

A young woman on fire in Rio de Janeiro on the last day of her life—a remarkable novel from a writer named by *Time* one of the top 50 writers from around the world to watch out for in the 21st century.

Özgin, having deserted her past and secluded herself from the outer world, is poor, hungry, and on the verge of a mental breakdown. She has a single weapon left in the all-out war she has declared against Rio de Janeiro: to write the city, which has trapped her and robbed her of everything.

As we read the bits and pieces of Özgin's unfinished novel, *The City in Crimson Cloak*, with its autobiographical protagonist named Ö, we begin to put together the fragments of Özgin's story. Meanwhile, the narrator tells us of a single day of Özgin's life which is, in fact, her last.

As Özgin follows in the footsteps of Ö, shadowing her fictional creation through the shantytowns, Candomblé rituals, and the violence and sexuality of the streets to her death, we find ourselves, too, drawn together with the city, the writer, the heroine, as they begin a whirling dance of death....

"In language both limpid and lyrical, Asli Erdogan perfectly delineates the distance between [the protagonist] and the foreign city... It's the Brazilian street which rules this novel with the romantic savagery of the *favela* and the banal, its love of life, its roughness, its disgust..." —*Le Monde*, France

"An unforgettable tale of mass-scale delirium, chaos, and death."
—*Vari Vizyrl*, Turkey

"[B]eyond a doubt the best I have reviewed this autumn. Overwhelming... In the same way that Dublin and Joyce belong together, or Prague and Kafka, for me from now on Rio will be inextricably bound together with the name Asli Erdogan. With this volume she writes herself into the dominant tradition of the last century's novels: the novel of the city."
—*Aftenposten*, Norway

Published by Soft Skull Press
www.softskull.com

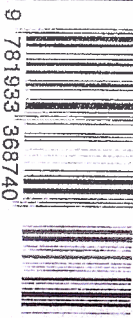
\$14.95

ISBN 13: 978-1933368-74-0

ISBN 13: 978-1933368-74-0



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THE CITY IN CRIMSON CLOAK

ASLI ERDOGAN



THE CITY IN

CRIMSON CLOAK

Asli Erdogan

translated by Amy Spangler

"Asli Erdogan is an exceptionally sensitive and
perceptive writer who gives us perfect literary texts."

Dallas Times



THE CITY IN CRIMSON CLOAK

"The City in Crimson Cloak", Aslı Erdoğan's major work and arguably her masterpiece, has established her as a unique writer and a modern classic both in her country and abroad. Generally referred to as a 'poem-novel', 'poetry of the twilight zone', 'verses of poetry saturated with bitter juice of life and existential suffering', the novel in fact follows the tradition of 19th century city novel; however, it uses the modern techniques of intertwined novels. Since its publication in Turkey in 1998, the book has made more than a dozen editions and been translated into several languages. In 2003, it was accepted into MARG ("Marg" means "spinal column" as well as "margin" in Norwegian) series of Gyldendal along with writers as Helene Cixous, W. G. Sebald, Nathan Englander etc. and received great reviews, comparing the author to Joyce and Kafka. The same year, it was also published by Actes Sud in France, and based on that single book, Aslı Erdoğan was chosen amongst the "50 Writers of Future", by the French magazine Lire. However, the biggest success of the book was in Germany. Wonderfully translated into German by A. Gillitz Acar and A. Hoch and published by Unionsverlag in 2008 in "Turkish Library" (a selection of classical and contemporary Turkish literature), the book received enormous attention from the press and the readers, selling over eleven thousand copies, as well as literary circles. Over forty reviews have appeared in newspapers and literary magazines such as Die Welt, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Der Tagesspiegel, Freitag, Die Presse, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Die Berliner Literaturkritik written by prominent writers as Ingo Arend, Ruth Klüger, Barbara Frischmuth etc. The novel was chosen as the "best translation into German from Turkish" following year. In the last decade, "The City in Crimson Cloak" has been published in USA by Soft Skull (which received the "Best Independent Publisher Prize" the same year), in Sweden (published by Ramus and also made the paperback edition), in Arabic (by Cadmus), in Bosnian (BUYBOOK), in Macedonian, Bulgarian, Albanian and Bulgarian. Currently the book is being translated into Danish, Italian, Persian and Kurdish.

"The originality of this book lies in the constant clash of inner and outer world, which blurs our concept of reality. What the author in fact never lost is her capability to depict a dangerous fall, a complete ruin, which so far in literature only man could live till end. A truly feminine sensibility, with no mixing up of gender roles voices itself. Not only Orpheus, but also Persephone, the queen and the prisoner of the underworld talks to us through these pages." (Ruth Klüger, Die Welt)

"In the same way that Dublin and Joyce belong together, or Praha and Kafka, for me from now on Rio will be inextricably bound together with the name Aslı Erdoğan. With this volume, she writes herself into a dominating tradition linked to last century's novels: The novel of the city." (Aftenposten, Norway)

"There are these rare literary works who grab you and conquer your mind because they tell you about an existence totally deprived of security nets, on the border to death. Aslı Erdoğan has managed to create a novel about a young woman lost in her desperate will to experience her limits and at the same time about a writer who lives her novel. In this Brazilian mirror game, Aslı Erdoğan occurs not only a true master but a magic narrator but as a unique female voice in a male dominated genre." (Eugene Schougin, writer)

"The author's name is whispered in the same breath with Malcolm Lowry and Antonin Artaud." (Libre Belgique)

“Aslı Erdoğan is an exceptionally perceptive and sensitive writer who always produces perfect literary texts.” (Orhan Pamuk)

Brief description

“The City in Crimson Cloak” is the title of two novels, the novel published and the name of the lost, incomplete novel its protagonist is trying to write. We read both.

In fact, the main protagonist of both novels is a city: Rio de Janeiro. The city in crimson cloak, woven fiber by fiber of human blood and suffering, concealing its Janus faces behind various masks. Chaos, jungle, violence and the anarchy of the body are its main axis. A city where heaven coexists with hell, hunger with pleasure, death with life.

The name of the heroine who is trying to write her own, devastating experience as a foreign, lonely woman in this notorious city, an experience of war, a fatal chess match or a dangerous, deceiving game of mirrors, is Özgür. (“Özgür” means “free” in Turkish and is a name that can be used by both sexes, significant facts that open up the underlying themes of the book as freedom vs destiny, catharsis vs captivity.) Özgür, alienated from her past and at the edge of a mental breakdown, knows that she is now a captive of Rio and has a single defense against the violence of the city: Writing. As we read parts and pieces of Özgür’s unfinished novel, with a protagonist of its own, for the time being named only as her initial ‘Ö’, we begin to put Özgür’s story together, a story of destruction, fall and ruin, combined with a great will to defeat violence and make peace with life. Meanwhile, the narrator tells us of a single day, in fact the very last day of Özgür’s life. The two levels of reality sometimes compliment, sometimes contradict each other as we read the story of a novel being written.

