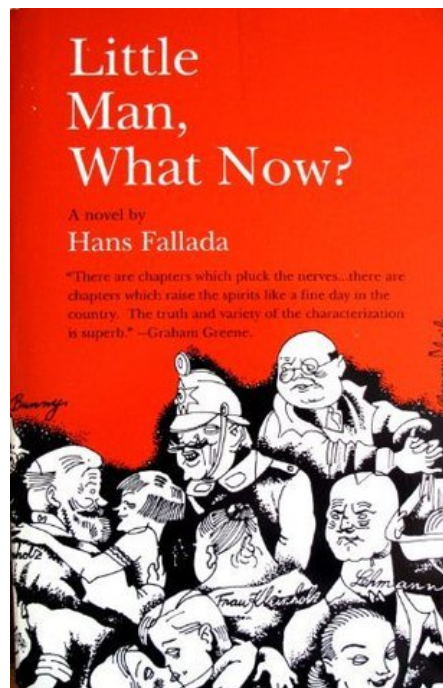




Little Man, What Now?

Hans Fallada , Susan Bennett (Translator)

Download now

Read Online ➞

Little Man, What Now?

Hans Fallada , Susan Bennett (Translator)

Little Man, What Now? Hans Fallada , Susan Bennett (Translator)

Since its first publication in 1933, this novel has become a world classic. It provides a vivid, poignant picture of life in Germany just before Hitler's takeover and focuses on a young married couple struggling to survive in the country's nightmarish inflation.

Little Man, What Now? Details

Date : Published August 30th 2005 by Academy Chicago Publishers (first published 1932)

ISBN : 9780897330862

Author : Hans Fallada , Susan Bennett (Translator)

Format : Paperback 384 pages

Genre : Fiction, European Literature, German Literature, Cultural, Germany, Classics, Historical, Historical Fiction, Literature

 [Download Little Man, What Now? ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Little Man, What Now? ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Little Man, What Now? Hans Fallada , Susan Bennett (Translator)

From Reader Review Little Man, What Now? for online ebook

Tijana says

Mali ?ove?e... je tako jedno prijatno-neprijatno iznena?enje: em je znatno bolja i modernija nego što sam o?ekivala em je nelagodno savremena - nema u osnovnoj pri?i o novope?enim mladencima koji se gr?e da prežive od jedne krajnje nesigurne plate i još ?ekaju bebu gotovo ni?eg što ne bi bilo poznato današnjim podstanarskim parovima i mladim roditeljima. ?ak ni užasi papirologije za de?ji dodatak. Suvi realizam bez neke umetni?ke stilizacije.

Ono što je zbilja zastrašuju?e za današnjeg ?itaoca i, mislim, glavni razlog za Faladin mini-rivajval poslednjih godina jeste koliko se iz ove knjige iz 1932. može iš?itati sve što je došlo kasnije - iako su junaci Pinebergovi totalni duduci za politiku, i njima je jasno da su dve glavne opcije komunisti i nacisti (a što oni vole da se tuku!), na nekoliko mesta se pojave jevrejski likovi kojima je život ve? znatno otežan zbog sveprožimaju?eg antisemitizma, gun?a se zbog ovog i onog, ali u dnu svega je, kao talog, o?ajanje malog ?oveka što je bezna?ajni šraf i što mu nema spasa. Jeste da je Falada na kraju malo dao po violinama i patetici u prikazu supruge koja ?e sve izneti na svojim ple?ima, ali bez toga bi knjiga mogla da se završi samo duplim samoubistvom. :/

Petra says

A lovely story of a young couple trying to make ends meet. The hardships placed on this couple, through no fault of their own, are still valid and around us today. Poverty can strike anyone, jobs are scarce and insecure, one feels as if one is a cog in a giant wheel with no control.

Pinneberg and Bunny work hard to find their way in this harsh reality. They do it with goodness, naivete, courage, love and faith that all will be well. They are the everyman of their time.

Fallada tells this story with charm and humor. A wonderful read and timely despite it's historical setting.

Chris_P says

The young man looked at Pinneberg. Pinneberg looked at the young man. Both of them were smartly dressed. Pinneberg was obliged to look respectable in his job. Both of them had washed and shaved, both had clean nails and both of them were white-collar workers. But they were enemies, deadly enemies, because one of them was sitting behind the counter and the other was standing in front. The one wanted what he considered to be his rights; the other regarded it as an imposition.

The above passage which describes the encounter between the protagonist and a public servant, takes place in early '30s Berlin. So does the next one, which takes place between a young employee and her boss.

'What I do outside work is my own business!' exclaimed the girl. She seemed to have stopped crying.

