



## The Sleepwalker

*Margarita Karapanou, Μαργαρίτα Καραπανού, Karen Emmerich (Translator)*

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"Margarita Karapanou leads us into the labyrinth where God lives. One must read her as one reads Rimbaud or Blake... Karapanou's insistence on tearing off our everyday clothes and ridiculous masks makes her, indeed, a truly remarkable writer."

--Jerome Charyn, *Le Monde*

At the opening of Margarita Karapanou's stunning second novel, in disgust at mankind God vomits a new Messiah onto the earth. Or rather, onto a Greek island. Populated by villagers, ex-pats, artists, writers, this island is a Tower of Babel, a place where languages and individuals have been assembled, as though in wait for something as horrific and comic as this second coming. *The Sleepwalker* moves deftly and dizzyingly between genres-satire, murder mystery, magical realism, its own brand of Theater of the Absurd-following Manolis, the new Messiah, as he moves through this place like a sleepwalker, unaware to the very end of his divine nature. Manolis, in his guise as policeman, leaves nothing unchanged by his passing, as the island shifts from a conventional locale for upper-class tourists and drifters to a place where the surreal comes to life and the sun refuses to set. In *The Sleepwalker* Karapanou has created an unforgettable depiction of a dissolute world, desperately comic and full of compassion, a world in which nightmare and miracle both uneasily reside.

## The Sleepwalker Details

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## From Reader Review The Sleepwalker for online ebook

### Sarah says

Kind of like Francesca Lia Block, but not nearly as enjoyable. I find that books about artists are uninteresting. Just seems like their tour into unconventionality fails every time.

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### Χριστ?να says

Δυστυχ?ς, παρ?λο που γενικ?τερα μ'αρεσει η Καραπ?νου, το συγκεκριμ?νο βιβλιο δεν το απ?λαυσα καθ?λου. Το γρ?ψιμ? της ε?ναι γεμ?το και ο λ?γος της χειμαρρ?δης, στοιχε?α που με κερδ?ζουν σε αλλα βιβλια αλλ? εδ? ?σα ?σα με απομ?κρυναν. Σε αυτ? βο?θησε και η πλοκ? του, που δεν τη βρ?κα ενδιαφ?ρουσα ουτε σε ενα σημε?ο του βιβλιου. Παρ?λα αυτ? δεν τα παραταω ?τι ε?κολα με την Καραπ?νου και θα της δ?σω και αλλη ευκαιρ?α

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### Γι?τα Τεμπρ?δου says

"?να κορ?τσι βλ?πεις στο λιμ?νι, 'ε ρε γκ?μενα' λες, και σου βγα?νει αγ?ρι. Βλ?πεις τις πλατ?ρες εν?ς αγοριο?, στρ?βει, ν? κ?τι βυζι??. Π?ς να τα βγ?λω π?ρα; Εγ? χω μεγαλ?σει με αρχ?ς. Τ?λος π?ντων. Σ' ?να πρ?μα χω καταλ?ξει. Ο δολοφ?νος ε?ναι ξ?νος. Καν?νας ?λληνας δεν ε?ναι τ?σο διεστραμμ?νος. Δε λ?ω, χουμε τις αδυναμ?ες μας. Αν ?ταν μ?νο πο?στης, θα εξ?ταζα το θ?μα απ? ελληνικ?ς πλευρ?ς. Αλλ? να πα?ζει και στα δ?ο ταμπλ? -σεξουαλικ?- ε ?χι. Ο ?λληνας, και πο?στης ν?ναι, ?χει αρχ?ς."

Μαχαιρ?ματα και κ?κινα σημ?δια. Ακ?φαλα αγ?ρια. Σωρο? απ? σκουπ?δια, ?νας κ?σμος ακ?θαρτος. Η Mina, ο Mark, η Λο?κα, ο Placido. Ο Μαν?λης και ?να νησ??. ?να νησ? στον ?λιο. Και, αυτονο?τως, πολλ? περισσ?τερα.

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### Treasa says

I continued reading because the writing was phenomenal. It was like nothing I'd read before for multiple reasons, one of them being how bizarre it was. The characters, the setting, the actions, all had a point and came together but I came close to putting it down. I get what it was trying to do/say and I think it's a very intriguing idea and message, but the way it got there was almost too strange for my taste. Strange sex, mostly.

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### Alan says

Just like Rien Ne Va Plus but more so... hyperbolically fantastical and beautiful and cruel and violent.

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### **Emily says**

Wow, this was a pretty crazy book! I . . . think I liked it? Oh, those Greeks.

