



## Min kamp 5

*Karl Ove Knausgård*

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## Min kamp 5 Karl Ove Knausgård

Femte bind av den selvbiografiske romanen Min kamp er skrevet med voldsom kraft og oppriktighet. Karl Ove flytter til Bergen for å gå på Skrivekunstakademiet. Det blir en gedigen skuffelse; han vil så mye, skjønner så lite, og får ingenting til. Med et tilsynelatende grunnløst pågangsmot fortsetter han likevel å skrive og lese. Flere av de han kjenner, blir antatt og debuterer som forfattere, og han begynner å tenke at han selv i beste fall kan bli en habil litteraturskribent, men ikke kunstner. Gradvis endrer skrivingen seg. Forholdet til verden rundt ham endrer seg også. Slik blir dette en roman om nye, sterke vennskap, og et alvorlig, omskakende kjærlighetsforhold, inntil romanen igjen når frem til det eksistensielle omdreiningspunktet som kanskje er den avgjørende impulsen for romanserien: faren dør, Karl Ove debuterer som forfatter og alt bryter sammen. Karl Ove Knausgårds tredje roman innebærer en enorm litterær satsning, og er en stor bok i mer enn én forstand: Min kamp blir utgitt som seks romaner. Første, andre, tredje og fjerde bok er utkommet, den sjette utkommer høsten 2010.

## Min kamp 5 Details

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# From Reader Review Min kamp 5 for online ebook

## Gary says

"What's genuine in the book is that I try to understand who I am." In a recent interview, Karl Ove Knausgård said he wrote Book 5 of his My Struggle series in just eight weeks, which is particularly impressive considering the depth of his 626-page autobiographical novel. Knausgård has a rare talent for finding the sublime in the mundane, and when measured by qualities like honesty, authenticity, and transparency, Book 5 is Knausgård at his unfiltered best. Highly recommended, especially for anyone who hasn't yet discovered the pleasure of reading Knausgård.

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## Elyse Walters says

"My Struggle: Book 5"..... is my first introduction to Karl Ove Knausgaard

In the beginning of this book, we follow along while Karl Ove is traveling.

From Bergen, Norway...he hitch hiked to Florence - to Athens-( met some Norwegian girls... and one very particular girl that he thinks he is madly in love with)...with hopes to meet her again when he gets back to Norway.

Before he makes it back to Bergen....the big University town where he has been accepted at the Writing Academy---with the last of his money he buys a train ticket to Vienna.

Karl Ove was hungry, - in need of food and money- and had to make some choices ...

but he also knew his mom would wire him money to get back home.

I related to this early part of the book. Karl Ove was aware of of "Tramp" style of temporary living...( wandering - filthy- hungry - no schedule to meet). The big difference between Karl Ove and "The Tramp", is he 'did' have a home to return to.

Karl Ove had one hell of a miserable night - ( one I can relate to, as I, too, experienced a night like this once in Greece).

It was night...Karl Ove had nothing but his zip up sleeping bag ( I didn't even have that)...it was raw chilly breezy. As he slept outside with ice-cold rain. He was stiff as a board. A night to remember....

Moving on...

Once at The Writing Academy...we meet his teachers and other students -- and the ongoing happenings in and out of the classroom.

.....at the writing academy -- I felt I got to know Karl Ove more...( maybe even holes were being filled in for me from previous books) -- many strengths ... but also he revealed a part of him that could be jealous of others success - yet he owned it.. and let go of it. I liked his self-observation of ego.,

.....I also began to respect Karl Ove's thinking process as a reader & a writer...( goals to write a novel)... but always a reader.

.....I learned about his family more during his visits home from school: his mom- grandmother- brother. It's clear he has a strong tie to him family & is proud of his country.

.....lots of visits - to meet friends for beer at the Cafe Opera.

.....We follow his relationships with women - sexual journey - watch him grow - age up- fall in and out of love...

....and always his connection with 'his writing'.

"I've been thinking of writing about ugliness and trying to find the beauty in it, if you see what I mean. It's not true that a thing of beauty is exclusively beautiful or ugly things are only ugly. It's a lot more relative than that."

....Over the course of a year at the academy, he learned there was literature and real literature....the true lofty variety, which stretched from Homer's epics and the Greek dramas through the course of history up to the present day....( he named dozens of present day authors including Stig Larsson)...  
.....It was fascinating gaining insight along 'with' Karl Ove

\*As for the more personal - results in Karl Ove's life ...( with his writing - family - and women)... I'm not here to give those details away.

I have to say...this book 'does' have that "want-to-keep-reading""irresistibility about it: no question!

Here is the one question I would love another Knausgaard fan to answer for me...

How old was Karl Ove in Book 1?

I was surprise to see him only 19 at the start of BOOK 5... ( with little sexual experience to boot). It just surprised me - that's all.

Was he 12 -- in book 1? ...or what? I'm sure one of my Goodreads friends will help me out... ( until I read series 1-4... then jump to 6)

Thank You Archipelago Publishing, and Karl Ove Knausgaard

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## **Olaf Gütte says**

Nachdem ich den Hype um K.-O. Knausgaard bisher nicht ganz nachvollziehen konnte, bin ich nach dem Abschluß des fünften Bandes seiner autobiografischen Romanreihe nun etwas anderer Meinung. Eindeutig sein bester Band, auch wenn er sich hier selbst nicht immer gut aussehen lässt. Sehr bemerkenswert, jetzt bin ich auf den letzten Teil sehr gespannt!