'That's where you're wrong,' said Mr Spannfluss earnestly. 'Seriously wrong. Mandels feeds

you and clothes you, Mandels provides the wherewithal of your very existence. It's not unreasonable to expect that you should think of Mandels first in everything you do and don't do.'

And just to make the point clearer:

'The firm makes your private life possible, sir! The firm comes first, second and third. After that you do what you like. We take on the burden of providing you with your daily bread. You've got to understand that. You live off us. You're punctual enough collecting your pay at the end of the month.'

I could quote the whole book but I don't think it's necessary. I'm devastated to say that these passages could be straight out of an ordinary day in Greece of the 2010s.

The book follows the struggles of a young couple and their newborn son to make ends meet in a bureaucratic system where jobs are hard to come by and which, when found, resemble slavery. Wages are a joke, expenses are absurdly high and people are left on the street with hardly any reason at all. I wish I could say *Little Man, What Now* is your typical dystopian but that's hardly the case. It's rather an extremely realistic novel published in 1932.

What really makes *Little Man, What Now* painful to read is that Fallada makes no use of melodramatic elements and teardrenched descriptions. He tells his story as it would have occurred in real life. He includes every little thing that makes up reality, like humor, silly blunders made by the inexperienced housewife, the naïve but also cute little romantic goings-on between the couple and the desperate optimism that youth inspires in people even when one's world crumbles to pieces. But that's not all. At the same time, Fallada perfectly captures the constant anxiety one feels when one has to desperately and unavailingly beg for a job, any job, the loss of dignity that comes when one is kicked out of one's job just because one didn't meet the monthly goal for example, and the ever-burning flame of "how will I feed my child when I can't even provide for myself" which slowly devours a person from inside out. When the Little Man grows even smaller by the day, any sense of dignity evaporates along with the joys he should be feeling but he's not. "How can I look anyone in the face?" asks Pinneberg (Sonny) after he's hit bottom. These are feelings that no one can understand unless they have experienced them themselves.

From the immaculate depiction of the degenerate human relations under such circumstances to that of the bosses' cruelty towards their employees, *Little Man, What Now* is a journey into the darkest night. A night that has nothing to do with dystopic dictatorships and science fictions. A night that is sponsored and kept alive by a democracy created by the rich for the rich. A night haunted by the ever-present spirits of Sonny, Lammchen and their Shrimp, desperately yearning to celebrate the coming of the day.

And suddenly the cold had gone, an immeasurably gentle green wave lifted her up and him with her. They glided up together; the stars glittered very near; she whispered: 'But you can look at me! Always, always! You're with me, we're together ...'

Annelies says

What a sad and gripping novel. The style in which it is written sometimes feels a bit naive but it underlines the humble position of the protagonists. They undergo life as a constant stream of fear for and struggle against poverty. Even when the boy has a job, there is the constant fear of losing it. You feel sorry, very sorry for the two main characters. The end is so sad that I wanted to cry. I couldn't get it out of my head, their fate. The book shows very good how people struggle to survive in the twenties in Germany with its financial crisis.

Gavin Armour says

Wird Fallada noch gelesen? Und wenn ja, warum? Einer der Gründe, warum wir lesen, so versichern wir uns selbst, sei die Durchdringung fremder Gefühle, fremden Denkens, fremder Welten und vor allem fremder Zeiten. Letzteres kann der einzelne mittels des sogenannten „Historischen Romans“ – oder, in dem er sich, will er die jüngere Vergangenheit bereisen, zeitgenössischer Literatur bedient. Wollen wir also ein wenig über das Lebensgefühl im Deutschland der ausgehenden Weimarer Republik erfahren, wäre ein Roman der sogenannten ‚Neuen Sachlichkeit‘ zu empfehlen und damit also Hans Falladas KLEINER MANN – WAS NUN?