Composed of short chapters, little glimpses into the lives of the ragtag multilingual inhabitants of an unnamed Greek island, the majority of whom are trying to be writers or painters, the book covers the events following the arrival (although it seems he was already there, or at least everyone assumes that) of a new Messiah, sent down because God was bored. What follows is not what I expected. But it is very interesting. And a little yucky.

I will definitely read more of Karapanou's books. But I will take a break first.

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### **Eugene says**

Amazing. It's hard to understand/accept this is a world where Karapanou isn't rabidly annotated or at least viciously condemned... Anyway, I'm with the rabids. What a writer!

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### **Will E says**

2.5 maybe. I feel like this book suffered because of unmatched expectations. The first chapter is so interesting (God vomits a new messiah) and then it's just 200 pages of sexually ambiguous hipster murder mystery. That might sound cool but it's not.

Ending is kinda fun and weird. The chapter with Alfredo is good too. But the symbolic nature of the story kind of dominated the book at the expense of having actual, developed characters. I could hardly keep track of everyone—half of them are gay, the other half are artists, and practically none of them get any descriptions outside of that. Kind of disappointed in this book, but maybe I built it into something else in my imagination from the time I first heard about this book until now, when I actually got to read it. Oh well.

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### **Torea Frey says**

I read about this little book on Words Without Borders (<http://wordswithoutborders.org/book-r...>). Their review is better/more coherent than mine could hope to be, but I will say this: probably best not to read the harrowing, dystopic narrative while in a doctor's office waiting room.

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### **Ben Winch says**

Disappointing. Strangely, what started out as gripping and impressive ended as a cartoon I was keen to be done with. Not that I dislike cartoons, but this one lacked weight, or self-consciousness. A shame, since the

seed of something great was still there, but unpruned, *gone to seed*, left to run riot while Karapanou, I suspect, awaited the end as I did. My impression: a book that, free-growing and much-improvised as it was, then exhausted its author in the editing, which polished the first part at the expense of the second. The result: while fulfilling its visionary contract to the letter, it reneges on the spirit. Could have been much more.

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## Vasileios says

<http://dreamersandco.com/2015/07/%CE%...>

Την Μαργαρ?τα Καραπ?νου, την πρωτογ?ρισα με το ιδιαιτ?ρως σκληρ? και γκροτ?σκο βιβλ?ο της Η Κασ?νδρα και ο Λ?κος. Εδ? και καιρ? ε?χα διαβ?σει το βιβλ?ο της Ο υπνοβ?της, το οπο?ο ε?χε διακριθε? στη Γαλλ?α με το βραβε?ο του καλ?τερου ξ?νου μυθιστορ?ματος το 1988. Με επηρ?ασε τ?σο που χρειαζ?μουν χρ?νο για να το «χων?ψω».

Ο υπνοβ?της, ε?ναι μια φ?ρσα για την αποσ?νθεση του σ?γχρονου κ?σμου μας, γεμ?το οξ?τητα, χιο?μορ αλλ? και συμπ?νια. ?πως και στο βιβλ?ο Η Κασ?νδρα και ο Λ?κος, ερχ?μαστε αντιμ?τωποι με μια γλ?σσα που χαρακτηρ?ζεται απ? ωμ?ς περιγραφ?ς και εικ?νες με πολ? μεγ?λη σημειολογικ? βαρ?τητα.

Με ιδια?τερη και π?ντα επ?καιρη γραφ?, που μπλ?κει το συμβατικ? με το μεταφυσικ?, η Μαργαρ?τα Καραπ?νου μ?ς παρουσι?ζει ?να ελληνικ? νησ? γεμ?το εκκεντρικ?ς καλλιτ?χνες που ψ?χνουν σε αυτ? την ?μπνευση που χρει?ζονται. Το νησ? που κατοικε?ται τ?σο απ? ξ?νους και εγχ?ριους κατο?κους, παρουσι?ζεται ως σ?γχρονη Βαβ?λ και ως κ?ντρο διαφθορ?ς, που οφε?λεται κατ? το βιβλ?ο στον συνωστισμ? των καλλιτεχν?ν. ?τσι ο Θε?ς απογοητευμ?νος και προδομ?νος με την εξ?λιξη του σ?γχρονου ανθρ?που, αποφασ?ζει να τους στε?λει ?ναν καινο?ργιο Μεσσ?α, αντ?ξιο της παρακμ?ς τους, ο οπο?ος προκ?πτει μετ? απ? ?ναν εμετ?.