The journey through the streets of Rio is a journey into a labyrinth set up on more than two dimensions, both in space and time, where the past, the future and the present are woven together. A labyrinth full of dead ends, traps, echoes, uncanny prophecies... As Özgür traces the paths of her written self, ‘Ö.’, through the shanty towns, Candomble rituals, gunfights and robberies, the violence and eroticism of back streets, Rio is born as a real city and as a metaphor for Death, slowly being transformed into the manifestation of Özgür’s inner world and her own violence. Like facing mirrors, the two reflect one another, yet at the same time they are dangerous opponents. As Özgür step by step approaches her death, which she had narrated as a finale to her unfinished novel, we encounter street people, masks and African rituals, carnivals and favelas, armed robbers and mad men, hunger, dancing, fireworks, the desire in the kingdom of flesh, the betrayal, the night and the jungle. While we delve deeper into the two concentric novels, the borderline between the two Rio’s, the real and the fictional, starts to blur, as the borderline between Özgür and her narrated self, the metaphors of

Life and Death seem to intermingle in an intangible way.. And at the finale, infinite moment of death, the two novels, the two layers of reality overlap, Rio and Özgür, the two opponents in this fatal game of mirrors, become unified. Like life and Death. The transformation of the narrator to her narration, the past into future, the inner world into outer reality is completed. Rio once again emerges as a glorious metaphor for life, while Özgür is essentially another Orpheus that has opened the doors of Underground with her writing, only to follow her own Eurydike back into the Land of the Dead.

The novel is essentially seven chapters, representing seven gates to death. The texts written by Özgür are italicized. Her language is dense, poetic, musical, at times a cross fire of metaphors and images. The more distanced, story-telling style of the narrator gradually comes to resemble that of Özgür, becoming more and more vivid, violent, ruthless and even 'corporal'. In fact, in the finale, at the moment of death, the two novels repeat the same long sentence, a glorifying description of the night starting in Rio, a farewell and an ode to Life.

Synopsis

The first chapter, "The Fireworks Day", opens with a gunfight on a scorching Sunday in Rio. Özgür, in the throes of a nervous breakdown, is in her basement flat, located next to the slopes where a local war between favelas is taking place, trying to write the story of her own destruction, smoking, staring at bare walls. Surrounded by the jungle, the interior festering with tropical humidity, the house is like an extension of her body. The murderous heat, newspapers filled with violence, a phone call from her mother, the ironic significance of fireworks, references to the film "Black Orpheus"... The stories of both Rio and Özgür unfold.

In the second chapter, "The Madman of Santa Teresa", Özgür is now on the outside, wandering through the streets of Santa Teresa, a poor, lively district semi-evacuated because of the war. Watching the city from her "Istanbul point", she takes up her pen. Fragments of memory, migration, loneliness, the flight to the realm of fiction... The clash between fiction and reality begins when she almost fights two gangsters, a scene she had already described in her novel. We meet the two madmen of Santa Teresa, the good-natured outlaw Eduardo and the genius madman, Oliveira, a famous artist of the past. Özgür directs her essential questions on freedom and death and art to Oliveira, receiving total silence as a response. "Eli, Eli! Lama sabekhtani?" (Father, father! Why have you forsaken me?) is one of the key sentences of this chapter and the novel.

"Far Away", is an internal monologue. Exile, entrapment, separation, a quest for meaning in a city of violence... Writing seems to be the only defense against a harsh reality and the only to give meaning back to the world and put together a fragmented identity.

In "Downhill", the language becomes more predominant, as we read through flashbacks, Özgür's descriptions of the carnival and the favela, characterized as the Land of the Dead. In this chapter, also is dropped the first hint that Ö has been killed at the end of the novel. A dialogue with a small girl, who appears and disappears suddenly, like a portent of disaster, ends the chapter.

The fifth chapter, "The New World", takes place in a foul smelling diner that feels like a submarine, between alcoholics and prostitutes. The most crucial passage we read from Özgür's notebook: The

story of a starving man eating his own vomit... Özgür tears of that page to replace it with a single sentence: "I am writing to make myself look bigger than I actually am, because I am... so, so small."

"The Zero Point", opens with another quotation from the Bible: "Let the Dead Bury the Dead". Özgür is finally ready to write the zero point of her fall, the very beginning of her collapse. This is her first encounter with a murdered woman, on Palm Sunday. Her first encounter with the corpse she carries within herself... Now she has finally managed to finish her novel, stepped out of her own story.

A menacing dialogue with another mad man, the un-lived love affair between Özgür and Eli, a black, orphaned, homosexual dancer, a lyrical passage that lets the reader face the infinity of the ocean, the first opening of the novel that has been deliberately claustrophobic, followed by a torture scene at the police station... The sixth chapter fully develops Özgür's story.

"And the Fireworks Explode": The night starts with Özgür in full consciousness of her exile and loneliness. She has written a novel, scored her "insignificant, insolent, puny victory against death", put together beautiful, artful lies "that lick her wounds". Only to realize that she has never been able to love life for its own sake. Now she is even lonelier than before, all alone in her created universe.

As she tries to avoid Eli, she walks to a dangerous back street, where Ö. had walked before, to find herself in a robbery attempt. A young girl with a broken bottle asks for her bag, which contains her newly finished novel, in fact only a green notebook. Özgür fights back, and by the time she realizes the girl has an armed accomplice, a gun is put to her head. The final passage of dying, we read from Özgür's novel when it looks as if the whole of life has been compressed into a single dimensionless point to expand towards eternity, a glorifying description of the city that has killed her: Rio de Janeiro. "She died precisely the way she had wanted to die," is the last sentence of the book.

adventurous travel writing.