1932 erschienen, fängt Fallada in seinem für ihn so typischen Stil, dem sogenannten „Fallada-Sound“ – genau in der sozialen Beobachtung, voller Wärme und Mitgefühl für seine Figuren, ausgestattet mit einem phänomenalen Gespür für Zeitströmungen und Zeitläufte, mit dem häufigen Gebrauch des Diminutivs zu einer eher optimistischen, eher beruhigenden Gesamtlage beitragend – die sozialen Bedingungen der „kleinen Leute“ am Vorabend des 3. Reichs ein. Episodenhaft berichtet der Autor von der Erlebnissen des Buchhalters Johannes Pinneberg, der sich in den Jahren 1930 bis ca. Anfang 1932 müht, seine Frau Emma, genannt „Lämmchen“, und den gemeinsamen Sohn, den „Murkel“, durchzubringen. Zunächst in einer norddeutschen Kleinstadt, später im modernistisch wimmelnden, unruhig-nervösen Berlin. Während Emma dem Proletariat entstammt und sich dieses Erbes sehr bewusst ist, darin Halt und Selbstverständnis in schwierigen Momenten findet, steht Pinneberg für den typischen Kleinbürger jener prekären Zwischenkriegsjahre der Weimarer Republik. In Berlin trifft er auf seine Mutter, eine Lebedame und Edelprostituierte, deren Lebensgefährte Pinneberg gelegentlich finanziell zur Hilfe kommt. Pinneberg findet Anstellung bei einem jüdischen Bekleidungshaus, wo er Freundschaft mit einem bekennenden Nudisten und Libertären, Heilbutt, schließt, der ihm künftig öfters hilft. Pinneberg kommt in immer größere Geldschwierigkeiten, Lämmchen müht sich, das ihrige beizutragen, zugleich will sie dem Kind aber auch eine gute Mutter sein. Als Pinneberg aufgrund von Intrigen im Kaufhaus, wo die Verkaufsquoten gnadenlos angezogen werden, arbeitslos wird, bietet Heilbutt ihm seine Gartenlaube als Ausweichquartier an. Hier endet die Reise der Pinnebergs. Lämmchen sorgt dafür, daß ihr Johannes ehrlich bleibt, denn, so ihr Credo, was anderes habe man denn noch als „kleiner Mann“ als die ehrliche Haut, die man sei. Es werde schon weitergehen, es werden schon bessere Zeiten kommen. Und auch wenn Pinneberg fast verzweifelt, erkennt er in der Liebe zu Lämmchen den einzigen Wert, der zählt.

Hans Falladas vierter Roman war ein für ihn bahnbrechender Erfolg, der den selbst in prekären Verhältnissen Lebenden finanziell etwas konsolidierte und ihm vorübergehend ein Leben in all seinen Ausschweifungen – Fallada war Morphinist – ermöglichte. Doch korrumpierte ihn der Erfolg nicht, sein Blick, wie der Nachfolgeband WER EINMAL AUS DEM BLECHNAPF FRISST bewies, in welchem er seine eigenen Gefängniserfahrungen verarbeitete. Aber ist Falladas Roman für den heutigen Leser noch lesbar? Ganz

sicher. Der spezielle Fallada-Sound wirkt auch heute noch. Man lässt sich gern umfassen von dieser Erzählung, man lernt die Figuren schnell kennen und lieben, fürchtet und leidet mit ihnen, richtet sich gern und häufig an Lämmchens Stolz und proletarischem Glauben an die Kraft des Guten auf; ebenso teilt man Pinnebergs eher skeptische Sicht auf das große Ganze, das „die da oben“ anrichten und dem der „kleine Mann“, als den er sich selber sieht, ausgeliefert ist, komme was wolle. Eine tiefe Politikverdrossenheit ist dem Roman zu entnehmen, auch wenn sich Fallada - aus persönlicher Vorliebe oder schriftstellerischem Kalkül, konnte man die Erfolge der Nazis doch schon herannahen sehen, sei einmal dahin gestellt – eher zurückhaltend in politischer Be- oder gar Verurteilung gibt. Daß die Nazis kaum wählbar erscheinen für einen, dessen Verlobte aus einem kommunistisch geprägten Haushalt stammt, ist nicht sonders zu erwähnen, dennoch lässt Fallada den Leser auch an gelegentlichen Gedanken seines Johannes Pinneberg in diese Richtung teilhaben. Er scheut sich nicht, die Anfälligkeit gerade dieses Kleinbürgertums für die Parolen und Sprüche der als „Bewegung“ auftretenden Nationalsozialisten anzudeuten. Und entlastet dann auch den einzigen Nazi, der im Buch wirklich vorkommt, indem er auch diesen als einen in den gnadenlosen Mühlen jener Jahre der Weltwirtschaftskrise Zermahlenen, hilflos Strampelnden zeigt. Allerdings macht er die um sich greifende Paranoia auch spürbar, wenn Pinneberg im Kaufhaus nachgesagt wird, er sei ein Nazi und daraufhin eine Abmahnung erhält.