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## **Hakan T says**

Kavgam serisinin 5. cildi de ?a??rtmad?, yine mükemmeldi. Bu ciltte 19-33 ya? aras? Bergen'de geçirdi?i y?llar?, özellikle de yazar olma mücadelesini anlat?yor Knausgaard. Yine benzersiz bir aç?k kalplilikle, kendini hem özel hayat?nda, hem de yazarlık serüveninde ac?mas?zca ele?tirerek. Yazarl???n, yarat?c???n çok ac? verici bir süreç oldu?unu, büyük emek getirdi?ini, öncelikle çok okumak gerektirdi?ini de bir kez daha anl?yorsunuz. 19 ya??nda kabul edildi?i, gözde bir yazarlık kursunda çekti?i sıkıntılardan, girdi?i çe?itli zorlu i?lerde ya?ad?klar?na, edebiyat dünyas?n?n içindeki dinamiklerden, ba?ar?ya (ilk roman?n?n bas?lmas? ve ödül almas?) uzanan süreç samimi bir ?ekilde anlat?l?yor. Okumaya, yazmaya merak? olanlar için yine çok ilginç pencereler aç?yor Knausgaard bu kitap?nda. Tabii bu dönemdeki özel hayat?n? da, kendisini pek bırakmayan özgüven eksikli?ini, a?klar?n?, ba?ar?s?zl?klar?n?, k?skançlıklar?n?, ailesiyle ili?kilerini, ilk evlili?ini, aldatmalar?n? da etkileyici ama süslü olmayan üslubuyla, kendisini ne ac?nd?rarak ne de yücelterek ortaya döküyor. Fonda ?ehirleri ve kırsal?yla Norveç tasvirleri de kitap?n de?erini peki?tiriyor. Herkesin kendisinden bulabilece?i ?eylerle dolu bu kitap. Ben çok sevdim, Kavgam serisinin 6. ve son cildinin ?ngilizce çevirisinin bas?lmas?n? merakla bekleyece?im. Türkçe çevirileri zaten biraz geriden

geliyor. İngilizce çevirileri müthiş, umarım Monokl'un yayınladığı Türkçe çevirileri de öyledir.

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## Manny says

[from *Min kamp 4*]

Looking at the other reviews here of volume 5, I see a good deal about the plot and some interesting notes on connections with Knausgård's real life. What's striking, given that the book is being sold as a novel, is how little people say about its qualities as a piece of literature. I am grateful to Björn, who pointed me to this interesting article by Jan Kjørstad. Kjørstad is uniquely well qualified to comment; he is one of the two or three greatest living Norwegian authors, knows everything about Scandinavian literature, and is referred to many times in the course of Knausgård's book.

(view spoiler)

I can't improve on his analysis. *Chapeau*, Karl Ove. (hide spoiler)]

[to *Min kamp 6*]

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## Kevin Kelsey says

Posted at Heradas Review

“What was consciousness other than the surface of the soul’s ocean?”

Book five details Karl Ove’s life from around age nineteen to thirty-three, but in a lot of ways it feels like the

closing chapter of *My Struggle*. Of course there is still one more book coming in the pipeline; whose english translation I hear has been delayed again, this time until "Fall 2018" due to it being twelve-hundred pages and requiring an additional translator in order to handle the extra page load. According to Knausgaard, the forthcoming sixth volume is supposed to be more about his friend's and family's reception to their portrayal in the first five books. That should be very interesting.

This wouldn't be a review of a *My Struggle* book if I didn't mention how fascinatingly readable the prose was. I say fascinatingly readable because I have no idea why it is. I really can't explain it, but his writing gets inside of me and latches onto something. He does such a fantastic job of relating the deep rooted sense of isolation we experience from, and along with the rest of humanity. We seem to keep two groups in our minds: the self (Us), and everyone else (Them). We are always alone even in company, because we can never truly verify that anyone else really exists.

More than any of the others this book is all about Karl Ove coming to terms with the realities of being a writer. At 19-20 he is in love with the mythology of writing, but not so much with the actual act of writing. He loves the idea but not the reality. He takes criticism of his work very poorly, very personally. He sees himself as not having the depth of soul to truly write like his influences. He feels that there is a chasm between him and others; that he is living a duplicitous life; that he is an imposter and everyone else the genuine article. I think that this ties deeply into his ultimate reason for writing *My Struggle*: I think he's trying to demolish the barrier between his private and public life in a way so destructive, it cannot be undone. I think he needs that barrier to break down.

He states several times that he feels he is a separate person internally than who he is perceived to be externally. He's able to alleviate this somewhat through heavy drinking, but heavy drinking causes him insurmountable other issues. When he drinks too much, he's finally comfortable, but he does all kinds of things that bring him shame, and this adds to his compartmentalization of his true self from his public self. In writing this 3600 page, six volume highly personal memoir novel, he is forcing his internal and external, depth and surface selves to intermingle and become one. Since he feels trapped in this situation, to me it seems like a way for him to force himself out.

The character of Karl Ove - I say character because he says over and over that he doesn't remember much from the periods of time he's covering, therefore there is definitely a percentage of events and memories that are invented - is the perfect anti-hero. He is often very abrasive to those around him, doing things that are terrible to those he loves, but we're given so much of his internal thought process that we relate with the reasons for his actions. In a way, it's more that he's just very honest about his faults and shortcomings as well as his achievements. Usually when we tell our own stories, we leave out all of the rough edges, and paint ourselves in a much better light. Instead, he seems to be making an effort at self-mythologizing as objectively as he can. Worts and all.

Really, we are all anti-heroes in our own stories when we're honest about both the bad and the good that we've done. I think this is why the concept of an anti-hero is so broadly appealing in stories; it's really just a well developed character. If a character doesn't have a little darkness inside of them, they don't feel real to us.

