



Learning to Pray in the Age of Technique

Gonçalo M. Tavares , Daniel Hahn (Translator)

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The second installment in Tavares's acclaimed "Kingdom" series. In a city not quite of any particular era, a distant and calculating man named Lenz Buchmann works as a surgeon, treating his patients as little more than equations to be solved: life and death no more than results to be worked through without the least compassion. Soon, however, Buchmann's ambition is no longer content with medicine, and he finds himself rising through the ranks of his country's ruling party . . . until a diagnosis transforms this likely future president from a leading player into just another victim. In language that is at once precise, clinical, and oddly childlike, Gonçalo M. Tavares—the Portuguese novelist hailed by José Saramago as the greatest of his generation—here brings us another chilling investigation into the limits of human experience, mapping the creation and then disintegration of a man we might call "evil," and showing us how he must learn to adapt in a world he can no longer dominate.(Portuguese Literature Series)

Learning to Pray in the Age of Technique Details

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Author : Gonçalo M. Tavares , Daniel Hahn (Translator)

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From Reader Review Learning to Pray in the Age of Technique for online ebook

BlackOxford says

Trumping Trump

If Tavares were to have published *Learning to Pray* in 2016 rather than 2007 he would have been successfully sued by Donald Trump for slander and invasion of privacy. Or possibly hired as Trump's campaign manager. Who knows, perhaps he was even the inspiration for Trump's presidential aspirations, a sort of anticipatory biography of 'alternative facts'.

Tavares' protagonist, Lenz Buchmann, lives in a world created by his father and described by Thomas Hobbes, a world of barely contained brutal competition and animosity. It is a world motivated and glued together by fear of each for each other. To Lenz there is no question that the world really is this way because it responds to him with the same hostility as he to it. His father's dictum is his lifelong guide: *"Doing what we want, that is the first level; the second is making other people want what we want."* There are only two forms of action relevant to executing this advice, defence and attack. The latter is always the more successful.

Lenz doesn't just recognise the world as Hobbesian, however. His aspiration is to be, not to be part of, the Leviathan, the force that keeps the heaving hostile mass in order, his order. To induce fear but never to fear. He is this sovereign whale domestically, of course, and also in his profession as a surgeon, where he metes out humiliation or approbation, happiness or tragedy. Or, more metaphysically, he is creating the Kingdom.

Lenz is conventionally virtuous because virtue pays not because it is virtuous. He similarly tolerates social and religious ritual because it creates a communal mood appropriate to an occasion, and assigns roles which individuals can play predictably as positions of leadership, respect, and influence, not because ritual has any demonstrative meaning. This vulgar pragmatism he calls competence, *"organic craftsmanship"*, rational technique: *"All actions are good as long as they meet their objective."*

Technique is the opposite of nature; indeed, its sworn enemy. Technique is laudably unnatural. Nature experiments with the most effective ways to deceive and to seduce bodily organs to "change sides", to give up on the body. Technique attacks nature to mitigate and correct its irrationality. Effective technique is also the sign of people who make things, who contribute, who build, and whose duty it is to protect the things which they make, contribute and build.

Lenz has an epiphany in his maturity. His ambition to become Leviathan can't be realised in his somewhat restricted role as surgeon. For real clout, he needs a bigger stage, a political one. And politics too is a matter of proper technique, that *"of joining men and separating them."* He becomes a successful Babbitt. The illusion of community created by Party politics became his milieu to manipulate as effectively and decisively as he had dealt with a defective kidney.

[Excursus: Any resemblance to Donald Trump is unintended and purely coincidental of course. The comments of the protagonist that "the price of anarchy has fallen in recent years" and "everyone wanted security, but first they wanted to feel more threatened" and his reputation as "an out and out crook" notwithstanding.]

There is a school of moral thought called Virtue Ethics which teaches that we take on the attitudes and dispositions of the positions and rituals we perform. Practice virtue and you become more virtuous. The process also works in reverse: the practice of evil facilitates increased evil. Lenz becomes an exemplar of this phenomenon.