Fallada erfasst wie sonst wenige seiner Zeit die Spezifik dieser Jahre. Und wiegt seinen Leser doch in einer gewissen Sicherheit. Sein Schreiben ist auch therapeutisch für den Leser, der hier ein permanentes Rezept des „es wird schon wieder werden“ mitgeliefert bekommt. Dies mag den ungeheuren Erfolg bei der Leserschaft erklären. Fallada lesen bedeutete eben nicht nur, Verständnis für die eigene Situation, sondern auch, in dieser Situation einen gewissen Trost zu erfahren. Der deskriptiv arbeitende Fallada, der einen Großteil seiner literarischen Wirkung auch aus den lebensnah wiedergegebenen Dialogen bezieht, dem es gelingt, einen gewissen großstädtischen Sound zu erzeugen, seine Protagonisten wie „echte“ Menschen reden zu lassen und damit seinen Lesern das Gefühl vermittelte, ihnen nah zu sein, was er zweifelsohne ja auch war, erschwert die Lektüre nie durch Entfremdung oder sprachlichen Hintersinn, gar Doppeldeutigkeiten. Darin seinen Kollegen Irmgard Keun, Erich Kästner oder auch Vicki Baum nicht unähnlich, maximal entfernt von dem Schreiben eines an Erkenntnis vermittelnden Effekten interessierten Autors wie Alfred Döblin, der die Lebensrealität der „kleinen Leute“ ebenso gut kannte wie Fallada, breitet der Autor seine Geschichten direkt und ohne Umschweife aus.

Abfällig als „Gebrauchsliteratur“ titulierte, wurde Falladas literarisches Wirken allerdings lange unterschätzt, galt er doch als geradezu trivial neben seinen Zeitgenossen wie den Mann-Brüdern, eben Döblin oder aber auch Stefan Zweig, der allerdings zu Lebzeiten mit ähnlich herabwürdigenden Urteilen zu kämpfen hatte. Fallada bietet nicht die ironische Distanz eines Thomas Mann, obwohl sein Schreiben durchaus ironische Untertöne hat, die hier aber eher distanzmildernd wirken, dem Leser das Gelesene abmildernd; er bietet aber auch keine surrealen oder expressionistischen Ausschweifungen wie es Döblin tat, und Remarques tiefe Ernsthaftigkeit wird bei Fallada durch einen scheinbar lapidaren, manchmal leichten Alltagsston ersetzt. Geplauder, wenn man ihm böse wollte. Doch sollte man die Strategie, die diesem Schreiben zugrunde liegt, nicht unterschätzen. Wir werden in Sicherheit gewogen, doch Fallada weiß zu gut um die Unbilden des Lebens, als daß er seinen Lesern diese vorenthielte. Sein Pärchen muß den ganzen Weg seiner Zeit gehen – Arbeitslosigkeit, Verlust der sozialen Sicherheit, Verlust des Zuhauses, Verlust von Freunden und Verlust der Familie, einem gnadenlosen „Alle gegen Alle“ ausgeliefert. Einzig Falladas Hang, dem Leser wenn schon kein Happy End, so doch zumindest eine Hoffnung in der Erkenntnis, daß die immaterielle Liebe all die materiellen Entbehrungen zu überstrahlen weiß, anzubieten, wäre wirklich zu kritisieren und wirkt auf uns Heutige dann auch eher kitschig. Das mag seine Konzession an den Massengeschmack, an die Unterhaltungsliteratur gewesen sein, die er sicherlich gern bereit war, zuzugestehen. Fallada machte Konzessionen, denn er wollte den Erfolg als Schriftsteller, daran ist nicht zu zweifeln.

Hans Fallada heute zu lesen, ist ein manchmal etwas anstrengendes Unterfangen, doch wie erwähnt, wirkt dieser spezielle Sog, den sein Schreiben zu entfachen vermag, auch heute noch. Und wir lernen auch aus dieser Lektüre, daß Geschichte sich eben nicht wiederholt, daß die heutige Situation, die so oft mit der Weimarer Republik verglichen wird, eben durchaus eine andere ist, wir lernen, daß die deutsche Gesellschaft, die hier doch noch klar von Klassen, Ideologien und „Haltungen“ geprägt wurde, einen wirklich fundamentalen Wandel durchlaufen hat im späten 20. Und frühen 21. Jahrhundert. Allerdings – und da müssen wir dem genauen Hinschauer und Hinhörer Fallada dankbar sein – ist da ein Sprechen, manchmal mehr ein Raunen, immer wieder auf den Seiten des Romans deutet es sich an, bricht es sich Bahn, es ist ein Sprechen der Verachtung. Verachtung gegenüber anderen, Andersdenkenden, Andershandelnden, Verachtung gegenüber den herrschenden Politikern, den Parteien, aber auch, wenn auch nicht wirklich explizit, da dies explizit kein politischer Roman sein will, Verachtung gegenüber dem System. Und dieses Sprechen hören wir heute wieder. Es mag heute lächerlich anmuten, weil es sich in einer Situation wie 1932 wähnt, obwohl alle objektiven Tatsachen, Statistiken und Berichte darauf hinweisen, daß es diesem Land selten bis nie so gut ging wie heute. Die Situation ist eine komplett andere, aber die Wahrnehmung wird in bestimmten Bereichen der Gesellschaft wieder dahingehend geschürt, die Systemfrage zu stellen, früher oder später. Wir, mit der Kenntnis dessen, was dann kam, können die Katastrophe, die sich aus dem, was Fallada noch als sozialen Druck beschreibt, herauskristallisiert, lesen. Fallada scheint sie zumindest antizipiert zu haben. Und diese Erkenntnis schließlich lässt uns auch heute bei der Lektüre – vielleicht aus ganz anderen Gründen, als der Autor sie je sich ausmalte oder gar intendierte – schauern.

