



Kaputt Mundi

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Roma, 1944. Mentre le truppe alleate stanno risalendo la penisola, la Capitale d'Italia, città ancora "chiusa", vive i momenti più drammatici dell'occupazione nazifascista: il coprifuoco, la fame, le retate, le Fosse Ardeatine. In questo clima di attesa, paura e speranza, il maggiore Martin Bora, detective-soldato della Wehrmacht, deve risolvere un delicatissimo caso di duplice omicidio. Le vittime sono una segretaria tedesca, "accidentalmente" caduta da una finestra del quarto piano dell'ambasciata del Reich, e un cardinale del Vaticano, vecchio amico di Bora e, al pari del maggiore, silente oppositore del regime nazista.

Kaputt Mundi Details

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From Reader Review Kaputt Mundi for online ebook

Edmond Dantes says

Lettura Faticosa, troppo lungo, i personaggi , a parte Martin, sono solo dei bozzetti...l'intrigo è o troppo cervellotico o troppo banale...

La cosa migliore è la descrizione della Roma occupata e dei doppi / tripli giochi praticati...

David Marshall says

Set against the failing German "occupation" of Rome in 1944, our "good German" has to help conduct the defence against the Allies as they advance from the south and solve three politically sensitive murders. The result is fascinating.

<http://opionator.wordpress.com/2014/0...>

Harriystuart says

Ho scoperto solo a posteriori che questo è il quarto o il quinto libro con Martin Bora Protagonista. Sicuramente un libro non facile. Le prime 150 pagine scorrono alla velocità di un bradipo zoppo. Troppe descrizioni paesaggistiche, troppe strategie militari, troppi personaggi inseriti alla rinfusa. Poi la trama si dipana e diventa anche una lettura interessante.

Susan says

This is the third novel featuring Martin Bora, following "Lumen" and "Liar Moon." This book sees Bora in Rome and takes place from January to May, 1944. It is coming to the end of the Nazi occupation and, like "Liar Moon," the novel features Inspector Sandro Guidi as an uncomfortable partner of Bora in an investigation. For those forced to work with the Germans will soon possibly be viewed as collaborators and there is an uneasy feeling in a city where the Allies are approaching and the Germans may be forced to pull out at any moment.

Guidi has been told to investigate the death of Magda Reiner, a secretary at the German Embassy, who fell to her death from her apartment. The main suspect is a man called Merlo; one of the highest ranking Party official in Rome. However, Guido's superior officer seems unwilling to contemplate any other outcome and it leaves Guido wondering why he has been framed for the crime. Reunited with Bora, the two investigate while the war escalates and you cannot escape the irony of one murder being given such importance when the city is torn by reprisals, the resistance, curfews, oppression and hunger.

Those who have followed this evocative and intelligent series will already be aware of Bora's difficult relationship with his wife, Benedikta. She figures again in this novel, visiting him in Rome, while Guidi becomes intrigued by Francesca Lippi – a young woman who shares the boarding house where he is staying.

This book sees us explore more of Bora's repressed personal life. Now damaged by war physically, as well as mentally, he finds his life as a German officer and his personal feelings begin to clash more and more. This novel will take us from the politics of the Vatican to torture and mass executions. It is no exaggeration to say that, at the end of this novel, you will feel emotionally wrung. However, if you are coming to this series for the first time, please try to read them in order – they are really best read in sequence. This is a rewarding, and different, crime series, which is both enjoyable and yet, at times, difficult to read. Still, I do hope that Martin Bora will figure in future books, as it is rare to find such a fascinating, if flawed, central character.

Cerisaye says

Ben Pastor writes with depth and perception. The Bora books are historical fiction more than crime novels so if a satisfying detective mystery is what you are looking for then these probably are not for you.

Pastor's writing is intense and emotional, deeply involving, satisfying like an excellent meal or glass of fine wine.

Bora standing against the sill with his back to the muting glare of the window, until daylight grew faint and relinquished the room. His wholeness was scattered all over, as far as his mind could go-strands of him, loose ends, strange pieces, and he would need to pick them up and braid them back together to reshape his balance.

The plots are complex, with a tendency to fade a bit towards the end. To be honest, that doesn't bother me because I am more interested in the historical background, the moral dilemmas of wartime and occupation, and, most of all, the fascinating character, Martin Bora. Reading war fiction there is always the question, What would I do in these circumstances?

For the final pages of this book I could hardly breathe for tension, and fear of what might happen, seriously tempted to skip ahead, just to KNOW. I didn't out of guilt I would somehow disappoint the author by displaying such a lack of trust. By the end, however, I felt emotionally drained and wrung out, but in a good way, if you know what I mean.