At one point during Lenz's accumulation of political power, he recognises a paradox however. The more power one has, the less clearly defined are his adversaries, and the more it is possible that the enemy is neither in front or behind but lies where Lenz remembers from his childhood. The real threat lies "*below*", in this memory, in the very earth one walks on. As an adult this below is not in the earth but within the depths of oneself, below one's own consciousness, hidden but active and awaiting opportunity.

A Faustian Lenz begins to take on traits of a Dorian Grey. Publicly he is sane and in control, but his increasingly debilitating headaches and fetishistic urges begin to dominate his inner portrait, his private self, which has become notably homicidal. Nature has arrived. But as a retro-virus, looking like the cells it attacks. Cleverer than any technique, the brain cancer progressively takes charge, with its own homicidal objective. The body spits on itself.

Here's the question: would even incipient death provoke Donald Trump to forego his ethos, to do something with no technique at all? Does he in fact pray or negotiate by the numbers with God?

Eddie Watkins says

For being such a detailed portrait, *from the inside*, of a thoroughly despicable character, this book left me with a very curious floating feeling, a feeling of subtle elation. This feeling could have stemmed from the closing death scene - peaceful, delicate (though eerie) - but I think there are other less obvious reasons, reasons worked into the novel between the lines by Tavares, that caused what I consider to be the intent of this book: the curious floating feeling which I felt after turning the final page.

While *Learning to Pray in the Age of Technique* is a monolithic portrait of an amoral, sociopathic man, rather than filling me with a mounting distaste, it rather filled me with an expanding lightness the darker it got, as if what I was reading was creating – in its negative space – a counter-portrait of general goodness. This technique is similar to what C. S. Lewis did with *The Screwtape Letters* - portraying what goodness is by turning it on its head into a portrait of evil - but on a far more subtle level, perhaps because I knew Lewis was a Christian while reading, and I know very little about Tavares' ideologies (though I suspect his moral/ethical stance is not as explicit (and simple) as Lewis'). Still, I was left with the distinct impression that Tavares', while keenly aware of the ways "evil" rules the world, *The Kingdom* (which is the comprehensive title of the series of book of which this one is a part), he is just as keenly aware of this evil's counterweight, but for whatever reasons has chosen not to explore/explain that side of the equation, though I have my thoughts on why...

To define is to defuse, and so by thoroughly unmasking whatever mysteries obscured the power-hungry machinations of Lenz Buchmann, Tavares provides the reader a means to identify inclinations toward evil within his/her own person, but also to identify it in the world and so to set up a counter-insurgency to combat it. Not that he suggests it can ever be overcome – I am actually inclined to suspect that Tavares considers the world at the corporate/political level to be beyond repair – but he does suggest that all is not lost because there's the possibility of establishing an alternate "kingdom", or kingdoms, within ourselves. This is of course an explicitly Christian idea – "The kingdom of God is within you." – but I doubt Tavares means it in

this way, and is probably intent on secularizing, or partly secularizing, this profound and transformative concept.

What I am suggesting is that Tavares' "Kingdom Series" of novels is an attempt to explicitly define the Kingdom of Evil that currently rules the world, while building up within the reader, without explicitly stating as much, the alternate Kingdom of Good that can continue to exist within us regardless of what sociopathic scoundrels rule the world. And by being implicit with this alternate theme, he provides this kingdom with the necessary mystery and elusiveness to survive within whatever hostile environment it finds itself in.

This is the third novel of Tavares' series that I have read, but the first that I have been able to review. In part it could be because this is in a way the simplest of the three, though the longest, but it could just as well be because I read it last and that it took the reading of three books to even begin to crystallize my thoughts on the themes he's exploring, and to begin to define the curious floating feeling his books have given me.

Teresa says

Com este livro termina a série dos "quadrigémios" negros de Gonçalo M. Tavares.

São quatro pequenas "ampolas", que é suposto guardarem o vírus do Mal. Ao destapar a primeira fiquei febril; na segunda senti um arrepio ameaçador; com a terceira um ligeiro catarro; quando tomei a quarta ampola - como o vírus não sofreu qualquer mutação - tinha criado imunidade.