Το ?σχημο Ρ?ζι Καρολ?να says

Δεν υπ?ρχει ?λεος. Ο Φ?λλαντα αν?κει στο λεγ?μενο ρε?μα της Ν?ας Αντικειμενικ?τητας (Neue Sachlichkeit), ?νας ε?δος ρεαλισμο? που υπερβ?νει σε σκληρ?τητα τον νατουραλισμ? του 19ου αι?να και με βρ?κε απροετο?μαστη. Δεν ε?ναι ωμ?ς, δεν ε?ναι ψυχρ?ς, αντιθ?τως ε?ναι σοκαριστικ? απλ?ς ο τρ?πος που εξιστορε? τα γεγον?τα. Με τρ?πο απλ?, λιτ? κατανοητ?. Και καταλ?γει να ε?ναι μια μαχαιρι? στην καρδι?. ?λη αυτ? η αλ?θεια. Τελικ? η πραγματικ?τητα μπορε? να γ?νει το αριστοτεχνικ?τερο μυθιστ?ρημα τρ?μου. Και δεν υπ?ρχει τ?λος σε αυτ?ν τον εφι?λητη. Γιατ? π?ς να ξυπν?σεις, ?ταν δεν κοιμ?σαι;

Ο Σ?νυ Π?νεμπεργκ και η κοπ?λα του η Λ?μχεν περιμ?νουν παιδ?. Παντρε?ονται και αρχ?ζουν την κοιν? τους ζω?, στην Γερμαν?α των αρχ?ν του 1930, στην Γερμαν?ας της οικονομικ?ς κρ?σης, ?που μαστ?ζει η ανεργ?α, η ακρ?βεια, η ανασφ?λεια, η πολιτικ? αστ?θεια και η ?νοδος του ναζισμο?. Και μ?σα σε αυτ?ν τον χαοτικ? κ?σμο, αυτο? ελπ?ζουν, και κ?νουν το παν για να με?νουν μαζ?, δεμ?νοι και δυνατο?, για τους εαυτο?ς τους και το μωρ? που ?ρχεται. Τ?σα βιβλ?α ?χω διαβ?ζει για την Δημοκρατ?α της Βα?μ?ρης και την ?νοδο του 3ου Ρ?ιχ, αλλ? μ?νο τ?ρα, διαβ?ζοντας αυτ? το μυθιστ?ρημα, κατ?λαβα σε β?θος, τ? συν?βαινε εκε?νη την εποχ? στην Γερμαν?α. Και με τρ?μο διαπιστ?νω πως αν τον Σ?νυ τον ?λεγαν Γι?ννη και την Λ?μχεν Μαρ?α, θα μπορο?σε αυτ? η ιστορ?α να εκτυλ?σσεται στην Αθ?να του 2016 κι ?χι στο Βερολ?νο του 1932. Κι αυτ? ε?ναι που με κ?νει να αισθ?νομαι τον πιο πρωτ?γγωνο και αυθεντικ? τρ?μο. Για ?λους μας.

Πρ?τα απ? ?λα ?ταν τ?τοια τα ποσοστ? της ανεργ?ας, ?που αυτομ?τως ?λοι οι εργαζ?μενοι, ε?τε εργ?τες, ε?τε εργατο?π?λλοι ?ταν αναλ?σιμοι και ?ρμαια του εργοδ?τη. Καν?νας ν?μος, καν?να σωματε?ο, καν?να κοινωνικ? σ?στημα πρ?νοιας δεν μπορο?σε να προστατ?ψει και να εγγυηθε? για το μ?λλον εκατομμυρ?ων ανθρ?πων. Με ?να φ?σημα απ? απλ?ς μικροαστ?ς κατ?ληγες ?στεγος στα παγκ?κια, με τους μισο?ς να σε κοιτο?ν με ο?κτο και τους υπ?λοιπους να σε βρ?ζουν ως β?ρος της

κοινωνίας. Στο πάρκο Tiergarten του Βερολίνου μαζεύονται οι γέροι:

“Πολύριθμοι άνθρωποι ήταν συγκεντρωμένοι εκεί, ντυμένοι στα γκρίζα, με βαθουλωμένα πρόσωπα. Γέροι άνθρωποι, περιμένοντας για κάτι, χωρίς ούτε κι οι ίδιοι να ξέρουν τι ακριβώς, γιατί; πλόν ποιος βρισके δουλειά; Απλώς κθόνταν ολγυρα, χωρίς κποιο σχδίο. Τα δία χλία θα ταν κι αν μεναν σπτι, οπτε γιατ να μην στκόνταν εκε; πρα; Δεν εχε νημα να γυρσουν σπτι αφο; πντα εκε; κατληγαν, θελ; τους, κι εχαν γλο το χρνο στη διθεσ; τους.”