In conclusion, I loved this book. It wove together the disparate threads from the previous four books very tightly. It was also the first to move almost entirely in a linear fashion, which was a big departure from the others. Finishing it makes me want to go back and reread book two, which was previously my least favorite, but I think the additional insight and perspective gained from reading five would make it much more interesting. The main narrative of book two chronologically lands right after the events of book five. I think

that book five could be read before book two, and might even be best experienced in that order.

Now begins the long wait for book six.

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## Geoff says

“The world is... the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Truth does not inhabit only the inner man, or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. ”

? Maurice Merleau-Ponty

(This quote will have to serve as a review for now. I'll probably write more later. If you want a thorough write-up of the book, go read Lee's fantastic review.)

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## Marcello S says

Mantiene decisamente le aspettative. [78/100]

Pensieri sparsi:

1. Mannaggia, già finito. E adesso che faccio?!
2. Nell'ultimo periodo ero impantanato su una media di 20 pagine a settimana. Poi è arrivato Knausgård e non c'ho più capito niente.
4. Normale seguito del quarto volume, verso la fine si incontra col primo (vedi alcune pagine quasi fotocopia) ed è il prequel abbastanza indispensabile del secondo. Per me è senza dubbio uno tra i capitoli migliori. E accadono, inaspettatamente, un sacco di cose.
5. Premio della critica al tentativo del buon Karl Ove di spacciarsi come un ventenne/trentenne sfigato, depresso e inconcludente risultando nel mio immaginario del tutto l'opposto.
6. Non saprei dire se beve davvero quanto dice ma faccio che mi fido e una gara di medie a chi perde paga la eviterei.
7. Ingvild, Gunvold, Tonje.
8. Dalla ricerca dell'amore che ti salva la vita vengono fuori momenti tipicamente knausgardiani come questo:

*Subito dopo ci sedemmo, ognuno con la propria media. Il locale era pieno, l'atmosfera era carica, erano le ultime cene di Natale tra colleghi e amici, intorno a noi c'erano uomini in abiti anni ottanta e donne dai vestiti con le spalle imbottite e le scollature profonde, che brindavano e ridevano. Eravamo soltanto noi a rimanere in silenzio.*

*Avrei potuto dirle che era una stella, una luce, il mio sole. Avrei potuto dirle che mi mancava a tal punto da star male. Avrei potuto dirle che non avevo mai provato una cosa simile in tutta la mia vita, e io di cose ne avevo provate tante. Avrei potuto dirle che volevo stare per sempre con lei. Invece non dissi niente.*

9. O come questo:

*Rimase in piedi a guardarmi mentre la musica inondava la stanza. Aveva in sé un che di onirico e di eterno, come se riguardasse ciò che continuava inarrestabile senza finire mai.*

*“Non è bello?” chiese.*

*“Sì,” risposi. “Bellissimo”.*

*Qualcosa in me sapeva che sarebbe andato tutto bene se mi fossi alzato e l'avessi abbracciata. Che mi avrebbe corrisposto e che l'unica cosa che sognavo sarebbe diventata realtà.*

*Ma non trovai il coraggio.*

10. O questo:

*Il pensiero di lei era semplice, leggero, aderiva come il cielo a tutto, invece quello di avvicinarmi a lei era pesante. E se mi stavo sbagliando? Se mi avesse detto di no? Se avesse riso di me? Che cosa ti sei messo in testa? Chi ti credi di essere? Io dovrei mettermi con te? Sei solo un povero scemo.*

*Ma quella sera dovevo.*

*Quella sera dovevo.*

11. Poi ci sono i momenti tristonici, anche questi abbastanza tipici, come questo:

*La nebbia si muoveva a banchi sopra gli abeti fitti, di colore verde scuro, quasi nero, lungo il fianco della collina sul lato opposto del laghetto. Erano le nove, la mamma mi chiese se potevo spargere degli aghi di pino sul tratto di strada vicino al cancello. Era una vecchia usanza. Ci andai sotto la pioggia, coprii la ghiaia con gli aghi di pino, alzai lo sguardo verso la casa, le finestre che splendevano in quella mattina grigia. Piansi. Non per la morte e per quanto c'era di freddo, ma per la vita e per quanto c'era di caldo. Piansi per la bontà che esisteva. Piansi per la luce che trapelava nella nebbia, piansi per i vivi che erano presenti nella casa del morto e pensai, non posso sciupare la mia esistenza.*

12. Altri così tormentati che Raskolnikov se la passava meglio, come questo:

*Quando mi svegliai, ero all'inferno. Fuori era completamente buio. (...) Il pensiero di quello che avevo fatto, la colpa, la vergogna e l'angoscia, era così grande che non esisteva altro. Era senza fondo. Ero paralizzato, non ero in grado di muovermi, ero lì sdraiato al buio e sapevo che l'unico modo per uscirne era la morte. Non mi ero mosso da quando mi ero svegliato, era come se le tenebre mi schiacciassero, sentivo un dolore tale che volevo gridare, invece rimasi perfettamente immobile e in silenzio, dal soggiorno arrivavano i suoni della televisione e poi lei attraversò la stanza e si fermò davanti alla porta aperta.*

13. O questo:

*Non scrissi niente, pescavo, dormivo e leggevo. Ero dilaniato, non era una sensazione di passaggio, ma nel profondo era quello che sentivo perché il mio stato d'animo non migliorava, non cambiava, ogni giorno mi svegliavo provando una disperazione che non conosceva limiti. Si trattava di resistere. Era l'unica cosa su cui focalizzavo la mia attenzione. Dovevo resistere.*

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## **Jonfaith says**

**The heavens were inexhaustible, it had rained every day since the beginning of September and except for a couple of hours I hadn't seen the sun for what would soon be eight months.**

Today was Norwegian in that respect. Yesterday was drizzle but today was rain. Our house was full of jet lagged family and I found myself reading 400 pages. Punctuating my reading of this volume was a series of correspondence with people I went to Uni some 27 years ago. Mnemonic specificity over such a time shocks me. Especially with respect to the newspaper staff, which is hardly a molding or poignant event of my character. Most memory is brittle paper. I retain more Nietzsche and Orwell than I do the quotidian.

