



Pietr the Latvian

Georges Simenon , David Bellos (Translator)

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A gripping new translation of the first novel in the famous Inspector Maigret series

What he sought, what he waited and watched out for was the crack in the wall. In other words, the instant when the human being comes out from behind the opponent . . .

Who is Pietr the Latvian? Is he a gentleman thief? A Russian drinking absinthe in a grimy bar? A married Norwegian sea captain? A twisted corpse in a train bathroom? Or is he all of these men? Inspector Maigret, tracking a mysterious adversary and a trail of bodies, must bide his time before the answer comes into focus.

The first book in the brand new Penguin Simenon series featuring brilliant renderings by some of today's best translators from French, *Pietr the Latvian* introduces the intrepid Inspector to a new audience.

Pietr the Latvian Details

Date : Published January 28th 2014 by Penguin Books (first published May 1931)

ISBN :

Author : Georges Simenon , David Bellos (Translator)

Format : Kindle Edition 176 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Cultural, France

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From Reader Review Pietr the Latvian for online ebook

Rosenkavalier says

La teoria della crepa

Appassionato lettore di Simenon, ma non molto amante dei gialli, non avevo mai approcciato un "Maigret", forse diffidando della monumentale serialità del filone, che conta (credo) oltre settanta titoli.

Ho approfittato della ripubblicazione in ebook della collana per investigare sul caso del celebre Commissario.

"Pietr il lettone" mi ha sorpreso per il clima decisamente più da noir psicologico che da racconto d'investigazione, non privo di qualche gratuita asprezza nella descrizione degli stranieri, in particolare degli abitanti del quartiere ebraico di Parigi (nel 1932, probabilmente, era considerato normale usare certe deliberate rudezze).

La finezza nelle descrizioni è tutta simenoniana, come la fenomenale pagina in cui Maigret viene faticosamente) iscritto nel contesto del lussuoso hotel Majestic come un massiccio corpo estraneo incappottato in mezzo al jetset in smoking.

Resta davvero impresso il personaggio del titolo, portatore di un segreto che è anche il plot-twist del racconto (e quindi non ne parlerò), criminale internazionale tutto d'un pezzo, ma che come tutti nasconde una crepa, una crepa che rende possibile al poliziotto intravedere l'uomo dietro il giocatore.

Susan says

Although I am a great fan of crime novels published between the wars (this was published in 1930) I have never read the Inspector Maigret novels. This is the first in a long running series, reprinted by Penguin, featuring the stolid Detective Chief Inspector. The book opens with Maigret receiving a telegram from the International Criminal Police Commission, warning him of the imminent arrival of the notorious conman Pietr the Latvian. Armed with a description, Maigret heads for the Gare du Nord, where he believes he identifies the criminal leaving the train – only to find that there is a corpse discovered in the train who also matches Pietr's physical description.

Much of this short novel is spent with Maigret doing old fashioned legwork and stakeouts. You sympathise with the fact that he has just got the stove in his office to the right temperature, when he has to set out in the cold and rain yet again, as events unfold. The man who he witnessed leaving the train is settled in the exclusive Hotel Majestic consorting with millionaires; people seem to disappear and reappear, change names and appearance and yet Maigret is patient and gradually unravels the mystery.

This is a darker read than most mysteries set in that Golden Age of 1930's mysteries. We travel from luxurious hotels and theatres to seedy boarding houses and there is true despair in some of the characters we meet. I feel glad that I have finally met the character of Maigret and discovered his fictional world and feel sure that I will read on in the series. This is not stylistically full of flowery prose, but it is compellingly written, with a realistic sense of the underworld and Maigret as a determined and –often sympathetic - investigator.

Federico says

Il mio primo Maigret, quindi prendete la votazione con le pinze. Sicuramente ce ne saranno altri in futuro, dove il mio giudizio sarà più veritiero.

Adrian says

Right, well this has to be my favourite fiction book of the year, easily. I don't think I have ever read any Maigret before, but I have seen numerous different tv versions from Michael Gambon to Rowan Atkinson, and enjoyed the character.

The book itself was atmospheric and a great murder mystery, with tension building all the way through the unfortunately so brief book. I have enjoyed the latest Maigret on TV with Rowan Atkinson and was surprised to find that in the book he is a well build man not slim and wiry , that said having based my Maigret on a slim man I found this in no way detracted from my enjoyment of the novel.

I shall be looking out for further Maigret novels.

Cphe says

A fairly solid police procedural, the start of a series featuring the dogged and somewhat dour Inspector Maigret. A relatively slow and convoluted mystery.

The high light was the time period, setting and atmosphere of the novel. There were a couple of typos in this particular edition although nothing major.