Οι χαρακτ?ρες του βιβλ?ου ε?ναι ιδι?μορφοι και με αυτ?ν του Μαν?λη να ξεχωρ?ζει (του ν?ου Μεσσ?α), τοποθετε?ται στο νησ? με τον ρ?λο του χωροφ?λακα για να επιβ?λει την τ?ξη στους ανθρ?πους. Κινε?ται αθ?ρυβα, ως υπνοβ?της (?πως και οι ?λλοι κ?τοικοι του νησιο?), γλυκ?ς και ευγενικ?ς εξ?ψεως, εν? κυριαρχ? μια «σκοτειν?» συμπεριφορ? που θα οδηγ?σει σε βιασμο?ς, δολοφον?ες και εξαφαν?σεις.

Συν?χεια στο Dreamers & Co. -> <http://dreamersandco.com/2015/07/%CE%...>

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## Lisa says

I would like to provide a few paragraphs from this beautifully written and translated book. The episode I'll excerpt struck me as particularly vivid (while sitting outside on a bazillion degree afternoon). It's from the end of the book, when the images were quickly shifting.

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Stephanos stood up, staggering, pulled the glass doors shut, locked them and put the key in his pocket. Then he went back to his chess game. In the closed space, the fans creaked unbearably, the music was deafening.

They were dancing naked, frantic from the heat. Sue had fallen off the table and they kept stepping on her, until her body was covered with bruises. They grabbed liquor off the shelves and drank straight from the bottles. The gin, whiskey, and tequila steamed, burning their eyes and cheeks. When the power went off, they didn't realize right away. Their voices were louder than the music, and when it stopped they didn't even notice. But then they saw the fans spinning more and more slowly, creaking one last time and then coming to a stop.

"Stephanos! The key!" someone shouted. But no one moved. Stephanos, alone in his corner, absorbed in his game, didn't hear. "Checkmate!" he announced, then fell senseless onto the board. The pieces scattered over the floor.

To the others, who were in the final stages of intoxication, that movement, endlessly repeated in the mirrors behind Stephanos, seemed slow, unending, like the frame of a movie which the power outage had also stopped. The entire bar was cut off violently from the outside world.

Inside, noses pressed to the glass, they opened and closed their mouths silently, like fish in a tank. Their arms, sliding over the locked doors, looked like fins. The lack of oxygen distorted their features, made their eyes bulge -- and yet from the outside it looked as if they were having the time of their lives, still singing at the top of their lungs.

The heat stole in, spread over the floor, and started to rise."

----- (pp 231-232)

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Going back over that section makes me love this book even more, makes me remember how fully all of my senses were engaged while reading.

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### **Alyazia says**

oh boy

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### **Nate D says**

Bleak and phantasmagoric, this plays out almost as a modernized *The Other Side*. A bunch of artists form an isolated community (here, as expats on the would-be utopia of a beautiful Greek island) but instead of productivity and freedom (or the slightest glimmer of happiness) they fall apart into personal problems, temporary loves, and all too often, death and dissolution (which becomes a kind of large-scale outside (divine?) apocalyptic force, as in the the plagues and collapse of *The Other Side*). This terrifying and beautifully macabre story seems to emerge, however, out of the ashes and detritus a much less clear and urgent one (to me, a much less successful one), aimlessly circulating amongst alcoholics and layabouts whose character and actions can seem entirely lacking in causality. This is something I've noted before in Karapanou, with greater success when narrating from the irrational spaces of childhood (and possibly insanity) in *Kassandra and the Wolf* and with somewhat less when attempting to tell some kind of hopeless love story whose characters' motives never seem to resolve enough to invite the necessary reader empathy in

Rien ne va plus. Here we have a few explanations for the inexplicable: alcoholism (that great breaker of logical sequences of action) and a kind of divine intervention, but neither of these entirely satisfy until the Karapanou's almost-symbolist cosmogony of moral disintegration and chaos overrides all else. The degree to which the ending modifies and illuminates what comes before is striking here, redeeming the novel entirely from my mounting frustration, but I'm still not sure that the first half or so actually works in any self-contained way. Then, neither did large swaths of *The Other Side*. Maybe books like these don't need to work in each independent facet to present a powerful and memorable whole. Or perhaps the early failings are, in fact, my own, and were I to re-read with my new sense of the larger arc, I'd find very different rhythms and significances. In any event, this is a strange and fascinating one, it just takes some time for that to become at all clear.

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### **Constance says**

I found this book extraordinarily compelling, although I'm not really sure how much I really grasped it or whether or not I would recommend it.

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