show the cost of war and cruelty in a more intimate way than numbers really can.

The generation that took on the burden of the atrocities of the holocaust are declining and, with them, the memory of the horrors humans can unleash on one another if blinded by nationalism or tribal loyalties. This makes it more important that books like this are widely read. A fairly depressing theme in this is the younger generations indifference and apathy to history, which is even more alarming due to populist nationalism rising again across the world. This book provides an important anecdote to this.

Phil says

Review of Belladonna by Dasa Drndic, translated by Celia Hawkesworth

The novel's protagonist Andreas Ban is recently retired from the univeristy where he lectured in psychology. Ban is unwell and living on the meagre Croatian state pension (and waiting for another stipend on it as art of his service working in Yugoslavia when it existed but Ban is not holding out for it).

While dealing with his own decline, Ban was also a witness to the grotesqueness that entrapped Europe in the 20th century with World War II, not just the Nazi war crimes but their Croatian puppets of Ustasche' Independent State of Croatia (This hadn't been entirely new information for me as Ustashe had been featured in the book Yugoslavia, My Fatherland by Goran Vojnovic). This book is as much about remembering the past of Europe and Croatia in particular as a man remembering his own life.

The book when reading it did make me feel angry, particularly the amnista (as was termed by Giles Tremlett in the book Ghosts of Spain where he looked at the recent history of Spain under Franco and how there is a consious amnesia towards their crimes). Similarly with this book, Ban is haunted by the ghosts of WWII, twice listing those murdered by the nazis and their accomplices. A compelling catalogue of the inhumanity of humanity.

Ban's writing to me conveys an urgency and a need for Europe not to repeat the same misstakes we made in the 1930s and 1940s. This urgency might be brought on by Ban's own health problems.

Hawkesworth superbly translates Drndic, both the anger, sadness but sprinkled with bitterly humorous observations here and there. Through the photos and text and lists of people, Drndic and Hawkesworth bring the horrors of the 20th century as a grave reminder to people to not forget and not to let the same happen again.

A read that I really felt was excellent and will be one of my books of 2018, though not one for the faint hearted.

* * * * *

on a side note: the flap of the book states that Ban is a "castaway intellectual of a society which subdues every critical thought under the guise of political correctness", I expected some different type of text in the book, usually when a statement similar to that is made, it usually takes aim at liberalism but this didn't.

Chris says

In the afterword to his novel The Guiltless (Die Schuldlosen, 1950), Hermann Broch states that political indifference is closely linked to ethical depravity, that is, that politically innocent people are to a considerable degree ethically suspect, that they bear ethical blame, and stresses that the German populace did not feel responsible for Hitler's coming to power because they considered themselves "apolitical", in no way connected to what was happening around them. And what about the "apolitical" Croatian populace, which is selectively apolitical? How does it cope with what was happening and is still happening around it? It doesn't. It enjoys music and

applauds. And writes rigged history.

Damn.

This scathing indictment, which can be leveled at virtually all western nations, exemplifies *Belladonna*, a book about atrocity, about memory, about death. It's a book that reserves several pages for a list of names of Jewish children murdered from one small town in the 40s, a book that wants you to gaze at the abyss, in full (impossible), that fascism rent so deeply into European landscape and consciousness.

Our protagonist is Andreas Ban, a man with a lame leg, a lame hand, a cancerous breast, the spine of a 90 year old, glaucoma, suspiciously red-tinged eyes, and an isolated and troubled soul. Ban battles the truth of his own mortality, rapidly seeping away.

He skips the first phase, the phase of rejecting the illness, he's no fool. So he confronts it. The second phase, the phase of anger (fuck off!), settles down, he no longer shouts at the doctor, he's tame. He rushes into the third phase, bargaining, with one sentence— Give me ten years—to which Dr. Toffetti replies, Perhaps. But then you'll come back for another ten, and Andres Ban falls silent.

Ban's health and history are only the half of it. He's also obsessed with the Second World War. The holocaust looms foremost, yet it's not simply German maleficence he's concerned with, but the complicity of all of Europe. Examples include the Balkan states barbaric executions of Jewish villagers by their neighbors *before the Germans even got there*. Or, to take a different tact, the Dutch expelling Germans from the Netherlands post-WW2, even those who had emigrated long before the war and had Dutch spouses and children. It's not simply the scale of torture and murder that pains Andreas, but the lengths people will go to forget, to shrug into apolitical stupor. They'll go so far as to spin that loss of memory and responsibility into hero worship of men directly responsible for death camps.

This is one of the bleakest books I've read. There is no light at the end of the tunnel — just another train you can't avoid. People will continue to forget our greatest crimes, even deny they ever occurred in the first place. Holocaust denial is on the rise. Consider this maddening article about Poland ascribing jailtime to telling the truth about its own complicity in the holocaust. It will depend on the reader whether Sadness or Anger is the primary emotion roused by *Belladonna*. For me, it was bitter anger. The same anger that erupts when watching Americans rewrite slavery or the Civil War. It's not only a battle for human rights, but one for our collective memory, our history.

Drndi? is a deft writer, and the front and back covers of *Belladonna* are eager to compare it to the work of W. G. Sebald. Though there are a handful of paragraphs that devolve into an unclear word-salad, especially when delving a little too deeply into Andreas subconscious, most of the book can be opened at random to reveal clever insights:

Cooking shows have long been universal hits. It might be worth asking why. Particularly since they are becoming increasingly tedious, unwatchable and undigestable. Since there is an ever-greater number of poor people, particularly those for whom TV shows are their only mental superstructure, these shows are also offensive. Lively performances by smiling chefs take place in elegant kitchens where high-quality pots and pans are used, the ingredients are expensive

and often exotic. As Andreas fears that when he retires his nutrition will be reduced to chicken wings and innards and that he will, heaven forbid, go to the market just before it is blasted by water cannons to pick up a few rotten apples and discarded salad leaves, he find this nutrition craze nauseating.

Balkan history is unfamiliar to me, like I would assume it is for most Americans. I was a gradeschooler when the Yugoslav Wars broke out and the level of truth and history exposed to children at the time was shamelessly minimal. Yet it is important. As right-wing fascism takes deeper root in America, our own suddenly-confident Nazis scuttle from gutters like the rat on *Belladonna*'s cover, and we must look to the peoples who have been struggling with it for decades. It's a disease some thought cured when the allies dismantled Auschwitz, but it lingers as a misshapen tumor, always lurking beneath humanity's fragile skin.

Let's end this review with one of the many different descriptions of *Belladonna* in this novel:

Belladonna is a bushy plant that grows up to two meters high and contains atropine, still used today to dilate the pupils, while in the Renaissance women would drop the atropine into their eyes to make them shine. And so those idle Renaissance ladies, squeezed into their corsets, in their silk, brocade, velvet and cotton dresses walk around with dilated pupils, disoriented, half-blind, winking without knowing at whom and smiling foolishly into space. Their eyes appear dark and deep, but are in fact empty and colorless. They were beautiful women, le belle donne, blinded fools.

This was originally published at The Scrying Orb.

Robert Wechsler says

Too much dully presented history for my taste. Some of the other material is excellent, however.

Michael Jantz says

Crushing.