Não é claro onde e quando decorre a acção; poderá ser na Alemanha, durante a Segunda Guerra; ou poderá ser somente numa qualquer galáxia "tavariana", onde todos são Darth Vader sem nunca terem sido Anakin Skywalker...

A escrita e o tema são originais, na medida em que não são comparáveis com outro autor que eu conheça. Mas, ler os quatro "Reinos" acaba a tornar-se monótono porque são todos iguais.

As personagens são uns meros objectos que o autor utiliza para expor as suas teorias sobre a guerra, o medo, a violência, a política, a religião, a moral, a doença, a loucura, e tudo o que tira a vontade de viver... A felicidade não existe, ainda menos o amor - andam por ali umas mulheres apenas para serem "feitas" pelos senhores...

Em relação a este livro - o mais extenso da tetralogia - não gostei de nada; achei repetitivo, forçado, sem sentido, por vezes a roçar no ridículo (com moribundos a visitar cemitérios para se despedirem dos mortos...).

E o final? Vou mas é calar-me...

Ben Winch says

I'm gonna risk courting controversy here - knowing what a cult the Dalkey Archive is to some Goodreaders - and say first up that I found the production of this book underwhelming. Specifically, the proofreading. After about the third I lost count, but I'd say there were over five typographical errors here, as well as an annoying repeated grammatical error which, while I know it has passed into common usage, seemed out of place in a

translation which purports to be so rigorous, so proper, so clinical. (The error? 'Like' for 'as if' or 'as though': The servant girl groaned *like* she was enjoying it. Ugh!) Added to that, the translation seemed, at times, a little too coy for me, a little too clever. Sure, maybe it's Goncales, but at some point the whole mountain of polite turns-of-phrase just about collapsed in on itself and I got the distinct feeling this was a phenomenon that had occurred in English, not the original Portuguese.

That said, I'll confess the novel itself left me at a loss. The opening was strong - the quick succession of scenes to illustrate the evidently twisted mind of the protagonist. But for the next 50 (100? 200?) pages or so I kept waiting for the story-proper to begin. No more vivid tableaux like bullet points, but a long essayistic exposition in which, to be honest, I wasn't sure I could detect a single moving or provocative concept. Yeah, it was different - not structurally or stylistically, but in terms of its substance. What *are* all these extended battle metaphors? I get it: Dr Lenz Buchmann is nuts. But I guess the substance of his nuttiness eluded me for many of these 300 pages. By the end I'd accepted it, the abstruse and epigrammatical nature of the text, and in fact by then a few things had happened in there somewhere too - but only a few. The result? I'm unsure if the glassy, empty, flat effect is to be praised or criticised. Stylistically, as I say, I don't rate this as 'experimental' - it doesn't do anything that Milan Kundera hasn't already done (with his conversational-intellectual breakdown of characters' motivations and telegrammatic blocks of declarative prose to illustrate brief scenes in those characters' lives). But on the other hand, in the character of Lenz Buchmann and the dissecting of his emotions and thoughts there may well be something original. To me it mostly seemed like a bizarre and meaningless cartoon, but it wasn't unenjoyable.

For me, the jury's out on Tavares, and given how hard it is to get hold of his books here in Australia I don't expect to have a verdict in the near future. Let's just say, for a book so full of exposition and analysis, it wasn't the type of thing that had me rushing to jot down pertinent quotations. But perhaps in its cruelty - the cruelty of the telling (the coldness, the lack of recognisable emotion) as much as the subject matter - it really is something new, something modern.

David says

I was first struck by the extraordinary title of this book and the positive reviews on GR. However, I started with Jerusalem and Klaus Klump (the other books of this trilogy) first before reading it. Those other two books are short, around 100-pages and pack punches with brilliant reflective thoughts on life, love and death. So I wondered about "Learning to Pray" which covers 340-pages. Would it hold up?