Karl Ove is admitted to the prestigious writing program at the age of 19. He still drinks too much, has issues with fidelity and is teeming with self-loathing. As Hitchens once said about the Queen Mother, two out of three ain't bad. I admit I am starting to tire of this endeavor. There were ugly sections in this, some which strike close to home: Karl Ove works one summer with the developmentally disabled and appears to be the least equipped soul on record for the job.



The sections on the drudgery of daily writing were eloquent as was the inexplicable nature of inspiration. I am not sure we need to know any further per Dad and I don't really care about the blood.

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## **Stephen P says**

A complex man spoken in such simple, open sentences, paragraphs. Yet unable to commit himself to anything or anyone in life, therefore unable to form a life. There was no self inside, only a vicious facsimile of his father and his emotional tortures; a man he could and would never be able to win with. Much of his time was spent humiliating himself internally and externally, and fearing it. Getting drunk allowed all he repressed out.

The ongoing ache and repetitive groan wore thin. The writing without plot sought to emulate the writers the protagonist admired. These Norwegian post modern authors, i.e; Tor Ulven, whose ability to create tone, mood, not through description-the writing about-but the writing itself, the language. From this grew a tale of tragedy. A man seeking and searching, lost in his own self hatred doused in alcohol leaving him alienated and self destructed. This would be a fine endeavor if the writing achieved an apt tone, mode, revealing through its language and texture rather than the ongoing whine of loss and defeat. What was attempted through description spoke about these landscapes, objects, lighting, and seemed tacked on. At times tasted of the spoiled soured flavor when writing is added to show how well the author can write; which he can.

This came as a shock to me. I loved books number one and two. A big fan. However it has been a while and I decided to skip numbers three and four jumping to number five where the setting was his college campus, the world of academics, great books, new authors to discover, the heightened talk of literature. If read in order the book's style and structure may have made more sense?

I do add stars for the early campus parts taking me back the many years to what it was like being on campus. We shared the same self consciousness, the retreat from self criticism, the orderly play of the Groucho Marx game where he wouldn't join any club who would have someone like him as a member. It was great writing or great self identification or both. In the end for it to carry on for over six hundred and forty pages with little insight or change, little widening of perspective minus the other qualities he sought from the authors he read leads tragedy thinned to an ongoing whine.

The first two books stood out for me as a different type of literature where the protagonist was faithfully honest about himself. The author making himself a character in his own novel. It is fiction or so I presume (with an effort). He is in this work true to his own formula of taking the reader through the events of his daily life. A difference that struck me is that in Book Two he is speaking of marriage, fatherhood, some questions about his masculinity, finding time to write and protecting that time, and his reaction to the world of publishing and awards. The issues impinge on each other, often times butting heads, other times stilettos are unsheathed. It was a rich read in many ways. In this work the daily life of a student, budding writer, academic, by nature is drier. So, he may well have portrayed his daily life as in this project he has set out to do. However, I believe the lines needed to be sharpened, the stilettos honed and any sense of sentimentality sliced away. The book for me would have had a gritted texture if the word, thought,-responsibility-would have surfaced, been questioned, been explored, rather than perfunctory references.

Will I read the next installment of this project? At this point I don't think so. This was a six hundred and forty six page commitment. I could have been reading...well... I could have been reading the mentioned, Tor Ulven and his book Replacement. By coincidence it is what I am reading now. In the first ten pages it

accomplishes what Knausgaard talked about, the kind of writer he wants to become.

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## Darwin8u says

*"...the silence of the living is quite different from the silence of the dead"*

- Karl Ove Knausgaard, My Struggle: Book 5

### Book 5: Some Rain Must Fall

First, just a quick observation. I'm a little perplexed by the photo on the cover of the Archipelago English edition. Isn't that Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty? Wait. I've been there. How does a giant earthwork, counterclockwise coil shooting into the Great Salt Lake fit into this novel? Beautiful, certainly, but odd.

Ok, back to the novel. Back to Knausgaard's strange, boring, brilliant, spiraling, frustrating 5th book in his 6 book übernovel. In many ways, it is fairly standard Künstlerroman. A young artist is trying to find his voice, to mark his own path, to open his eyes, open his mouth, find that literary rhythm. The amazing thing is after 5 books, I still care about Knausgaard, even after he has exposed, again and again, an often irritating and destructive side. I'm not sure if my affection is because he resembles in some ways my own brother, or because there is something warm and attractive about his strange sense of brutal honesty (as brutally honest as a fictional biography can get). I'm not sure being his brother or mother would be a job I'd volunteer for. He is fairly aware of his indulgent side, but this is one guy you might want to remove sharp items from once he starts to drink.

In the novel I was most interested in his relationship with family and his relationship with women (oh, and the scenes at the clinic are amazingly strange). I think the technique he uses to explore these relationships can be described as an inversion. What is inside of Knausgaard gets put outside. Things most rational and sane people would not expose to the world, he exposes. At the same time he chews inwardly on the outside. He brings in as almost an emotional experience the water, the weather, the cold, the ground, birds, geography. Knausgaard describes this fascination after he writes a poem:

*Two leather chairs  
in the wind  
noise from a town  
You have left.  
The girl disappears  
into the girl.*

He follows the poem with a line that perhaps hints at some of his larger themes, *"ever since I was small I had been fascinated by the relationship between the inside and the outside, when what was supposed to be inside was outside, and vice versa."* Knausgaard struggles throughout most of this book to find his voice between the inside and the outside. He literally struggles with friends and family and other writers to speak. He struggles to write. He wants to write literature but seems destined to write nonfiction. Insecurities, distractions, women, school, and his own competitiveness seem to constantly pull at his desire to be a writer. He seems trapped in the Hamlet paralysis. Caught between to be or not to be. Between the sky and the not sky.