The L Magazine Review:

The Book Page

The City In Crimson Cloak

By Miles Newbold Clark



Asli Erdogan [Trans. Amy Spangler

Soft Skull Pres

Available Oct. 28

Contemporary politics may have transformed popular conceptions of the Arabian tale into a fundamentalist nightmare: we're less likely to find virgin-filled harems awaiting us on the other side of a beaded awning than a suicide bomber on the other side of life. Though "luscious" prose and noir epistemology might appear unlikely bedfellows, Erdogan, a Turkish physicist-turned-writer, has attempted to compose such a novel. In order to do it she has skipped across an ocean to Rio de Janeiro. Her protagonist, Özgür (herself an older university scholar-turned-novelist), suffers through poverty, stifling heat, cultural alienation and the humanistic horrors of a city consumed by Carnival's dark wheel. Elephantiasis-stricken vagrants lie in pools of urine, street urchins are "disposed of" for a few hundred dollars, and the difference between police and gangsters is merely that the gangsters conceal their weapons.

Innate failings of compassion — in which we, as Erdogan writes, "naturally have more pity for a sick dog than a sick man" — don't help lighten the mood here. Erdogan's Rio is not a city for the timid. And Özgür, neither outright prude nor shameless Parnassian, is clearly at sea as to how to live and work in such environs. The fact that she's writing a novel abets her plunge into further social and emotional isolation. As the boundaries between reality and Özgür's story-within-a-story blur, her descent toward death is not tragic or terrifying, but inevitable.

While this novel is oftentimes needlessly preoccupied with recycling images of poverty and brutality, the intrigue of *The City in Crimson Cloak* lies less in what it exploits than what it denies; namely, any intimate familiarity with its setting. Twice removed from her environment — first by foreignness, second by the isolation brought on by the act of writing — Özgür is only able to unpack the surface characteristics of Rio. For author Erdogan, this approach is a risky one, but it's also honest, as anyone who's taught English in unfamiliar environs will attest. And therein lies the greatest surprise the novel has to offer: the reader is able to empathize with Özgür despite an emotional and narrative distance from her. If this is a form of highbrow noir from another shore, it looks very, very good.

the complete review - fiction

The City in Crimson Cloak

Betreff: press

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Publisher's Weekly review:

The City in Crimson Cloak

Asli Erdogan, trans. from the Turkish by Amy Spangler. Soft Skull, \$14.95 paper (176p) ISBN 9781933368740

Turkish author Erdogan vividly captures the life and sin of underclass Rio de Janeiro in this darkly atmospheric novel, published in Turkey in 1998. A native of Istanbul, Özgür has spent the past two years barely surviving in Rio, a city overflowing with debauchery and violence. Lonely, penurious and hungry, Özgür's only solace is writing, and she has committed herself to staying in Rio until she does the city justice in her own book, *The City in Crimson Cloak*, which here becomes a novel within a novel. On the city's Fireworks Day, she makes her way through the favelas, or slums, gathering impressions of the chaos and carnality while recalling pieces of her autobiographical novel and journal entries. Özgür's battle to hold on to her own reality makes for a stark, nightmarish journey.

Barnes & Noble review:

From Barnes & Noble

The City in Crimson Cloak is at once the title of an unfinished autobiographical novel following a protagonist named O and the title of Asli Erdogan's novel about the (fictional) author, a Turkish woman named Ozgur. Ozgur, on the cusp of 30, has spent two years in Rio de Janeiro, trying to write the city around her into a shape that might be understood by her imagined reader: "a sophisticated, educated someone who had never experienced hunger, and who would be sitting down in a comfortable chair and doing the least risky occupation in the world -- reading..." As it happens, the novel begins on what will be the day of Ozgur's death, though she, of course, does not know that. Two years on, Ozgur, in her ragged jeans and worn-down shoes, looks like a woman without a dime to her name, subsisting on warm tea and cheap cigarettes, yet still appears to her neighbors as a gringa, voluntarily shrugging off privilege that they were never offered. In alternating sections, we are introduced to a former painter who once lived in London and is now considered the village madman, quoting passages of Keats and *Macbeth*; Ozgur's onetime friend, Eli a gay actor; and scenes describing harrowing conditions of violence and poverty. The novel might have been richer had Erdogan taken advantage of the structure to interrogate Ozgur's motives and perceptions more fully than Ozgur herself can. But it does succeed as a sort of reverse postcard -- the hazards of the tropics seen in the eyes of a woman from winter climes. --Amy Benfer

Library Journal review:

Forest Turner - Library Journal

Physicist-turned-novelist Erdogan debuts in English with a meandering yet heartfelt work set among the favelas ("shantytowns") of Rio de Janeiro. Drawing from her experiences during a two-year stay in Rio in the mid-1990s, Erdogan reinvents herself as the protagonist, Özgür, a young Turkish woman teaching English and writing a half-fictional novel called *The City in Crimson Cloak*, featuring a main character named Ö. The multilayered disguises employed by the author effectively mirror the nature of Rio, "the city that never removes its mask, not even after carnival." As Özgür wanders aimlessly through the chaotic streets one fateful Sunday, musing on the downward arc of her life and scratching out the final passages of her novel, her melancholy becomes as oppressive as the humidity. Erdogan supplies earthy, seductive description that accentuates the dark side of the tropics, painting Rio as a hellish labyrinth that lures its residents, native and foreigner alike, to their doom. There is a strong sense of social justice present in the finely observed street scenes, but ultimately this is less about the city and more about one woman's failed quest. Recommended for large fiction collections, this work may also appeal to fans of

The complete review's Review:

The *City in Crimson Cloak* is a story of being down and out in Rio de Janeiro. The young Turkish protagonist, Özgür, always has the option of leaving the abyss and returning to her homeland, but Rio has a good hold on her. It's summer vacation time at the language school where she teaches, and she barely earns any money giving private lessons, so she's reduced to near-destitution -- but in this city of extremes, with its relentless heat, her hunger, thirst, and general discomfort are almost a given anyway.

Özgür is writing a book -- yes, *The City in Crimson Cloak*. It's one way of trying to keep her sanity, of making sense of it all:

Writing meant first and foremost putting things into order, and Rio, if it were to be defined in just one word, was CHAOS.

She hopes: "to capture Rio like a butterfly in her hand, and to gently imprison it in her words, without killing it", but the delicate imagery stands in stark contrast to the brutal urban agglomeration that is that city. There's violence everywhere, and all the manifestations of the worst poverty: disease, hunger, filth. The bodies of both the living and the dead are literally lying in the streets, and when there are fireworks it's not as some part of a carefree celebration but rather a signal that another drug shipment has arrived.

The City in Crimson Cloak isn't a wallow in self-pity, or a love (or hate) letter to Rio. Özgür isn't exactly reveling in the experience, but the city has her by the scruff of the neck, and it continues to exert a powerful fascination. The heat makes it impossible to go much beyond a sort of torpor, yet there's an over-abundance of life and experience all around, every action fraught with potential -- including that of the most extreme violence.