Using very short "chapters or short thoughts spanning 2-3 pages, Tavares develops a masterful story. The main character, Lenz Buchmann is truly a nasty piece of humanity. Cruelly taught by his father to stand on his own, develops his cold "rational" view of humanity, becomes a doctor and then strives for one thing - political power. I have to admit I was initially repulsed by Buchmann, but the way Tavares writes, I honestly kept turning the pages to see how he develops. And this is key to the story.

I am not giving away the plot but how the Buchmann story morphs, this ride through his drive for power, his lack of compassion, his obsessive love/fear of his father, his perversity and everything that happens in between, both startling, hidden and revealing, was a real eye-opener. From the shocking opening to the surreal last pages, this was truly an amazing read.

Some will like; some will hate but for me the use of almost poetic, simple, repetitive words gives a glimpse

of people driven by power. You can use this symbolically for many people from Hitler to Stalin, and the assorted crazies that are in power today. The title is the message. Scary. Scary. Scary.

Argos says

Çok iyi bir roman. Babas?n?n etkisiyle içindeki kötü- güçlü-otoriter kimli?ini ortaya ç?karan bir cerrah?n hikayesi. Lenz Buchmann bir t?p fakültesi mezunu doktor, konusunda uzmanla?m?? bir cerrah, ama sadece bir teknisyen, hekim de?il, çünkü hekimlik bir sanattır, Buchman bir sanatç? de?il bir uygulayıc?, hekimli?e eri?memi? bir t?p doktoru. Üst ve güçlü insan füğürüne inanan cerrahideki "korku/h?z" kavram?n? tüm topluma uygulamaya çal??an bir fa?ist. Mesle?indeki sertli?i politikada da sürdürmek isteyen insanlar? korkutarak, ezerek yönetmeye çal??an bir insan. Bunun için provakatif bombalama eylemi yaptırabilen veya insan öldürmeyi gözünü k?rpmeden yapabilen bir psikopat ruh yap?s?na sahip, tüm fa?ist liderlerde oldu?u gibi narsisist.Ülkemizdeki benzer karakterleri hemen an?msayacaksınız?

Roman? anlatmayacağım ancak yazardan çok etkilendim. Çok sert ve gerçekçi, söyleyece?ini yekten söylüyor. Bolca kulland??? metaforlar mükemmel. T?pla ilgisi olmamas?na rağmen roman?ndaki t?bbi kavramlar ve yakla??mlar inanılmaz derecede do?ru kullanılm???. Bir cerrah olarak yazar?n Buchmann'a ait cerrahi dü?ünceleri beni çok etkiledi. Bu tip cerrahlar?n varl??? bir gerçek.

Kitapta ele?tirebilece?im yönler ?unlar; e?er bir çeviri tercihi de?ilse, yan cümleciklerin ve parantez içinde aç?ıklama cümleciklerinin çok fazla olmas? insan? yoruyor, okumay? sevimsizle?tiriyor. Ayr?ca bölüm ba?lıklar? çok abartılı? ve inanılmaz say?da fazla, bu da aynı ?ekilde okuma zevkini k?rıyor. Biçimsel olarak bu kusurlar?na rağmen okunmas?n? kesinlikle öneririm.

Son bir not; yazar için Le Figaro gazetesi "Portekiz'in Kafka's?" demi?, bence halt etmi?, yazar?n ne karamsar Kafka ile ne de Kafkaesk roman türüyle bir ilgisi var, her ?eyden önce realist bir yazar.

Antonio says

I've only heard about Gonçalo Tavares in foreign lands, never in Brazil. After some insistence of a friend, I decided to give it a try. At first, I was expecting another regular medical tale. I can only tell you how wrong I was.

Tavares introduces us to a despicable human being. Lenz Buchmann is an abhorrent man whose despise for others is a routine. Every patient who goes to see Buchman receives a medicine and a dose of the doctor's disdain. When Lenz becomes a politician, he continues to be this hateful man plotting his rise on the party.