And like a levy breaking, one day it opens up. He finds his voice. He is able to catch the fire, to hold the flame. All those clichés about writing seem to find form in the text. In this way his writing is a pharmakon (a means of producing something). In this way, writing for Knausgaard is both a cure and a poison, a blessing and a curse. Like his constant struggle with drinking too much alcohol -- which allows him to speak but also inspires him to commit horrible and often destructive acts, Knausgaard seems through-out most of the novel to be at the cliff-edge of writing. He is afraid at both his need for the drug and afraid of what will be released when he finds his voice and lets go. But, this wouldn't be a novel about the development of a writer, if he didn't, in the end, jump.

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## Lee says

You've heard about Karl Ove Knausgaard's six-volume *My Struggle* series. If you've been avoiding the annual hype since 2012 but now for some weird reason think you're maybe KOK curious, these reviews of Books One, Two, Three, and Four will get you up to speed.

OK. Now that you're all caught up: Book Five begins soon after Book Four ends, with a nineteen-year-old Karl Ove triumphantly copulating in a tent. He's returning from travels, preparing to attend a writing academy in Bergen. He's been in touch with an angelic girl (Ingvild) he met for a moment, flipped for, and expects to see once school starts. Other than writing and reading, he's still deeply into music ("pop and indie"). He's with his brother Yngve a good deal, acclimating to city life in an apartment alone, masturbating for the first time, ignorant of everything other than the distance between his abilities and his ambitions.

The rise and fall of his affections for Ingvild, the all-encompassing, spirit-emboldening, perception-enhancing fizz of it ("inner joy finds an outer counterpart") and resultant fumbling, drive the first part of Book Five. He's cray cray for Ingvild but they can hardly talk, they're too attracted, it's terrible, it's fantastic, he drinks too much, screws everything up, he dreams of Yngve kissing her, a dream that proves prophetic and sparks sibling misery until things end between Yngve and Ingvild, whereupon the brothers watch footie and make up for a while before a super-drunk Karl Ove beams a glass at his brother's face.

Other love stories follow. His experience of love varies with each woman: the first is idealized, lust-filled, impossible to realize; the second is comfortable, caring, normal, sane, stable, yet difficult to maintain; the third combines the others: it's comfortable, caring, committed, but bonded by passion, idealization, and a sense of right-ness from the start. The opening rounds of this third big love elicit a signature Knausgaard statement, a hard-won declaration that may seem too simple or even unsophisticated out of context: "Life can be so fantastic. Living can be so fantastic."

Other interests make living fantastic: books, music, writing, drinking. So many titles are listed. (A review limited to lists of authors/books and bands/records mentioned might be ideal.) He's filling himself with experience and culture, seeing what seeps out when he plays drums poorly in a band called Kafkatrakterne with his brother, when he writes poorly received stories and poems as the youngest member of the Writing Academy, when he opens himself to darkness via drink. At times, Karl Ove stands at the gates of hell, its mouth agape and ready to devour him. There's a darkness in this volume that threatens to overtake Karl Ove's life, the way we know from the end of Book One it enveloped his father. He characterizes it while out drinking with Yngve as "dancing in the realm of death."

The scenes in which he tightropes across the abyss, on the verge of blacked-out drunk, counterbalance ecstatic moments momentarily experienced via love and art. This conflict extends Book Five's range in a

way that makes it weightier than installments since Book Two. Of course, even when most endangered, passed out on someone's roof in the rain in Iceland, or trying to climb up to a woman's window only to fall on his back into a huge muddy puddle, he's protected in part by the bright-shining horizon of his eventual achievements. We know he will write two well-received novels, have a family (he has four kids now), and write six volumes of autobiographical fiction that will rock Scandinavia before storming the UK and US. There's a sense that everything in Book Five is gathering itself in preparation for literature, the knowledge and experience gained, the low points serving a higher, or at least a later, purpose. But he can't achieve maturity without first suffering from immorality (stealing bikes, attempting to maim his brother) and self-inflicted harm (drinking to excess, slicing-up his face).

The cover of the Archipelago Books edition makes sense since he's spiraling, although it's not necessarily a downward sort of spiral. It's more of an involution that's ultimately productive. All the love interests, the random drunken sexual exploits, the reading and early attempts at writing, the early failures at everything important to him, all the spiraling in general -- five or six years after school ends and he's worked in mental institutions and a radio station -- expresses itself as a jetty, a bulwark against the metaphorical tides, when he focuses completely on writing his first proper novel:

"It was a fantastic feeling. I had spent ten years writing without achieving anything, and then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, it was just flowing. And what I wrote was of such quality, compared with what I had produced earlier, that I was surprised every evening when I read through what I had written the night before. It was like having a head rush, or walking in your sleep, a state in which you are out of yourself, and what was curious about this particular experience was that it continued unabated." (579)

He has connections through his interests in books and music that help him get published. Once published, rave reviews appear on the cover of the newspaper, followed by interviews and a bit of celebrity. But the success comes at great personal cost. We know that the woman with whom he has three kids in Book Two is Linda, not Tonje, but the revelation of the devolution and end of his first marriage, particularly the time he spends in solitude on a small desolate island, is surprising and affecting.