Özgür doesn't dwell on it much, but Rio is a sort of anti-Turkey, and not just because at this time of year it's probably near freezing there, even as the summer heat in Brazil hovers constantly around forty degrees Celsius. She still has her Turkish lifeline -- and wishes her mother had more to say when she talks to her on the phone -- but is also freed from many constraints: she doesn't have to carry an ID, no one notices that she doesn't wear a bra. Still, given how she's living it doesn't sound like the trade-off speaks much in the favour of staying. But she does.

The City in Crimson Cloak describes Özgür's day, while sections from her writing are also interspersed in the text. What she writes about in her 'The City in Crimson Cloak' resembles what she lives, making for two close variations on the theme. Erdoğan captures the city well: it's not a pretty picture, but it's a vibrant one. The stifling heat, the violence, the sheer arbitrariness of so much comes across very well -- this sense of: "Everything decayed so quickly in the tropics, and revived just as swiftly".

There's no one Özgür is really close to, no one she can have a real conversation with. The few conversations she does have, such as with her mother on the telephone, are only a very limited interaction. She's frequently wanting to avoid people (often for good reason), and the sense of isolation, of being at sea in a flood of humanity, is prevalent throughout the book. Conditions in Rio -- its apparent lawlessness, as well as a certain carefreeness (that spills into indifference) -- accentuate the feeling.

The City in Crimson Cloak is an evocative novel, a city-portrait that is particularly strong on the dark underbelly of Rio. The book-within-a-book idea works well enough most of the time, a different reflection of her state of mind and situation, and the descriptions are striking enough that the attempts at more poetic passages usually work well enough. The ending is perhaps an appropriate conclusion, though it feels a bit like a very literary 'way out'.

An interesting novel of a city, with some fine writing.

LIÈVRE Une jeune écrivaine turque se cherche et se perd dans la ville de la samba

Plonger dans Rio, jusqu'à en mourir

La ville dont la cape
est rouge
à Erdogan
réduit du turc par Esin
Ayral Dauvergne,
Paris Sud,
17 pp., env. 18 €

On peut se perdre dans un amour passionnel et aimer à en mourir. Mais peut-on aimer à ce point une ville? La jeune écrivaine turque Ash Erdogan le croit et propose une plongée dans Rio de Janeiro, un trip amoureux et douloureux, comme une longue nuit d'amour impossible.

Ash Erdogan est née en 1967 à Istanbul et a passé deux années à Rio. Son livre est une autobiographie imaginative de ces années-là. Ozgür, son double, étudiante istanbuloise, débarque à Rio pour ne plus jamais s'en échapper. On ne connaîtra rien de ses années turques, de ses tropismes moyen-orientaux, si ce n'est une mère qui l'appelle pour demander pourquoi elle reste encore à Rio où plus rien, apparemment, ne la retient. On pourrait ajouter qu'elle s'y perd, elle se drogue à la co-

caïne, fait l'amour à tous ceux qui passent, s'éclate toutes les nuits dans les bars. Mais Ozgür est aussi écrivaine. Elle veut réaliser son livre sur Rio et elle doit se perdre pour que le livre existe, s'affirmer, s'offrir à la ville, se déchirer sur ses récits pour que son roman surgisse de son propre sang. Ce roman d'Ash Erdogan est aussi une réflexion sur l'émergence d'un livre et la nécessité d'écrire: "Même si j'ai gaspillé deux longues années de ma vie, au moins j'aurais écrit un livre. Peut-être qu'il ne servira à personne, ne sauvera personne. Rien que des faits que j'ai choisis pour remplacer la réalité, des mensonges pour soigner mes blessures. Deux trois frêtillements lumineux dans un océan noir. Des frissons se couants, magiques. Maintenant, je suis encore plus solitaire qu'auparavant."

Cette plongée douloureuse dans

l'écriture est celle de Malcolm Lowry ou d'Antonin Artaud.

LE ROMAN D'UNE VILLE

Mais le livre d'Ash Erdogan est surtout le roman poétique et sanglant d'une ville, Rio, et de ses habitants, les Cariocas. L'auteur sait décrire les nuits trop chaudes, le sexe omniprésent, les vendeurs de cocaïne, les bars louches de Lapa, le tram de Santa Theresa et ses détresseuses de touristes. Elle raconte Oliveira, le peintre revenu d'Europe, fou et muet, ou Deborah, la mulâtresse qui ensorcelle tous les hommes. Chaque semaine, un feu d'artifice illumine les favelas, mais c'est pour annoncer l'arrivée de la drogue. Et à Rio, comme "je meurs", Ozgür écrit à sa mère: "Cette ville me tue tous les jours, à chaque instant, à chaque occasion, elle me tue par tous

les moyens. Lentement, profondément. Elle me vole petit à petit tout ce que je possède. Je suis cernée. Je suis obligée d'écrire Rio."

"Apprends à t'aimer", lui dit-on, "parce que personne ne va le faire pour toi. Cette ville est meurtrière pour une femme étrangère". Et encore: "L'être humain ne se lasse jamais d'épuiser ce dont il n'a vraiment pas besoin."

Cette longue descente aux enfers où elle croise les prostituées, les mourants abandonnés, les voleurs à la tire, où elle offre son corps désespérément, se terminera par un coup de couteau dans n'aurait pas les dollars réclamés par une petite frappe. Sa mort était annoncée, elle s'est offerte à la ville pour la tacher de rouge, une sorte de don mystique, une crucifixion sous des airs de samba.

Tuy Duprat



À TURQUIE AU BRÉSIL

Dans la jungle des villes

LA VILLE DONT LA CAPE EST ROUGE, d'Aslı Erdogan, traduit du turc par Esma Soyral-Danvergne, Actes Sud, coll. « Lettres turques », Actes, 2003, 186 pages, 18 euros.