So why is this a good book? Lenz Buchmann sincerity is amazing, showing us the depths of human nature. His idolatry to his foster father is so sick and explains so well his dysfunctionality that I want to congratulate Tavares for that. The choices of this man are controversial and complicated, even though they show us a sometimes forgotten image of the spectrum of human nature. A great story of a despicable man.

Jonfaith says

About a hundred years ago my wife and I were on holiday in England, staying then with her brother in Reading. A certain chain of events had left me at a hotel bar with my wife's brother, his friend Richard and

Richard's soon-to-be wife. At the time Richard didn't care much for me, I was an American and one who didn't rise to his provocations: in fact I agreed with most of his zingers. We have since become warmer and I rather enjoyed hiking with his wife and children a few years back. Well, anyway, it was the four of us and then suddenly this fellow sat down uninvited and began relating his life's story. He stated that he had been kicked out of the French Foreign Legion for being too violent. Now if that isn't an endearing ice breaker to a table of strangers, I'm not sure what is. Quickly the others identified the guy as harmless and a blowhard and abandoned ME to listening the tirade. The guy kept harping on the competitive gene which a biological holdover of sorts. It was self evident, we wanted to be the best. I assured him that such reductions weren't likely. He asked, no, implored for evidence. I strangely referenced myself, my vocation, my approach to life. He kept hectoring and saying that my discretion was a crutch. This "debate" as such continued its stumble through a few more pints. I still shudder recalling that.

That grinding tactic is wielded by Tavares as well as his protagonist in *Learning To Pray In The Age Of Technique*. It leaves the reader gasping for air and insecure. Nothing can be conceded for the author. Abstractions and biological imperatives steamroller all objections. There are no refutations to marshal. The assault continues until the earth is blackened. Such is the world view of Lenz Buchmann. His brother dies and apparently has the temerity to mix their father's books with his own.

Albert hadn't kept his father's library isolated on some particular shelves, with his own on others; on the contrary, he had merged all authors, reordered everything, arranged it all alphabetically, a simplistic decision that revealed the flaws in his character--he confused strength with alphabets.

Even as the flesh weakens the spirit is vigilant. The novel's conclusion is an amnesty of sorts. I admit to being relieved but am awe struck by the pitch maintained throughout.

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

Can one build his life on the refusal to really live with others?

This is a story of a "relentless rise" and even an abrupt descent of a man that is born to be a servant of violence.

Lenz Buchmann is an utterly despicable character but what a phenomenal and satisfying portrait of a despicable character it is. Maybe that's why the book works on several levels. The thin line between melodrama and pastiche verges on the absolutely brilliant.

Jim Fonseca says

A militaristic upbringing by a stern father creates a depraved surgeon. He has no feelings; no soul, and in fact is glad when his older brother finally dies so he alone can carry on his father's name and traditions. He thinks

of his brother "I'm going to find it easy to forget you." He engages in bizarre practices such as bringing homeless men into his house to watch him have sex with his wife. Having conquered medicine and earned a reputation as a surgeon, he abandons that career and turns to politics. A major theme of the book is an extended metaphor on the parallels between surgery and politics: in surgery, the downward-pointing hand; in politics, the upward-raised hand. Eventually his depravity leads him to commit three murders.

As in Tavares' novel *Jerusalem*, we are carried along on a deep-sea dive into the depths of human darkness. We are offered rich language and ideas and we can see why his Portuguese countryman, Nobel-prize winner Jose Saramago, raved about his writing. Some nuggets: "The brain, when seen up close...has the form and function of a weapon..." "Statistics are a precise way of demonstrating indifference." "...words are like warehouses, holding successive concentrations of experiences from different generations..."
(Edited 11/19/16)

Hakan says

"portekizli bir kafka" gibi bir övgüyü ön kapa?a, kapa??n en üstüne ta??may? uygun görmü? yay?nevi yazar için. okumaya ba?lad???m?zda ise, ilginçtir, daha ilk sayfalardan itibaren kafka'ya taban tabana z?t bir anlat?yla kar??la??yoruz. kat?, kapalı?, s?n?rlar? kal?n kal?n çizilmi? keskin bir anlat?. teknik ça??nda dua etmeyi ö?renmek bir romandan çok bir romana dair dü?ünceler gibi. ya da bir roman?n yaz?lma sebebinin, meselesinin aç?klamas? gibi.