I have become very fond of Martin Bora despite (because of?) his flaws. Of course Pastor, too, is in love with her creation, I think, and that communicates something to her writing that engages the reader at some fundamental level. Don't get me wrong, this isn't some kind of soppy, sentimental romance type writing. Bora is unhappily married and, desperately lonely though he is, generally refuses to give in to his need for love, though it causes him pain. Relationships are not something Bora is very good at, and circumstances just don't allow him to pursue personal pleasure. In Books 2 and 3 his awkward relationship with Italian police man Guidi working together to solve murder crimes, despite pretty much official indifference, shows Bora in both good and bad light; under different circumstances they would have likely been friends. That this is impossible is a source of regret to them both.

I am reading the Bora series in quick succession (PLEASE can the publisher issue ALL the books in English!) and they shape up as a fine character study. Bora is a career military intelligence officer, a patriot

though not a Nazi party member or sympathiser. As the series progresses he becomes increasingly conflicted by the demands of serving his country and his conscience, what he sees as his duty as a Christian, an honourable man. Pastor writes Bora almost as a romantic hero type: handsome, cultured and educated (a doctorate in philosophy), he plays the piano and can speak English and Italian fluently. A Prussian from an aristocratic family, a fine soldier, haughty and almost unbearably stoical, Bora isn't a man to wear his emotions on his sleeve, though he feels deeply and suffers in silence, fighting to retain customary control. He holds himself to high standards of ethics and morals, a practising Catholic who becomes spiritually troubled by the kind of war unleashed by Hitler's *Reich*.

Men's life was nothing, nothing. At any time the stars could crush them from their pointed and multiform distance, a cascade of worlds against their weakness. It was only anger that kept grief at bay, but the emptiness was untenable. The silence absolute. Bora looked in disgust at the pitiful tangle of his soul. It was like bloody offal and deserving mercy only in the measure he could give mercy to any human being for failing himself and others. He deserved nothing if he let go.

My reactions to Martin Bora remind me of reading Dorothy Dunnett and her flawed 'heroes', Lymond and Niccolo, which is high praise from me, so it was with delight I read *"Actually, I [Bora] was born in Edinburgh. And I'm Scots on my grandmother's side."*

Keith Currie says

I love the peculiar uniqueness of Ben Pastor's novels. I suppose their unusual sense of otherness is what irritates some readers, the fact that they cannot easily be categorized. This one should be read, not so much as a crime investigation – although it is that too – but as an exploration of the reactions and behaviours of an army and its soldiers on the brink of defeat in an occupied city. That city is Rome, the army is the German army and the soldier primarily is Major Martin Bora, conscience-struck, but dutiful and true to his calling as a soldier.

This is the best of the three Martin Bora novels I have read, a weaving web of complex movements and relationships. Bora is maimed, abandoned by his wife, fighting (he knows it) for the wrong side, trying to steer a course of conscience throughout, unwilling to compromise his Christian faith and principles. For all his acerbic priggishness Bora does what is right, even though it costs him a lot, both in his personal relationships and in attracting the notice of very dangerous people.

The novel is a sustained narrative of impending collapse, punctuated with scenes of sudden, unexpected and shocking horror: Bora caught in a field hospital during an allied bombing raid, holding the hand of an injured prisoner of war; the scene in the hotel bedroom when his wife Benedikta tells him the truth about why they have no children; Bora's increasingly frustrating attempt to save his colleague, the Italian detective Guidi, from an SS death squad; the scene outside the church of St John Lateran when Bora takes action against a local who is informing the SS about Roman Jews; the shock when the identity of the informer is revealed. This is a hugely satisfying book on many levels. For me the standout aspect is the tense relationship between Bora and Guidi, men who at another time might have been the closest of friends, but in their own times can at best maintain a strained and difficult professional alliance.

Judie says

A Dark Song of Blood is more than just a mystery, as are the other books in this series, and that's what makes them unique. There is depth to the historical factor and characters that drives this series.

Mieczyslaw Kasprzyk says

Every now and then you read a book and realise that you are privileged to be handling a masterpiece, a book that has somehow managed to touch on an aspect of humanity that can resonate across time. This is how I feel about "A Dark Song of Blood". I know that there will be some who will be baffled at my words and will be unable to see what it is that I experienced but, for me, this was a book that caught a time and place, and emotions, that I could truly identify with.

Initially it was a different read, almost episodic in the way that... well, it's almost like a journal, diary entries or a daily log. It wasn't a satisfactory opening because the "logs" were short and almost impersonal... you could easily call them mini-chapters or passages. I realised, at some stage that it was a sort of countdown. This is a record of the final months of the German occupation of Rome, from just before the landings at Anzio to the German abandonment of the city to the Americans.