CND roman d'une jeune romancière turque, ce livre au titre insolite se déroule à Brésil : il évoque la découverte de Rio par Özgür, une *gringa* qui va faire le spectacle de l'enfer sur terre. Elle projette d'écrire un roman, mais le texte va lui ravir l'existence au point de l'avaler comme un anacarda. La dérive existentielle de la jeune venue de l'ancien monde va d'abord trouver à s'ancre dans l'étranger et la confrontation de deux univers radicalement différents : proche parente de *Y Finim*, le consul de Malcom Lowy dans *Aux dunes du volcan* (1947), Özgür devient la violence mais pour mieux s'approprier le monde qui l'entourne... ligé plusieurs tentatives de bâtir un amour qui rende le monde possible, le prix reste total. Il faut mettre sa vie en jeu, car elle est désormais plongée dans une et le mot n'a rien d'excessif... La ville du tiers-monde ne laisse aucun choix : monstre et objet du désir tout à la fois : « Rio, la ville qui obligeait ses prêtres à jeter ses yeux fermés ». Özgür oseille entre la peur et l'envie de mourir, la volonté d'être car cette métropole terrible, aspirant à se faire multirasse, aspirant à être dépensée : son âme : « Elle avait craint la mort à chaque coin ; une mort engendrée, non pas par l'air infecté dans chaque mot qu'elle avait écrit. Pourtant, ce qu'elle pourchassait les labyrinthiques, c'était autre chose. Ce qu'elle cherchait dans la faulx multicolore les regards vides des sans-abri, au-delà des marges d'assurances... La passion de du corps pour la vie, plus vieille et plus puissante que tous les mots... »

Langue à la fois limpide et lyrique d'Aslı Erdogan exprime parfaitement la e de moins en moins grande qui sépare Özgür de la cité étrangère. Si, dans ce le foisonnant, plusieurs observations viennent rappeler la similitude avec le ture, c'est néanmoins la rue brésilienne qui résonne avec le romantisme sauvage d'i du *bandido*, son amour de la vie, sa rudesse, le dégoût tout comme la fascina-il insipide.

En 1967, l'auteure incarne la jeune génération des promoteurs tures : moins aux problèmes nationaux, liberté du roman à thème, ils exploient le monde et ent imperceptiblement des parallèles entre les îles...

IMMOLA MINICHIE

PROCHE-ORIENT

MÉMOIRES D'UN VILLAGE PALESTINIEN DISPARU. - Mohammed al-Assad, commenté par Joseph Alqazy et traduit de l'arabe par Sara Descamps-Messil.

* Albin Michel, Paris, 2002, 108 pages, 14,90 euros.

« Vous souffrez toujours votre mémoire et nous pressentons, lorsque l'un de vous parle, qu'il n'est pas tout son histoire. » Benis en 1991. Les *Euphrates de la nuit* contiennent une anecdote qui se cherche, se retrouve ; la poésie, faisant remonter les images et les mots, lui offre les possibilités que l'Histoire a tenus de rommer... Mohammedi al-Assad est né dans le village d'Ismail-Zahid, en Palestine, alors sous mandat britannique. Il a quatre ans en 1948 et vit, enfant, la *Makba*, l'expulsion-déportation des Palestiniens de leurs terres. Adulte, il revient sur la biographie de son village aujourd'hui dénué, faisant s'élever de son vilage une métropole des brèves d'immigrants et permettant de devenir le poids de ce qui bouleverse encore des individus.

Journaliste au quotidien *Haaretz*, Joseph Alqazy retrace, dans une longue postface, la politique d'Israël vis-à-vis des Palestiniens devenus « citoyens » d'Israël, depuis la *Makba*. Dominant les chiffres de l'emploi, il jette à l'origine un regard désabusé sur la non-reconnaissance, qui passe aussi par la localités palestiniennes, en particulier en Galilée et dans le Néguev.

I. A.

ISRAËL, J'AIMAIS UN RÊVE. - Philippa Hadad * Editions du Faïolier, Paris, 2003, 160 pages, 12 euros.

Orthodoxe, le rabbin Philippe Hadad l'est au sens religieux du terme, mais pas au sens politique. En témoignage cet essai, écrit au retour d'un pèlerinage interreligieux en Israël Palestine, organisé en mai 2001 par l'hebdomadaire *Taninim* (hébreu) *L'année*. Leur n'a certes lieu d'un « roman » de

EUROPE

L'AMONALE BERLUSCONI. - Adrien Gandiant * Flammarion, Paris, 2003, 300 pages, 19 euros.

La puissance de feu médiatique dont dispose M. Silvio Berlusconi ne suffit pas à expliquer son retour aux commandes de la présidence en 2001. Ce succès relève plutôt d'une alchimie complexe que l'auteur synthétise en une formule : le « populisme méditerranéen » - qui sert de combustible à Forza Italia, le « vaissau amiral » d'une redoublante armada politique partie en guerre contre la démocrate italienne. Pas des tentatives d'écarter de combat de tous les autres institutions, de l'information, par la machine à graver sur la culture, par la criminalisation de l'opposition et de la magistrature, par le vote de lois inflées son mesure, par la préservation de la sphère publique, etc. Le patient de la Fininvest tente de former un régime d'un type nouveau, liberticide et autoritaire. *Insalubre ?* La tentation transpartite, en Espagne Espagne, vivante, concret, préféré par Antonio Lanzetta. L'auteur propose un état des lieux détaillé de l'Italie après deux ans de pouvoir berlusconien.

SERGIO CARROZZO.

AFRIQUE

MA GRAND-MÈRE BANIQUE ET MES ANCIÊNES LES GAULOIS. - Hami Loppé

* Gallimard, coll. « Continents noirs », Paris, 2002, 133 pages, 11,50 euros.

Peut-être compilé de « sang-nôble », Hami Loppé rassemble les histoires de son identité, questionnant métissage, négritude, francophonie et création littéraire. Évoquant les affres d'une « identité originelle » bantoue par la création il en ajoute à « ne plus avoir bonjour d'être en ce moment ». Tout en dénonçant le nombre d'une identité des « blancs ».

ASIE

LE MONDE ARABE, Enjeux sociaux, perspectives méditerranéennes. - Samir Amin et Ali El-Kenz * L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003, 103 pages, 15,50 euros.

Où est le monde arabe ? Samir Amin et Ali El-Kenz en proposent un état des lieux nourri de réflexions contextuelles et de recherches empiriques. Sans cesse tendue entre deux pôles, la spécificité de l'espace arabe et l'universalité des concepts, les auteurs s'appuient sur toute la gamme des sciences sociales, économique, histoire, sociologie, etc. L'avis libéré s'inscrit dans la continuité des travaux du Forum du tiers-monde, du Forum mondial des alternatives et de l'Arab Research Center. Il en résume un réexamen critique des expériences populistes et une mise en cause permanente de la vision essentialiste qui fait de l'Islam et de l'éthnicité des entités immuables. L'intérêt de l'ouvrage réside aussi dans une analyse décapante du projet euro-méditerranéen, dans la cristallisation des conflits en cours au Proche-Orient et dans la description des nouvelles formes de domination qui prennent appui sur les préceptes du néolibéralisme mondialisé.