F.R. says

There's a distinct lack of glamour to this first Maigret mystery. In itself that's interesting as this is a story centred on an international con-man and an American investor in one of the finest hotels in Paris. Surely that gives a triumphant yell of glamour. In the hands of a Leslie Charteris or an Agatha Christie, the glamour would have been buffed shiny and played up above all else. But in this novel everything is filtered through the doughty, solid presence of Inspector Maigret – a man who has no time for glamour. This is a policeman who has seen a lot of (too many) bad guys, who knows he is paid poorly and who is well aware that the successful conclusion to any criminal case means a mass of paperwork for him. In short he's a man with no time for glamour and as such the book takes all these shiny elements and boils them down to a story of crooks and cops and very little in-between. However that filter also manages to diffuse other elements normally crucial to a crime mystery: for example, excitement. In 'Pietr the Latvian' a chase scene is told solely from the point of view of what Maigret has to do to achieve his objectives and how he goes about it, rather than the perils and danger involved in achieving those objectives. It does rather kill the tension. But then this is the doughty and solid Inspector Maigret, and Maigret doesn't get excited. He has a job to do after all.

So seemingly there are flaws here (and that's without the fact that Simenon at this point doesn't really have the knack of creating memorable characters; beyond Maigret, and perhaps the title character, the rest are just cyphers) and yet there's something quite compulsive about Pietr the Latvian. An engrossing police procedural, which is straight and no fuss, and sets out to do things on its own terms and – you know what – largely succeeds.

Gaetano says

Primo episodio (almeno ufficialmente) della fortunata e famosa serie di Simenon avente come protagonista il commissario Maigret.

Maigret era enorme e di ossatura robusta.... Aveva in particolare un modo tutto suo di piazzarsi in un posto che era talora risultato sgradevole persino a molti colleghi.

Al di là del giallo, traspare già l'indole del commissario, l'intuito istintivo, la conoscenza dell'animo umano, la tenacia nei pedinamenti ed il rapporto personale con i sospetti ed i loro famigliari. Rapporto personale che, questa volta, mi è parso un po' troppo "complice" nel finale (e non aggiungo altro).

L'ho letto con piacere, come spesso accade con Simenon, nonostante l'età (del romanzo).

Una curiosità per gli appassionati: l'ispettore che viene ucciso nel libro sono certo di averlo ritrovato, vivo e vegeto, più di una volta in altri racconti. Svista dell'autore o che altro?

La copertina dell'edizione Adelphi è una chicca: una foto del fotografo Brassai, nel club gay "Le Monocle" a Parigi.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

As can be seen in the GR title, this is the first in a series. I think this series can be read in any order, but I hoped to get a full introduction to Inspector Maigret, and I was not disappointed. There is a lot of plot, as one might expect. The mystery was different. There was a bit more to the other non-reappearing characters than I might have expected, although to suggest they are fully fleshed would be an exaggeration. The prose is good - it isn't so complex as to get in the way of the story, nor is it so over simplified as to be annoying.

The characterization of Maigret does not have him quite fully fleshed, but nearly so. He is completely unlike Hercule Poirot, and yet there were moments when I thought of that character. Poirot and Maigret appeared on the literary scene at about the same time. They are both diligent - and somewhat smarter than others. Maigret is a huge man, Poirot more diminutive. Maigret is a Deputy Chief Inspector of the Flying Squad. Not that I know what the Flying Squad is, or what equivalent might be in the US, but he does work in an official capacity, not as a private detective as does Poirot.

I do like French literature and as much as I like Poirot, I think I like Maigret slightly better. Simenon writes other than Maigret mysteries, and he was very prolific. Even if I were 40 years younger, I might not find myself getting to his entire output, but I will most happily read more of him. The best in this genre gets 4-stars from me, and this one just barely crosses that line.

Jim says

This is a re-read for me. The same reason I re-read it made me change my rating from four stars to five. There is something amazing to me about this first mystery by Georges Simenon to be published to be not only complicated by masterful. Maigret and the Enigmatic Lett is called by several names: In France, it was published as **Pierre-le-Leton**. In English it goes by the names **Suite at the Majestic**, **The Strange Case of Peter the Lett**, **The Case of Peter the Lett**, and the title shown above.

I keep coming back to Simenon's mysteries, both his Maigret novels and his non-Maigrets. Both are uniformly excellent, but I find myself being drawn to Maigret because he is, in the end, more enigmatic than the master criminals he goes up against:

"Good Lord! Is this the way you search for someone?" she snapped, turning to Maigret. "I'm told you're from the police. My husband may have been killed.... What are you waiting for?"

The heavy gaze that he turned on her was a hundred percent Maigret. Utterly calm. Utterly indifferent. As though he had just heard a fly buzzing. As though he were looking at some completely commonplace object.