Book Five is surely not the first extended stretch of prose to describe the development of a young male writer who plays music, drinks to excess, and experiences what seems like every calibration along the spectrum of love. But this iteration will be read and taken seriously. Why? Because it's not just about Karl Ove's books and music and writing and drumming and drinking and carousing with alluring girls. It's also about his family, his grandparents, his parents, his brother, his cousin, and his surroundings. Bergen is forever wet in this, drenched by what seems like constant pouring rain. Such liquidity syncs with Karl Ove's malleable identity and position. There's discussion of the porous borders between Dublin and its characters in *Ulysses* ("this arrogant brilliant young man [Stephen Dedalus] was perhaps first and foremost a place where things happened . . . the world flowed through him and the story, Augustin, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare, everything moved through him and the same was true of Bloom . . .").

Intertextuality may be this installment's most interesting aspect, how its curatorial content—the way Knausgaard names and discusses writers and novels, bands and albums—bonds with readers.

". . . I noticed a young guy with a shaved head and Adorno glasses, not least because he had a copy of Ole Robert Sunde's *Of Course She Had to Ring* on the desk in front of him. This was a

statement and a signal, a code for the initiated, of whom there were not many, and therefore particularly significant. He read Sunde, he had to be a writer himself.” (462)

Intertextuality, for the most part, functions in Book Five as a sort of secret handshake. When he talks about two of my favorite novels—Thomas Bernhard’s *Extinction* and Thomas Mann’s *Joseph and His Brothers*—in a span of fifteen pages, or when he mentions listening to Tortoise, a band that sound-tracked the second half of the ‘90s for me, it strengthened the bond between writer and this reader. This can cut both ways, however, like when he talks about Smashing Pumpkins, who I never really came around on beyond one song (“1979”). But in general inclusion of this sort of thing unites more than it repels. Fans of Bjork, for example, will feel especially bonded with Karl Ove when he describes attending a party at her home in Iceland and vomiting in her toilet.

The spiral jetty on the cover also works because Book Five concludes a long and winding journey through childhood and adolescence back to the territory of the first and second volumes. This volume returns to the death of the father, covered in detail in the second half of volume one, yet really only touched on here. Karl Ove (horrifically) slices his face in the first instance of a pathological and disturbing courtship ritual, but it’s not the same episode described in Book Two early on with Linda. And, by the end of Book Five, he’s once again being interviewed for articles about writers who have only written one book. He has the idea for *A Time for Everything* but only approaches it, writing preliminary notes and false-start drafts, not yet ready to abandon his second wife Linda and their child to write for weeks in his office until he’s finished.

Something else about this reading experience I’ll mention although its significance is limited only to this reader: I received the advanced reading copy on the second day of January 2016, whereas previous volumes had arrived in March or April. A new volume of *My Struggle* had taken its place among robins and jelly beans as a rite of spring the past four years (2012 to 2015), but I couldn’t have been happier than to have started 2016 with 629 fresh pages of Knausgaard. (Read it in 50-page sittings, immersed, now planning a trip to Bergen one day.) Ending this volume means the arrival of Book Six, the final installment apparently featuring a 200-page essay on Hitler, may be less than a year away. I know from interviews that one aspect of this project, only signaled by the semi-ironic title at this point, is that Karl Ove as a boy, teen, and a young man shared tendencies with the young, artistically ambitious Adolf Hitler. In a different time and place, Karl Ove suggests he could have become a Hitler, or better yet, Hitler could’ve have written a completely compelling six-series autobiographical novel. That’s a pretty enormous stone to drop into the pool of five-volumes of prose. I look forward to seeing how this ripples back through the previous volumes and reevaluating -- if not completely re-reading -- the complete project as soon as possible next year.

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## Jennopenny says

Oh Knausgård, this is, in my opinion the best part in your "My Struggle" series. A very strong five stars to this one.

How I loved it.

I want to, as always, write that it **doesn't matter** in which order you read the books in this series. They are made to be read independently from each other, the books are not in chronological order but by different parts of Karl Ove's life, and different overarching themes.

I read them *out of order*, started with part one and read until part four, then six and jumped back to this one, part five.

It makes no difference in which order you read, since all the books connect in some ways, and you get to know Karl Ove more and more as you do read.

If for some reason, you're reading this, and want to read Karl Ove Knausgård's series in **chronological order**, here is how to do it:

- Start with **part three** Boyhood Island

This part goes through Karl Ove's childhood, growing up in a small town in Norway.

- **Part four** follows the events of part three pretty much. It's all about Karl Ove moving to north Norway after being done with school to teach at the same time he's trying to write and find his voice.

- Then, here is where it's get tricky, read about *450 pages* (depending in which language you're reading in) in **part five**. Stop when you get to Karl Ove's father dying and go back to read **part one**.

The first part is all about Karl Ove's relationship with his father and dealing with his death.

- Once finished with that - read the *last pages* of **part five** which the ending of that part connects perfectly with **part two**.

- End with **part six**, which is a long epilogue (my edition was 1125 pages) about what happened when he started to publish the books in this series. How he handles his relationships and media. Friends and family saying that he got things wrong and what to sue him if he publishes. How he didn't know what he started when he started to write and this phenomena that these books and his life has become.

But as I wrote, you can read this in any other you like.

But let's get back to this part.

***Why is this my favorite book in the series?***

Well I hate to pick favorites but this just was more than amazing. I enjoyed, loved the other parts too. Which should be obvious now that I read all of the 3933 pages (the total number of pages in the translation I read) else I wouldn't gotten past passed part one.

But I'm picking favorites, so this is my absolute favorite closely followed by part two.