MOHAMMED HARRBI.

LA MACHINE KIMÈRE ROUGE, MONTI SANTÉSOK 9-21. - Rihy Parh, avec Christina Chauraman

* Flammarion, Paris, 2003, 308 pages, 19 euros.

Nombre de livres ont été écrits sur le Cameroun de la période kimer rouge (1975-1979) : études sur le fonctionnement et les mécanismes du régime de l'oligarchie, tentatives d'évaluation du génocide, biographies de dirigeants, récits de récipients. L'originalité de

50 ÉCRIVAINS
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Dire l'indicible

Né à Kaboul en 1962, Atiq Rahimi quitte l'Afghanistan pour le Pakistan à l'âge de 22 ans puis demande l'asile politique en France où il passe un doctorat de communication à la Sorbonne. Il est l'auteur de deux romans, *Terre et cendres* (qu'il a lui-même transposé au cinéma en 2005) et *Les mille maisons du rêve et de la terreur*.

Terre et cendres, le premier roman d'Atiq Rahimi, est une mise en échec de la barbarie par la seule force du verbe. Près d'une rivière asséchée, au bord d'une route, un vieillard fané par le soleil et la poussière attend. Il attend que passe une voiture qui pourrait l'emmener de l'autre côté de la vallée, à la mine où travaille son fils. Les heures défilent. Auprès du vieillard, un enfant joue. C'est son petit-fils, devenu sourd depuis que les Soviétiques ont bombardé le village. Et il joue, cet enfant qui ne comprend pas pourquoi ceux qui l'entourent ont perdu leur voix, il joue dans les ronces et les rocaillies sous le soleil écrasant



d'une matinée d'automne. « Grand-père, les Russes sont-ils venus prendre les voix de tout le monde ? Que font-ils de toutes ces voix ? » Le vieillard songe. Il revoit les bombes sur le village, les cris des siens lorsque les flammes les ont avalés. sa femme et sa bru déchiquetées, ses voisins massacrés. C'est cette horreur qu'il vient annoncer à son fils. Mais comment dire l'indicible ? Atiq Rahimi a trouvé un ton, un phrasé, qui laissent le lecteur pétrifié. Le tutoiement qu'il utilise tout au long de l'histoire est la voix de la conscience et fait de ce court roman un livre majeur.

Terre et cendres
traduit du persan par Sabrina Nour
96 p., P.O.L., 8,99 €



Le ravissement d'Asli

Née en 1967 à Istanbul, Asli Erdogan a connu le Brésil après avoir fait des études de physique quantique en Turquie. Auteure de nouvelles et d'un roman, elle décide d'écrire *La ville dont la cape est rouge* à son retour de Rio en même temps qu'elle abandonne son métier d'enseignante à l'Université pour faire de la recherche.

Ozgür, étudiante turque, débarque un jour à Rio où personne ne l'attend. Pour une fille d'Istanbul, la cité brésilienne devrait faire peur, la pousser à fuir ce monde totalement étranger. Or, c'est la fascination qui prend le dessus et Ozgür n'a qu'un désir : décrire ces lieux de perdition, raconter la pauvreté des favelas, croiser la mort et la vie, plonger dans la jungle des ruelles puantes. Deuxième roman d'Asli Erdogan, *La ville dont la cape est rouge* est une œuvre d'un lyrisme grandissant. On suit, à travers un style de plus en plus sensuel, la passion de l'héroïne pour les lieux, sa volonté de se laisser bercer par une vie aussi dansante que violente. C'est à la fois une plongée vers l'enfer et une recherche de la volupté. Le rythme devient vertigineux. Est-on vraiment loin de la Turquie dans cette œuvre foisonnante ? La romancière a attendu d'être rentrée dans son pays pour commencer la rédaction et garder ainsi la distance nécessaire. On pourrait pourtant parler de dérive car Asli Erdogan, comme son héroïne, est devenue une étrangère partout : Brésilienne à Istanbul, Turque à Rio. Seule l'écriture la sauve de ce mouvement perpétuel. C'est ce qu'elle exprime dans ce livre poisseux, sauvage, où tous les Sud se ressemblent un peu.

La ville dont la cape est rouge
traduit du turc par Estin Soysal-Dauvergne
192 p., Actes Sud, 18 €



Virulent passé

Fils d'un psychiatre nord-coréen, Chang-rae Lee est né en 1965 en Corée du Sud où s'étaient réfugiés ses parents. Il a trois ans quand sa famille étraigne aux Etats-Unis. Après de brillantes études à Yale, il devient analyste financier et, à la mort de sa mère, suit des ateliers d'écriture pour se consacrer à la littérature. Il vit à Ridgewood (New Jersey).

Le retour du passé et l'intégration sont certainement deux des thèmes les plus difficiles à traiter en littérature. Preuve de son talent, Chang-rae Lee a abordé ces sujets avec simplicité et pertinence. Son premier roman, *Langue natale*, mêle ainsi l'histoire d'un couple face à la mort de son enfant et le récit du fils d'un immigré coréen se souvenant de son père, plus particulièrement de son anglais approximatif. *Les sombres feux du passé* ont encore creusé ces obsessions. Chang-rae Lee se penche ici sur le destin d'un vieux docteur nippon, bien installé dans la banlieue new-yorkaise. Mais, à l'occasion d'un incendie, le gentil praticien voit son imposture se rappeler à lui : il n'est ni japonais ni médecin. Durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, ce Coréen officia comme aide-soignant dans un camp en Birmanie, où il s'occupait des prostituées - contraintes - destinées aux soldats nippons. Pour le jeune homme d'alors, l'amour arrivera sous les traits d'une jolie femme, dont le destin tragique modifiera à jamais celui du futur vrai-faux docteur Hata. L'élégance et l'intelligence de l'auteur nous font attendre la traduction de son troisième roman, *Atoji* - en version française : *En haut...*

Chang-rae Lee
Les sombres feux du passé

Les sombres feux du passé
traduit de l'anglais par Jean Pavans, 416 p., Points/Seuil, 7,50 €