Superintendent Maigret of Flying Squad #1 is a large man who sucks the air out of whatever room he enters. He is also cerebral to the nth degree. We don't always see what the man is thinking, and the fun is in waiting for the case to come clear.

And this case is a doozie. It starts with an Interpol memo warning of the approach by train of Peter the Lett. Maigret meets the train, sees Peter get off, and then is surprised to find there has been a murder on the train of a man who resembles Peter the Lett. We follow the case to the soggy port of Fécamp, where a drunken Russian named Swann is married to a young mother. This Russian bears a slight resemblance to Peter the ... you guessed it ... Lett.

Maigret has a difficult time deciding when to arrest Peter because the evidence against him is too flimsy. In the end, he haunts him, putting himself in front of him, though his ribs are aching from a patched-up bullet wound. The last few chapters, as Maigret stalks and eventually nails his prey are fascinating.

Susan Johnson says

3.5 stars

Dagio_maya says

La prima indagine del corpulento ed atipico commissario Maigret che darà il via ad una nuova modalità di

concepire il romanzo giallo.

"In ogni malfattore, in ogni delinquente c'è un uomo. Ma c'è anche e soprattutto un giocatore, un avversario: ed è questo che la polizia tende a vedere in lui, è questo che, in generale, affronta. È stato commesso un delitto o un comune reato? La lotta viene ingaggiata su dati più o meno oggettivi, come ogni problema a una o più incognite che la ragione si sforza di risolvere. "

[Mi piacciono i gialli senza ispettori/commissari ecc...
Di Simenon prediligo di gran lunga *le romans durs*]

Tfitoby says

It's the first one. Thank goodness for these Penguin reissues, I was starting to think I'd never find a copy. These early Maigret's are nothing like what the series would become, potentially Simenon had high hopes for literary success for the handful of Maigret novels he'd written before launching them as a complete work in a hail of publicity; thus explaining the more existential nature of them compared to the casual musings over a delicate meal and stiff drink that would characterise the later works.

Of the early books *Pietr* is the most impressive as a stand alone roman dur but it's not really what I've come to look for in a Maigret, unfortunately. Essentially Maigret follows a man around Paris for 160 pages after a murder on a train, the whole time learning to identify and sympathise with the criminal. That's pretty typical stuff for the series but the eventual plot is so convoluted and revealed in such strange and unlikely ways that it all feels a bit rushed and flat.

I wouldn't be surprised at all to find out that Christopher Priest had read this novel, such are the similarities with his very famous work.

Nancy Oakes says

When I *finally* was able to finish this book, I really wanted to go right away to the next one in the series, but it will keep for a few days.

Not only did I have fun playing armchair detective with this one because it is indeed a puzzler, but just as the book was starting to wind down and the solution to the case at hand about to be revealed, I surprised myself when I realized that what comes out of the last few pages is actually the very stuff of Simenon's excellent *romans durs*, in which, as John Banville noted in the New York Review of Books in 2015,

"... a man who has spent his life in servitude to family, work, society, suddenly lays down his burden -- 'Lord, how tired he was now!' -- and determines to live for the moment, and for himself, in full acceptance of the existential peril his decision will expose him to."

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Although I won't reveal the "existential peril" at play here, I will say that while many readers may see *Pietr*

the Latvian, or for that matter any of the Maigret mysteries as yet just another police procedural, it goes well beyond that into examining just what it is underneath someone's exterior self that leads him or her to do what they do. In short -- I get the feeling that as I travel through the Maigret mysteries, I'll find myself in the mind of a policeman who genuinely understands human nature, and that's a place I want to be.

While anyone considering reading this book should be aware of the times in which this book was written because there is some definite racial/ethnic stereotyping being done here, I can definitely recommend the novel to crime readers of all sorts.

Simona says

Vi dirò, ero scettica quando l'ho preso in mano - principalmente perché non sono abituata a leggere i gialli, non li leggevo da tanto tempo. A me piacciono i romanzi in cui si impara qualcosa - tant'è che spesso non faccio caso alla trama, guardo solo il contenuto, il messaggio, il cuore pulsante della storia. Qui però - qui però c'era da scoprire chi sia, Pietr il Lettone. Maigret, il commissario, lo insegue incurante dei delitti che si susseguono, incurante del sangue perso nel corso delle pagine (che poi, non sono convinta si possa arrivare in fondo al libro in quelle condizioni senza prendersi una bella setticemia), incurante della fatica dell'impresa. E anche se la scrittura di Simenon è acerba, c'è qualcosa in questo libro che affascina, che ammalia, che ci spinge a volerne sapere di più.

Mohammad Ali says

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