arka kapakta ise yazar?n "portekiz edebiyat?n?n genç dahisi" oldu?u belirtiliyor. bu, kafka benzetmesine göre, daha isabetli bir övgü. romanda insana ve topluma dair zaman zaman ???k ama çokça zehir saçan yazar zekas? öne ç?k?yor. insan? afallatan-bozan ama sa?lam temeli, gerçekçili?i ve ifade biçimiyle kendini kabul ettiren bir güç. sonuçta, yazarla romanc? fark?n? gösteriyor sanki roman. bir ince çizgide duruyor. kötü roman-iyi yazar. belki de "teknik ça??nda" bu böyle.

jeremy says

since publishing his first book some ten years ago, gonçalo tavares has gone on to write more than a dozen others. the angolan-born portuguese writer has won a number of prestigious literary awards and received accolades from around the world. were his storytelling skills not already well apparent in *jerusalem*, the first of his works to be translated into english, *learning to pray in the age of technique* (*aprender a rezar na era da técnica*) confirms the immense talent of gonçalo tavares.

only the second of his works yet translated into english (save for an apparent few titles published by a very small press in india), *learning to pray in the age of technique* is a dark, often disturbing novel; one that probes the depths of ambition, power, and the human capacity for calculated cruelty. lenz buchmann, an accomplished surgeon, is malcontent with the limitations of his career (despite having achieved an almost flawless level of proficiency), and decides to turn his steady hand to the realm of politics. per his resolute will, buchmann quickly ascends the party ranks into a position of considerable power within city government. his loathing of weakness and disdain for all those he perceives as such leads him to reject family and foe alike (except for the veneration of his late father). as buchmann lusts for ever greater

dominance and control, an illness waylays his plans and leaves him a defeated, helpless shell of his former self.

throughout *learning to pray in the age of technique*, buchmann commits acts of utter reprehensibility, with a disregard for others that borders on the sociopathic. buchmann's actions are often without consequence to himself, as he is intent on his own concentration of power and prestige, absent of any concern for others. the violence (often sexual) that permeates buchmann's life, from youth onward, has made him all but incapable of human compassion or emotion. if he has become a mechanized version of himself, set to conquer and overtake, he does so not so much out of immorality but, rather, amorality. *learning to pray in the age of technique* is a distinguished work, composed with precision and characterized by a bold, stark prose. gonalo tavares seems to be electrifying the international literary scene, and with works like this it's of no wonder why.

to prolong one's lifespan, that most existential of questions, was- lenz believed- merely to provide an additional period for the incubation of hatred, for the incubation of the battles and disjunctions between the opinions, aims, and customs of various human beings. it was quite clear to lenz, each time he saved a person's life by way of some surgical procedure, that he was saving only one man- a statistical nonentity. statistics are a precise way of demonstrating indifference.

learning to pray in the age of technique was apparently to be released by dalkey archive as *learning to pray in the age of technology* (and still appears that way even in this translation's end matter, where dalkey's catalog is listed in full. while "technique" appears to be a more accurate translation than "technology," the change may simply be on account of the untranslatable essence of the original portuguese word.

dalkey is set to publish another of gonalo tavares' novels, *joseph walser's machine (a mquina de joseph walser)* (part of the "kingdom" novels begun with *jerusalem*), early next year. it appears they have also acquired the rights to at least one additional book of his. nearly a half dozen works that form a part of his acclaimed (and, apparently, quite funny) *o bairro (the neighborhood)* series seem to be awaiting translation and publication by texas tech university press. deservedly, many more of tavares' novels may soon be finding their way into english (followed hopefully by his short stories, plays, poetry and essays).