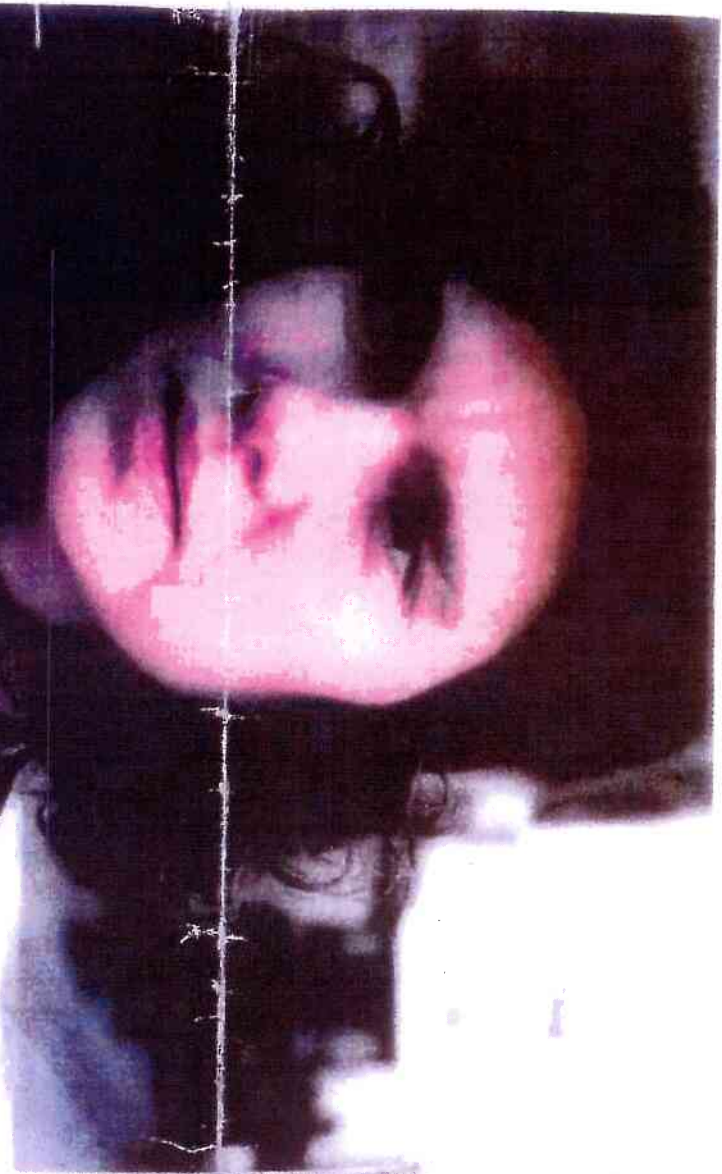
TORS DAG 21. OKTOBER 2004

Dagbladet

Uppgjord TORS DAG 21. OKTOBER 2004

Vibrasjoner fra et **urbant inferno** i tyrkiske Asli Erdögans

nye roman «Byen med den røde kappan».



Rio - et bilde p

romantisk

Tekst: Marald Flo
hfl@dagbladet.no

Asli Erdogan åpner vinduet mot bakgården i Gyldendal-komplekset i Oslo og tenner en filerisigaret.

Det blir bare to av dem i løpet av de par timene den tyrkiske forfatteren har til rådighet for Dagbladet. Ellers går det på helsekost fra et fullstær fruktfa.

Dirende

Forøvrig er det stort sett depressive ve vrasjoner som dirrer utvekkende gjennom teksten i Asli Erdogans roman «Byen med den røde kappan», som har hennes møte og toårige opphold i Rio de Janeiro som fysisk klangbunn. Sjelden har jeg lest et mer kroppslig forankret språk enn i den partikkelfylte kyndige Isanbul-kvinnens bok, som er oversatt med hektisk karakter fra tyrkisk av Gunvald Ims.

På omslaget av den norske utgaven står detne sliakt fra boka: «Eggsman er en epidem i verden, men en religion i denne byen». Byen Rio vekster utvilsomt fra det verste til det beste, men det virker som Erdogan hamner et overmålt av de negative sidene i dette sosialt så skrikende utretforrige landet.

– Din romanfigur, Özgür, må jo ha visse forankringer i erfaringer du selv har gjort med grådighet, løgner og sykdommer. Men det fins jo andre steder ved Brasil enn carioca'enes lurvete liv og levnet?

Voldshelvete

– Jeg har nesten ikke vært utenfor Rio de Janeiro. Tok en kortere tur til Sao Paulo, som til tross for sine 20 millioner mennesker mellom styskrapene er en mye mer disiplinert og europeisk by.

I «Byen med den røde kappan» håper jeg at rio-boernes vakre og

vemmelige *cidade* framtrer like mye som en menator for verdier, som å gi en realistisk skildring av dette bossa nova-besungne bakgrunnet av et voldshelvete. Markobandens krig om kontrollen i favelhorne - som du kanskje er ffilmen «Cidade do Deus» - er jo et høyst *høbart* fenomen.

Urbant inferno

Asli Erdogan har - nesten lik Dante - dukket ned i et urbant inferno. Hun forteller dagens globale faenskap i et bilde materialisert gjennom Rio de Janeiro. Teksten får stedets utryggelig ånd til å sive fram og koke over i dunkle lakner mellom fjellene Corcovado og Sukkertoppen. Ja, til og med under de forfirske strandvandringene langs Copacabana og Ipanema, er det som om strømmen for vold og ran gripe tak i henne.

– Var det virkelig så færlig?

– Jeg har merket utbyggen, men i

hovedsatt opphevet for å bli en slik blank side. Eller som nattemørk glede, da Maria Bethania sang gratis for 30 000 mennesker på Copacana for to år siden. Og halvparten sang med på de mest kjente låtene til Bahian-sangerinnen.

– Det er noe av desperasjonen og tonen i boka di som kan minne om Chico Buarque's intense kortroman, «Estorvo» («Btåke»), som kom på norsk for to år siden. En slags svimmelhet hvor hovedpersonen pendler mellom virkeligheten og en surrealistisk sfære?

Brasils Bob Dylan

– Jeg kjenner ikke boka til Buarque. Men «Noisen» («Støy») ville vel vært en bedre oversettelse av den portugisiske titalen. Jeg liker ham selvfølgelig som sanger, og vel at han ofte kalles for «Brasils Bob Dylan». Men jeg klarer aldri å danse meg inn i de suggestivt

greide heller ikke å tilpasse meg badematen overfor brenningene som slår uoppberlig inn over Ipanema. Det er så fjernt fra den stille månen vi svenner på i Jytkka, og som du nesten kan oversette med navnet på det arabiske sukkeret av et «Turkish delight»

Glede neste gang?