Αλλ; κι σοι εργζονται υπκείνται σε τσους εξευτελισμο;ς, εκβιασμο;ς και ταπεινσεις, το δε βσμα πεفته σννεφο, και χωρίς αυτ;, ελπδα για μισθ; και μεροκματο ταν εκτ;ς συζτησης, εκτ;ς κι αν καποιος αποφσιζε να ασχοληθε; με παρανομ;ς και κομπν;ς:

“Συστατικ;ς επιστολ;ς: χρηστες. Ικαντητα: χρηστη. Καλ; εμφνιση: χρηστη. Ταπειντητα: χρηστη. λα ταν χρηστα εκτ;ς απ; την μεσολβηση εν;ς τπου σαν τον Γιχμαν” (σσ: που χει το κον;).

Τα δε αφεντικ; Δε θλω να σχολισω για να μη βρω θα αψω να μιλσει το απσπασμα:

“- Σας παρακαλ; συχωρστε με κριε Σπνφους, το παιδ; μου ταν ρρωστο χτες το βρδυ και τρεχα να βρω νοσοκμα...

Τους κοταξε απελπισμνος.

- Α, το παιδ; σου, επε ο Σπνφους. στε αυτ; τη φορ; ταν το παιδ; σου ρρωστο. Πριν τσσερις βδομδ;ς, μπως δκα; παιρνες συνχεια δεια εξαιτ;ς της γυνακας σου. Υποθτω πως σε δο; εβδομδ;ς θα πεθανει η γιαγ; σου και σε κνα μνα θα σπσει η θεα σου το πδι της.

Σπασε για λγο και ξαναπρεφρα:

-Η επιχερηση δεν ενδιαφρεται για την προσωπικ; σου ζω;. Τα Μντελς (σσ πολυκατστημα ροχων και αξεσουρ) δεν ενδιαφρονται για την ιδιωτικ; σου ζω;. Καννισε να ασχολεσαι με τα μικροπροβλματα; σου αφο; σχολσεις.

Ακμα μια παση κι πειτα:

- Η επιχερηση σου εξασφαλζει την προσωπικ; σου ζω;, κριε! Η επιχερηση ρχεται πρτη, δετερη και τρτη. Μετ; απ; αυτν κνε ;τι θες. Αναλαμβνουμε το βρος να σου παρχουμε το καθημεριν; σου ψωμ;. Κατλαβ; το αυτ;. Χρη σε εμ;ς ζεις. Τον μισθ; σου ξρεις να τον τσεπνεις πντα στην ρα του στο τλος του μνα”

Τ; να πω; Καθκια. Ε καθκια. Τελικ; δεν κρατθηκα κι βρισα.

Και πσος ταν αυτ;ς ο μισθ;ς; 200 μρκα. ψαξα να βω πσο αντιστοιχε; αυτ; το ποσ; σε σημεριν; ευρ; αλλ; μπρεσα να βρω μνο μια αντιστοιχα του ριχμαρκ του 1938 με το δολριο του 1938 κι απ; εκε; βρωκα ναν μετατροπ;, χι πολ; αξιπιστο με τον οποο; κανα την αντιστοιχα απ; δολριο του 1938 σε σημεριν; δολριο κι απ; εκε; την μετατροπ; σε σημεριν; ευρ;. Τα υπολγισα κπου στα 900 ευρ; σημεριν;. Στο περπου και κατ; προσγγιση. Σε κποιο σημεο η Λμχεν κνει μια λστα με τα μηνια; ξοδα και αναφρει τα εξ;ς:

62 μαρκα το μηνια για τρφημα = 250 ευρ;

ασφλιση και φροι 31,75= 150 ευρ;

εισητρια 9 =35 ευρ;

ηλεκτρικ; 3 = 11 ευρ;

ρουχα - εσρουχα 10 = 48 ευρ;

τσαγκρης 4 =17 ευρ;

Υπ?λοιπα 73,25 (καθαριστικ? τσιγ?ρα νο?κι κτλ) = 353 ευρ?
απρ?βλεπτα ?ξοδα 3 = 11
σ?νολο 196 = 875 ευρ?
και μ?νουν για αποταμ?ευση 4 μ?ρκα = 17 ευρ?
200 μ?ρκα = 892 ευρ?.