O?uzhan says

-kimi kitaplar? kar??t?r?rken ilk sayfalarda bir tan?d?k his yakalar ve onun iin sat?n al?r?z. tavares'in bu kitab? iin bunu ya?ad?m, lanthimos'un dogtooth'undan bir sahneye benzer bir ?ekilde a?l?yor kitap, fakat kimi benzerliklerine ra?men lanthimos'un filmlerindeki o s?cakl?k kitapta yok. kusurlar?ndan s?yr?lm??, insani zelliklerinden ar?nm?? karakterler mevcut kitapta. sper kahramanlar gibi. lanthimos, distopik atmosfer yarat?p, oradan insan?n zndeki duygular? n plana ?kar?r oysa.

-ayaklar? yere basmayan ve sonunda da havada kalan bir roman. ne yapmak istedi?i ok belli olan bunu yaparken de bilmi? bir tav?r sergileyen bir slup sz konusu. bunu sevemiyorum. diktan?n, iktidar?n, ktl?n daha iyi anlat?labilece?ine inan?yorum. ?renilmi?, planl? ve plan?ndan bir ad?m d??ar? ?kamayan metinler ho?uma gitmiyor.

Arturo Belano says

"Kötülük beni en çok ilgilendiren konulardan biri. Krallık diye adlandırılan seride bulunan romanlarda kötülüğü anlamaya çalışıyorum; ortaya çıkmasını, gizlenmesini ve tepemizde dikilmesini. Yanlış yapıyor da olabilirim ama kötülüğün daimi biçimde bizi çevrelediğini, pusuya yattığını, bize baktığını, bizi beklediğini hissediyorum. Öyle ki bir anda kötülüğün nesnesi, yani kurban da olabiliriz; öznesi yani ikenkenceci de olabiliriz. Etrafımızda kötülük çemberleri mevcut, kendimizi onlardan tamamen kurtaramıyoruz. Kendilerini kötülükten tamamen uzaklaştırdıkları söyleyen insanlardan korkuyorum. Naifler de, 20. asrda olan bazı şeylerin bir daha tekrarlanmayacağını söylüyorlar, çünkü onlara göre, gerekli dersler alınmış. Naiflerden de korkuyorum. Söylediklerine inanmıyorum, hatta bu naifliği (naïveté), en büyük kötülüğün yeryerdiyi toprak olarak görüyorum. Ezer benden edebiyatın bir insana verebileceklerini tek bir sözcükle isteseydiniz, bunu söyledim: netlik. (...) Kötülüğün ortaya çıkmasına dair iaretler konusunda uyanık olmalıyız çünkü bence tarih sürekli olarak tekrarı ediyor; tek fark, şiddetin her seferinde daha da artması. Tarih, bana öyle geliyor ki, kötülüğün tekrarlanmasıyla eylemli ama her seferinde, teknolojik olarak daha gelişmiş yöntemlerle."

Gonçalo M Tavares Krallık dörtlemesinin meselelerine dair bunları söylüyor. Söylediklerine ve dörtlemeye döneriz, evvela Kırmızı? Kedi yayınları? tebrik etmek lazım. Dörtlemeyi oluşturan Joseph Walser'in Makinesi ve Bir Adam-Klaus Klump ile Kudüs romanı elimde dururken Teknik Çağında'nın bir serinin devamı oldu?una dair bilgim olmadı?ndan Tavares ile tanışmak için bu kitabı seçtim. Neyse ki karakter ve konu bütünlüğünden öte tematik bir devamdan bahsedebileceğimiz için, anlamda bir sıkıntı? olmadı? ama bir yayınevi için bence büyük bir hata bu yapıldı?.