– Da jeg intervjuet Chico Buarque på 90-tallet, fortalte han at det var umulig for ham å synge i de to åra det tok å fullføre «Btåke». Etterpå kom hans kanskje beste cd, «Paratodos» («For alle»), som er en rad høysanger til livet i Brasil. Kommer det kanskje ei glede-fylt bok fra din side neste gang?

– Det kan bare vida og livet vise, sier Asli Erdogan med et smil, og skriver følgende dedikasjon: «Jeg skriver for å se større ut, fordi jeg er så, så liten».

Owe Wikström BORTENFOR HVITE STRENDER OG FORTAUSKAFEEER

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Hva reiser vi til og hva reiser vi fra? Owe Wikström er fascinert av reisons sosiologi og psykologi, men først og fremst av reisons motsetninger. På den ene siden, jakten på stederne og de store opplevelsene, på den andre siden reisons melankoli, fordi man aldri kan reise fra seg selv.

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ISBN 978-82-02-21020-5 • Faste kr. 319,- • Faste kr. 240,- • Faste kr. 240,- • Faste kr. 240,-

ISBN 978-82-02-21020-5

ISBN 978-82-02-21020-5



Erdoğan öppnar bräddjup

10 november 2010 kl 01:00 . uppdaterad: 18 november 2010 kl 14:35 Prosa Staden i den röda kappan Asli Erdoğan 213 s. Råmus (Kırmızı Pelerinli Kent, 1998) Övers: Ulla Lundström

För två år sedan introducerades den turkiska författarinnan Asli Erdoğan på svenska med sin debutroman "Den mirakulöse mandarin", som kretsade kring minnet av Istanbul hos två turkar i schweizisk förskingring. Och nu ges Asli Erdoğan's andra roman, "Staden i den röda kappan", ut på svenska. Vi möter även där en turk som lämnat hemlandet, en kvinna som sedan två år bor i Rio.

Men Özgür, som kvinnan heter, drömmer sig inte tillbaka. Hon har lovat sig själv att inte lämna Rio förrän hon är färdig med staden. Hon vill inte hära den med sig resten av livet.

Men Özgür's misär blir allt värre för varje dag. Hon kom till Rio för universitetsarbete, men får sparken. Hon hankar sig fram på att ge kurser i engelska, men studenterna blir färre.

Till slut måste hon ransonera tidningarna till en i veckan, och hon tvingas överge sina medelklassiga rökvanor för enklare cigaretter. Vad som håller Özgür hjälpligt uppe är romanen hon skriver, kallad "Staden i den röda kappan".

Men Asli Erdoğan skriver inte en *work in progress*-roman av mer traditionellt snitt. I hennes roman slutar inte med att vi får veta att huvudpersonen skriver den bok vi just läst. Erdoğan smälter istället samman Özgür's allimer paniska upplevelse av staden med den fiktiva romantexten. Özgür's vandring utför den sociala hierarkin, från de bättre stadsdelarna till kullarnas favelas,

Staden i den röda kappan.

Författare: Aslı Erdogan

Översättare: Ulla Lundström

Förlag: Rámus.

ASLI ERDOĞAN. En av mina första nätter i Rio de Janeiro hade jag en fruktansvärd mardröm om jordens undergång. Den kända Kristusstatyn fick liv och steg ner till staden för att döma levande och döda. Ingen slapp undan.

I turkiska Aslı Erdoğan's roman "Staden i den röda kappan" från 1998, den andra av Erdoğan's romaner att översättas till svenska, känner jag igen min mardröm. Romanens huvudperson, turkiska Özgür, befinner sig i ett Rio väsensskilt från det som syns på glansiga vykort. En stad av extrem fattigdom, droger, död och förruttnelse. Över det dygn som romanen utspelar sig ligger en fuktig och kvävande hetta. Özgür, sysslolös och pengalös, rör sig genom de delar av staden som flickan från Ipanema aldrig skulle beträda: fattiga favelas och de stökiga stadsdelarna Lapa och Santa Teresa. Hon är en Orfeus i underjorden, vars enda möjlighet att bli fri från stadens grepp om henne och återvända till ytan är att skriva klart sin roman "Staden i den röda kappan". Så växer en roman i romanen fram, som ju längre det lider blir svårare och svårare att särskilja från ramen. Vad händer när fiktionen och verkligheten kolliderar? Är det möjligt att skriva absolut sant, om en stad eller ens om sig själv?

"Staden i den röda kappan" är på många sätt intressant. Språkligt pendlar den mellan en sentimental smetighet, kylig saklighet och kokett intellektualism – ömsom irriterande och ganska tröttande, ömsom förtrollande. Huvudpersonen Özgür förblir en skickligt tecknad gåta. Vad är det för destruktiva krafter som håller henne kvar i Rio trots hennes ensamhet och likgiltighet? Allt man får veta är att i Rio har Özgür funnit "Nollpunkten" – platsen i tid och rum varifrån ingen återvändo finns. Den personliga undergången, omöjlig att undslippa.

Amanda Svensson
författare

Here are the two interviews

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=478&artikel=5106695>

<http://www.sydsvenskan.se/kultur-och-nojen/bocker/-turkisk-press-ar-tystad->

Here reviews of *The City in crimson cloak* (below you will find translated quotes):

http://www.svd.se/kultur/litteratur/erdoan-oppnar-braddjup_5646115.svd

<http://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/bokrecensioner/article8070714.ab>

<http://www.sydsvenskan.se/kultur-och-nojen/framlingskap-utan-granser/>

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=478&artikel=4146681> År 2014

<http://www.unt.se/kultur/erdogan-synar-rio-de-janeiros-sjal-1154318.aspx>

<http://hd.se/kultur/boken/2010/11/22/raddaren-rio/>

<http://www.corren.se/kultur/bocker/artikel.aspx?articleId=5466633>

<http://www.kristianstadsbladet.se/kultur/article1350299/Litteraturens-foumlrharingllande-till-doumlden.html>

"Magic enjoyable... The end is magnificent, cinematic"

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Efter tio, FV4

Erdogan writes a text that slowly eats its way into the readers mind, a text that in its existential obstinacy opens a precipice."

Svenska Dagbladet

"Linguistically, it is a joy to read her lengthy, illustrative descriptions of Rio."

Östgöta Correspondenten

"A novel that concerns with strong linguistic mode of funding, but also presents a series of sharp images taken from that which is living in the overheated city"

Skånska Dagbladet