It's not long before you get into the flow of the thing and the sections begin to get longer, and more gripping. The many characters that we are introduced to in the small "entries" begin to take on real flesh and blood and the story takes a real hold on you.

Martin Bora, fresh from his adventures in Verona, is in Rome as aide-de-camp to General Westphal. Coincidentally, so is Inspector Guidi who worked with him in Verona on a delicate investigation. Guidi is put in charge of investigating the murder of a German civilian and, in the process Bora also becomes involved. This is the bare bones of it all because the story is neither a war story nor an investigation of a crime - it is much more than this.

The cold, almost arrogant Bora somehow manages to encapsulate all the emptiness and tragedy of life. Heartbreak and love go hand-in-hand. Bora's sincerity shines through the Prussian professionalism of the military man that he is. Emotional wounds accompany physical injury and loss in a way that makes Bora a true hero. Around him is the pettiness, the nastiness and the brutality of the SS and the Italian Fascists, the complications of an occupying power dealing with the Holy See, and of the Army struggling to avoid the inevitable in the South. Bora, somehow, manages to wade through all this with true dignity. He has to be admired for the man that he is.

Guidi also comes across as a fascinating character. In many ways he is the opposite to Bora; he lacks confidence and authority. He is neither a collaborator nor a partisan, he's just a policeman doing his duty. Like Bora, he is a professional who finds himself in difficult circumstances. His personal life takes on complications as he becomes involved with the enigmatic Francesca and the difficulties of working alongside a man, Bora, that, to be honest, he doesn't really like.

There were three moments in the book that touched me deeply and changed the whole reading experience - one managed to shock me, the second gripped me with fear and trepidation for the characters, the third was a twist that, somehow, I saw coming. The final moments, the almost-Gotterdammerung of the last hours in Rome, had a quality that felt very familiar - I watched it on the telly as the Americans abandoned Saigon. There is a depth to this tale. In my view it is a masterpiece.

Martina says

#3 in the Martin von Bora series. A Wehrmacht officer and aide-de-camp of General Westphal, Bora is assigned to investigate the suicide/murder? of a German Embassy secretary with Inspector Sandro Guidi of the Italian police. At the same time the Allies advance toward Rome from the South and the city is bombed constantly. The investigation is complicated, and crosses with other issues and crimes. More than an intense historical mystery/thriller, Pastor's extraordinary writing creates an increasingly dark atmosphere within which the multiple groups, both German, Italian and Vatican, all vying for power and control, do battle. The terrors of the SS and the Gestapo as well as the Resistance moves and the betrayals complicating the moves and countermoves among all the groups are made vivid. The overwhelming sense of random evil just about brought me down. I blame my strong reaction to the current state of politics. That Pastor can bring me to such a place through her exquisite writing is high praise for her.

The Mystery Book Group discussed the first in the series, *Lumen*, in August 2011.

Bora's rank increases with each book, thus Bora is a Captain in the first book, a Major in the second, and is promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the third.

Cynthia Alice says

This was my very first encounter with Ben Pastor. I simply happened to notice a novel about WWII at the public library. Given that I will eagerly read almost anything, except garbage, about WWII, I brought it home, started to read, and managed to finish it. Despite the fact that Pastor's frame of reference in this book is not one I enjoy for many reasons, I still found myself getting attached to the experiences and fates of the two central characters.

Perhaps I will risk saying that Pastor seems to have learned how to walk that razor's edge: on one side the stereotypical stoical male Roman Catholic victim/martyr/driven German aristocrat, trapped in catch twenty-twos (ie. no-win situations); on the other side the much more modern man, much more honest-with-himself, unable at this point in history (the present juxtaposed with 1944) to avoid responsibility for his decisions and their consequences.

Rob Kitchin says

A Dark Song of Blood is the third book in the Martin Bora series translated into English. As with the earlier books, the strength of the story is the character of Bora and the moral ambiguities of the tale. Bora has aristocratic roots, is a committed military man who has served in Spain, Poland, Russia and Italy, and is strong willed, intelligent, principled and brave. Although he knows he serves a corrupt regime he has a strong sense of duty and loyalty, but he's no apologist for the German army. He also abhors the Gestapo and SS and their work and methods, and hates the treatment of the Jews and will actively intervene on their behalf. At the same time, he's quite happy to see partisans executed, but not the ratio of reprisals. The story unfolds over the first six months of 1944 and mostly focuses on Bora's interactions with the local police, the Gestapo and SS, and the Church, with the murder investigation forming one thread amongst a number, being very slowly edged forward and at times almost disappearing entirely. At one level, this is fine, as there is

plenty happening, but another it left the plot a little rudderless at times. And whilst Pastor keeps a number of possible suspects in the frame, I found the denouement a little unsatisfying. Overall, an interesting story centred on a fascinating character.