Karl Ove is 19 and moves to Bergen to start *Skrivarakademin*, a writing school for a year. He's the youngest student in the class and he starts out really ambitious. He moved away from home, has his own apartment and lives in a new town. He hangs out with his older brother Yngve, who takes him out to meet his friends and get drunk together.

Their sibling relationship change pretty much during the years when this book set.

Karl Ove falls in love. Gets drunk. Is poor, because he spends all the money he gets fast. He writes and tries to write. When his classmates start to criticizes his work, he tries to shrug it off but inside he's hurting. He stops showing up at class. He's trying constantly to write but he's never happy with anything. At times he doesn't write at all.

He does random jobs. Starts to study literature at the university. Writes reviews for books in some magazines. Works with mentally ill people. Procrastinates. Does military service. Works for a radio station. Travels. Messes up and breaks up. Falls in love again. Gets married. And so much more.

As he drinks, he blackouts. Loses time. Makes stupid mistakes. Is unfaithful. Regrets everything as soon as

he wakes up the next day. If he remembers it. He claims to be two different people - one when he's sober and one when he's drunk. Drunk Karl Ove can't stop drinking, gets into trouble and talks to everyone. Sober Karl Ove is fine with spending time alone, doesn't need to talk and wants to focus on his writing. Yngve worries about Karl Ove's drinking several times throughout the book and tells him he has to stop. Karl Ove can't just have one drink, he always has to have plenty.

There are moments when he's drinking or making bad choices, where I just want to yell at him. What are you doing Karl Ove?! Why did you do that?! What were you thinking?! Get your act together! At the same time I understand him. He is about my age as this book is set, going through a lot of things in life, and even though him and I have experienced our early twenties totally different - I can still understand him. His lack of self confidence, his fears and all that he wants to block out. His way to in a way or another torture himself, if that is by thinking himself down or physically harming himself.

All the parts of this series has made me love and hate Karl Ove, and that's why I have kept on reading to the very end. He's not a good person at times, sometimes often, and he writes it all down. I sigh at him while reading. Karl Ove will get better, I want to say. You have no idea what happiness you will experience later in your life. You have no idea how many people will pick your book up and read them. And love them as much as I have. Also hate them, but don't bother with those.

Part five, started out slow but as soon as I got into it I just didn't want to put it down. I knew what would happen in some parts, because of reading the other parts, but it didn't feel like I've been spoiled in any way. I read and waited patiently until he went to Iceland. Until he met Espen ( Espen Stueland) and Tore ( Tore Renberg), his good friends and both also writers who were published before Knausgård was. I waited for Tonje, Knausgård's first wife. Oh Tonje. I feel for you. But what a woman you are.

What I feel that Karl Ove does perfectly in this is to show how much love there is between him and the people around him. Mostly between him and Yngve. As I read, it's very clear to me that that is a loving relationship. Even if there has been some hard turns in their relationship, here and there. Also Tonje. I know that Karl Ove messes things up, is unavailable for her and unfaithful, and that she just has the most patience with him. What I read though is also the love he has for her. His relationship with Espen and Tore also. His jealousy as they get published before him, being younger than he is, but also his support and them supporting him.

*How come I read part five last?*

Well I just couldn't handle this series to end and I knew that I would cry my eyes out as I reached the last sentence in part six. Which I also surely did. So I saved part five for last so that that last sentence wasn't the last in the series for me. Also saving it until I needed it, which was recently and knowing I would really enjoy it and even love it. I loved it so much.

Sometimes when I hear in the bookshop where I work people who didn't enjoy Knausgård and found, whatever part they read, to be slow and boring. I don't agree but I understand them. The books in this series aren't exactly page turners. There are some parts in each book that drag on and are (a bit) too long, but they should be there. Life isn't always action packed. Sometimes it's about having coffee and a cigarette and reflect upon life. That might be two pages, or as in part six, ~350 pages, long drawn out thoughts and scenes, but that's just how life is. That's how I see it. Not all that Knausgård writes is fun to read, but sometimes I laugh. Sometimes I want to close my eyes and not read on what will happen next. I want to yell at him. I have cried several times while reading this book and the others in the series. I have sighed. *I have felt so much* while reading this.

Karl Ove, thanks for the struggle. I have enjoyed myself so much while reading. I'm sorry for thinking your writing wasn't for me because your series is my favorite series of all time and I doubt that any other series will ever top it. I know I will return to your books in the years to come. I know I will dog ear more pages, underline sentences and parts I love. I know I will reread a couple of pages here and there and just feel happy and sad at the same time as I re-experience them.

Thank you Karl Ove. You have been a big part of my reading life the last year and a half. I have recommended, and still recommend anyone who will listen to me, to pick up your books.

I wish there was more and I will read what you have written before and what you will write in the future with pleasure. I'm so happy to have these books in my life.

Tack så himla mycket.

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## **Robin says**

### ***Karl Ove Knausgaard - a painfully open book***

I had never heard of Knausgaard, a Norwegian author, best known for his 6-volume autobiography *My Struggle*. When it was recommended to me I was a little curious as to whether listening (I experienced this via audio format) to 21.5 hours about this guy was going to be worthwhile.

After I was assured that it doesn't matter which book you read first, I set my need for reading 'in order' aside and started with this one, number 5. We begin when Karl Ove is 19, just about to start at the writing academy in Bergen. He is a young man, very inexperienced in life and love and the world, with a desire to write. He's also filled with insecurities, which hinder him socially. He leans on alcohol to relieve uncomfortable feelings.

I listened as he told us of the people he met, the books he read, the music he listened to, the beers (the many beers) he drank, the (even more) cigarettes he rolled then smoked. The anguish and hell of love and heartbreak. The money he borrowed, the little jobs he took to pay bills. Conversations with his mother, time with his brother, complicated and painful emotions regarding his father. And the girls, oh the girls.