Και κ?που εδ? θα μπορο?σε κ?ποιος να σχολι?σει το π?σο ?δικο ε?ναι ?ταν μια χ?ρα ξ?ρει π?σο δ?σκολο ε?ναι επιβι?σει μια οικογ?νεια με παιδ?, με τ?τοιο μισθ?, σ?μερα, να πρ?πει να ζ?σουν οικογ?νειες στην Ελλ?δα με 800 ? 500 ? ακ?μα και κ?τω απ? 400 ευρ?. Αλλ? δε θα σχολι?σω, θα κρατ?σω επ?πεδο και δεν θα βρ?σω. Α στο δι?λο. (Δεν μπ?ρεσα τελικ?).

Αυτ? το βιβλ?ο θα το πρ?τεινα σε ?λους. ?σοι μπορο?ν να βρουν μια αγγλικ? μετ?φραση αν δεν ξ?ρουν γερμανικ?. Λ?ει αλ?θειες. Σε γεμ?ζει οργ?. Ξεσκεπ?ζει την υποκρισ?α. Αλλ? ε?ναι γεμ?το και απ? τρυφερ?τητα. Ανθρωπι?. Δεν δ?νει ελπ?δα. Δεν προσφ?ρει λ?σεις. Αλλ? β?ζει τα πρ?γματα στη θ?ση τους. Σε καν?ναν λα? δεν αξ?ζει τ?ση δυστυχ?α. Καν?νας λα?ς δεν θ?λει αυτ?ν την εξαθλ?ωση. Τ?τε γιατ? τα κ?νουμε ?λα αυτ? ο ?νας λα?ς στον ?λλο; Γιατ? η κοινων?ες να ε?ναι δομημ?νες επ?νω στην αρχ? της ανισ?τητας; Γιατ? οι δυνατο? να πρ?πει να τσακ?ζουν π?ντα τον αδ?ναμο; Π?ση π?εση μπορε? να αντ?ξει ?νας λα?ς πρ?ν τραβ?ξει στα ακρα κι αρχ?σει να αναζητ? αποδιοπομπα?ους τρ?γους;

Π?ντως αυτ? που κατ?λαβα ε?ναι πως πλ?ον ?σοι διαρρηγ?νουν τα ιμ?τι? τους και κατηγορο?ν τους ?λλους και υποκρ?νονται τους σωστο?ς, απ? τους θ?κους και τις θ?σεις ισχ?ος που κατ?χουν, θ?λουν απλ?ς να κ?νουν τον αδ?ναμο, τον φτωχ? να νι?σει ?νοχος εν? δεν ε?ναι για να συνεχ?σουν να τον τσακ?ζουν. Κι ?πως αναφ?ρει κι ο συγγραφ?ας στο βιβλ?ο:

“Η φτ?χεια δεν ε?ναι απλ?ς εξαθλ?ωση. Η φτ?χεια ε?ναι αδ?κημα, η φτ?χεια ε?ναι ρετσινι?, η φτ?χεια ε?ναι αιτ?α ενοχ?ς”.

Α σιχτ?ρ, π?ω να μετρ?σω την π?εσ? μου, καθ?λου καλ? δεν ε?μαι...

Hadrian says

George Grosz - Berlin Street, 1931

Wandering, pitiful story of a poorer employed couple in the last years of Weimar Germany. Living constantly in the short-term, from pay-day to pay-day, desperate, shunned. Fallada wants so desperately to write about the triumph of the human spirit and love at the very end, but what would happen in Germany by 1933 only laughs at that.

Dana says

Hans Fallada must have been a lover, because he hits every detail. The babytalk, the little spats and the guilt that follows, the waffling from boundless optimism to despondency over the course of the day, the overwhelming sense of well-being and accomplishment two people get from making dinner or the budget

together - or from forgiving each other (the story of the dressing table!).

Fallada wants to defend the lovers' right to their naivete, to their apolitical existence - to defend the "little man" from the Nazis' politicization of daily life. He is actually optimistic (of course he is, he doesn't know what's going to happen, who ever does?), which inspires a deep sadness and, if read late at night, sense of doom in the contemporary reader - especially one who has already read *Every Man Dies Alone*, Fallada's final & postwar novel, and who realizes that Fallada's faith in the lovers will give way to his faith in death.

Bjorn says

The book is written in Germany of 1932. One year before Hitler came to power.