Gelelim Lenz Buchman ve kitaba...Hayali ve çok tanıdık bir ülkede, bilinmeyen bir zamanda geçen kitap Güç, Hastalık ve Ölüm adlı üç bölümden oluşuyor. Asker emeklisi despot bir babanın çocuğu olan Lenz Buchmann'ın en önemli doktorlarından. Ama teknik çağda doktor yetenekli bir otomobil sürücüsünden farklı? de?ildir Lenz için. Edebiyat tarihinde örneğine çokça rastladığımız kötüden Lenz'i ayıran temel yanı bu diye düşünüyorum. Yapıtları, düşündükleri ve söyledikleriyle kötülüğün prototipi olan Lenz duygular, istekler ve hastalıklar dünyasının ötesinde adeta bir cyborg (makine insan) edasıyla yaşıyor. Ameliyat esnasında ne?teri, av esnasında tuttuğu silah onun dışında parçalar olmak ?öyle dursun,Lenz'in varlığını uzantıları. Çok iyi bir doktor ama hastalar? iyi biri oldu?u için iyileştirmiyor, hastaların bir zayıflık belirtisi oldu?u için ona sava? açıyor. Ve bu bireysel sava?ın kendini tatmin etmedi?i anda 'parti'ye katılarak ?ehri ve belki tüm insanları? kurtarma hedefiyle mesle?i bırakıyor.Zizek, Hitler'e dair ?öyle bir şey diyordu,'o kendini diktatör de?il tüm Almanya'nın çilesini omuzlamış kurban konumunda görüyordu muhtemelen'. Lenz Buchmann ise kurbanlardan, güçsüzlerden ve hastalıklardan nefret ediyor, bu konuda tutarlı? ama hayat bu sert fa?isti beklemedi?i anda beklemedi?i yerden vuruyor.

Kitap,tema itibarıyla bilindik sularda yüzyüyor, bu bilindik sulara güzelli?i katan ise yazarın üslubu. Çok bilindik çok aşına halleri yazar öyle farklı? bir dille ve kitabın adı?na yara?ır bir teknikle anlatıyor ki ne dedi?ine, nasıl dedi?ine bakmak için geriye dönüyorsunuz. Alberto Manguel yazara dair ?öyle diyor ' Genç Portekiz'li yazar Tavares'in en büyük mahareti, bir yazar olarak, dünyayı parçaları?na ayırması? ve sonra onu sanki kendi yarattı? bir ?eymiş? gibi yeniden inşa etmesi'.

Krallık serisine son dan başladım ve başa döru gitmeye devam edeceğim, Saramago'nun övmelere doymadı? Tavares'i ?skalamayın der ve kitaptan sevdiğim alıntılarla veda ederim.

"Onun gözünde hasta organizma maddesel olarak suçluydu ve bu nedenle Lenz, kendi aklınca dokulardan bir ahlak düzeni kuruyordu, siyah ve beyaz hücrelerden, yanmış hücrelerden ve el değmemiş hücrelerden

olu?an bir ahlak d?zeni. Ve bu d?zende ahlaks?z olmak, i?levini yerine getirmemektir."

"Ac?ya yakla??m? bireyseldi. Ba?kalar?ndan ödünç al?nm?? ac?y? kabul etmiyordu; ?efkat gereksiz bir duyguydu ya da Lenz'in kendi tabiriyle, varolu? için yarars?z bir araç?, teknik aç?dan hiçbir i?e yaram?yordu; ?efkat, iki kuma? parças?n? birle?tirmek için elinde çekiç tutmak gibiydi."

"Büyük olaylar ve büyük hastal?klar dünyas?na' girmeye karar vermi?ti. Bireylerle u?ra?maktan ve kendisi de bir birey olmaktan b?k?p usanm??t?; onun ölçe?i bu de?ildi; o bütün bir ?ehrin hastal??n? ameliyat etmek istiyordu, tek ve önemsiz bir canl?n?nkini de?il. Her ?eyin ötesinde, o tuhaf yiyece?i verme zevkini tatmak istiyordu, gücün askerlerine ve memurlar?na sundu?u, neredeyse sihirli bir enerji veren o yiyece?i, kalabal?klar?n karn?n? maddeten olmamakla birlikte e?it derecede etkin bir ?ekilde doyuran o yiyece?i. Biraz ekmek ve biraz korku, dedi Lenz bir dürtüyle, uzun bir sessizli?i bozarak."

Hugo says

Assombroso.