It was strangely addictive, hearing of his life. Strange, because I wasn't really sure where it was going. Much of it seemed a little mundane - life is comprised of mundanities, punctuated by interesting moments here and there. Nevertheless, I was interested, for a couple reasons: 1) his absolute frankness and 2) his development as a writer.

Reason 2 was so interesting in its arc - he begins as a young man in a creative writing course, receiving positive and negative feedback from his classmates. Then he writes on his own, short stories that would take months to write and then would be thrown away in disgust, and self doubt. Later, he painfully takes time to go away and write, but produces very little. And finally, almost magically, finds his stride and writes in dedicated rhythm, is appreciated, published, receives awards and recognition. Anyone who is interested in writing or a writer's process, will find this fascinating.

Still, through all of this, he is a bit of a train wreck, personally. What a self destructive streak he has! But oh so human. And he doesn't try to make himself look better than he is, which makes me as a reader, sympathise and identify.



Sometimes I felt I was trudging through too many mundanities. Sometimes I wondered why he would focus so heavily on certain things, such as yet another conversation in Cafe Opera, but then glide over something more important, such as an entire trip to Africa. But for the most part, I was very much engaged. The writing is conversational, casual, yet captures this part of his life in a dignified way.

*Silly aside:* Perhaps a new drinking game could be made with this book - let's see how many times Karl Ove or his friends say "fantastic"... you'd be under the table in no time ;)

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## Matt says

[continued from *here*]

At **12%**. Karl Ove Knausgård. Here we go again! I started the fifth book right on schedule this time, but had to pay almost the same price for the Kindle version as for the hardcover. With my luck the paperback will come out any day now, and the price for the Kindle will drop too. Aargh! Or better Åååååååå! (to paraphrase from Manny's review)

The letter Å, by the way, is pronounced similar to *aw* in the English "law" and caused some trouble one time: Members of my family live in Norway, in a town called Ås, and when they moved to Canada for a year the passport scanner at the Canadian airport refused to do its work. Apparently Å wasn't in its character set. It took several hours, and a call back to Norway, to convince the officials to let the family in. Åååååååå!

..●..

At **33%**. Karl Ove recites the entire poem *Todesfuge* by Paul Celan to his girlfriend, instead of actually talking with her. A peculiar guy at 19. In my German edition of the book the original poem is printed, of course. I wonder how the Norwegian version sounds to Norwegian ears? I found this other poem "ER" by Immanuel Weissglas (a school friend of Celan) which was written before *Todesfuge*. This poem really sounds like the basis on which Celan has build his fugue.

In other news: The recently published critical edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (which I added to GR), has been combined with the other editions of this infamous book, even though I added a librarian note saying not to do this for obvious reasons. In my opinion a high rating of a critical edition usually means a low rating of the original work, and vice versa, so the average rating and rating histogram will lose all validity (what's left of it anyway). But apparently keeping the two works speperated would have been a violation of the holy rules and regulations of GR and who am I to argue that. At least I won't spend any more of my precious time on fixing glitches in the GR database. He he he.

..●..

At **50%** Knausgård is talking and talking and then he talks some more. This narrative seems like an endless stream and it suits the mood in Bergen nicely where all it ever does is rain, it seems. He studies literature. But talking about is not his main focus. Only sometimes, for brief moments, when the cloud cover ruptures, he mentions his own writing. What seems more important is telling us how often and how hard he gets drunk.

His name is not in any book yet, not as the author anyway. But he discovers it in the novel called *Ut* by Else Karin Bukkøy; at least I'm fairly sure it's this book he mentions in his novel. The description of the cover fits, but I didn't find a blurb or anything. Just a cover. And it's not on Goodreads either (as if!). Quite obscure.

..●..

At **78%**. Tonje enters Knausgård's life. But the individual stories in his "Struggle" volumes are not told in a linear fashion. Far from it. So at this point we already know a great deal about Tonje and their relationship

from books one and two. I wonder if the books would make an entirely different impression if they were told chronologically. Probably so, even though we would end up with the exact same amount of information. But the overall impression would be different, I'm sure. In other words: How we build up our world view also depends on the order in which we receive information. Somewhat crazy, if you think about it.

..●..

At **94%**. Oh no! KOK starts cleaning his father's house again! Enough said.

..●..

At **100%**. Five down, *still* one to go. The book deserves its stars for the last quarter which is really great. But perhaps this is only because the other three quarters were kind of straining. A clever construction ... if it was intentional.

After two thirds of the whole novel series (based on the page count of the original Norwegian hardcovers) I'm still here, poor fool, with all my lore and stand no wiser than before. I don't believe all his stories in the book (and the other four I read so far) to be entirely true, because if they were, and I were a shrink, I could easily diagnose Mr Knausgård with several psychological disorders, and have him admitted to an institution, maybe one of those he mentioned in this book. For instance this scene in which he, his girlfriend Tonje, and his brother Yngve are sitting in a bar and Tonje and Yngve start talking to each other and enjoying themselves while Karl Ove drinks and gets jealous? This scene shows strong indications for *acute alcohol intoxication* (F10), *delusional jealousy* (F22), and *intentional self-harm* (X84). This guy really should stop drinking!

Or maybe it's all made up? This whole thing is a hoax, some fabrication of his mind. In this case, one might speak of *pathological lying* (there is no ICD-10 code for this, it falls under the code F69 "unspecified personality disorder"), if it weren't for the word **NOVEL** on the cover of the books.

Knausgård is first and foremost a novelist, and novelists tend to take the truth (of their own biography in this case) and then bend and twist it to their needs until it fits their purpose. I guess taking *Min Kamp* at face value is not the way to go.

[to be continued **here**]

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