I first read this in Swedish a few years ago. The Swedish title, *What'll Become Of The Pinnebergs?* is a bit cheesy; it sounds a bit like a 30s comedy, which of course it is in a way, but it doesn't seem to have the weight of the original's *Little Man, What Now?* At the same time I can't help but like the title, as if it's setting us up less to see a warning (which it is) and more to see the people in it, as a (which it also is) nice, low-intensity but increasingly desperate story about a young family just trying to get along.

Start from the beginning: Johannes Pinneberg marries Emma "Lämmchen" ("Little lamb") Mörschel. They hadn't really planned to get there this quickly, but they're young, they forget about contraception, and whoops. No big, these are modern times and it's not that much of a moral issue. They're well into their 20s, they already have jobs (though of course she'll have to quit hers), they were going to end up here anyway, now they just have just under 9 months to get their proper adult married lives in order before the little one arrives. They're in love, they're willing to work hard, they don't demand any luxury... What could possibly go wrong?

Well, there's the bit about getting started. If you want to feed three mouths on one salary, you need to save money. To save money, you need to have money. If you can't afford to buy your own place, you need to rent expensive furnished rooms, and they don't want squalling newborns. You need a fixed income, but the economy is hurting and if you don't like the deal, there are thousands of others who want your job, and...

(...and there's political unrest brewing in the background, communists and Nazis fighting in the streets, and say what you want about the Nazis, they may be violent thugs but at least they're OUR violent thugs, good German boys who are bound to grow up if we just show them some respect, and let's be honest, nobody likes the Jews, so we'll see after the election...)

The book is written in Germany of 1932. One year before Hitler came to power.

And Pinneberg works and toils but he can't get ahead, he clings to any job he can get by his fingernails, locked in competition with his co-workers. They're in a recession, and you know the business owners are hurting too, what with the taxes and all, and they'd *love* to offer better wages but &c. Don't cause any trouble, keep your head down, don't come across as political by demanding more than what we say is your share, you'll get pie in the sky when you die. Emma's class-conscious worker parents sneer at her for "marrying up", Johannes' aging madam of a mother can't understand why they're so hung up on something as hopelessly common as money. All Johannes and Emma ask is to love and earn their keep, but anything they can say or do is turned against them. Pride fucks with ya; nobody likes a beggar, but what to do when you're reduced to

asking for mercy? The harder society becomes, the more we hate the weak, the weakness in ourselves.

Down the slippery slope, sunk without trace, utterly destroyed. Order and cleanliness, gone; work, material security, gone; making progress and hope, gone. Poverty is not just misery, poverty is an offence, poverty is a stain, poverty is suspect.

And yet Fallada describes them with such warmth and wide-eyed optimism, as if he can't bear the thought that it's hopeless even as he piles on the misfortune and they increasingly lose their grip on that steep, slippery slope. He describes their lives so simply, so matter-of-factly that he never lets us forget that this is happening NOW - in the 30s, sure, but that wasn't long ago, this isn't some weird mediaeval Dickens world, these are two young people in 20th century Europe. They're in love. They have no money. They're slipping, and they can't hold on. And they're not alone, and fear and paranoia is spreading, and SOMETHING is going to happen to society very soon.

And it breaks my heart, and leaves me fucking furious that I *know* what'll become of the Pinnebergs. Whatever they ended up doing over the next 15 years, they became part of that thing that we've been so busy arguing that it can never happen again that we completely ignore any hint that it can, as if "Never Again" were some magical formula. Nobody saw it coming that time, so common wisdom states... Except for Fallada and other writers, obviously... So clearly we'll see it coming next time, right? Increasing inequality, rising unemployment, fear, xenophobia, more people running to extremist parties, that's all stuff that just kind of happens in 2014. Germany of 1932 was long ago.

And yet I read this book and I love it, I can almost forget what I know, I can read it and see that question mark at the end of the title. The book is so now, and the Pinnebergs so multi-faceted and so trusting in each other and believing that somehow it *has* to work out, there's simply no other option, that I want to believe it. Fallada didn't *know*; he could suspect, but he could hope. He could be as naive as Johannes and Emma are at the start. Because really, what else is there?

The book is written in Germany of 1932. It sold massively, was serialized all over Europe, became the 1930s version of *Orange Is The New Black*, was discussed everywhere. Then Hitler took over anyway. The pen didn't stand a chance against the sword.

Little man... what now?

Makis Dionis says

Ο ανθρωπος του Φάλντα, είναι μικρός και ερωτευμένος. Κάνει νείρα για την υπεροχή ζω που απλνεται μπροστ του. Αλλ η Γερμανα της κρσης, λγο πριν τον Β ΠΠ δεν του χαρζεται. λα τα συστατικ που οδγησαν στην κρση είναι εδ. Μπροστ του. Αμρφωτοι νθρωποι, μπλεοι των κμπλεξ τους εμφανζονται διαρκς για να τον τραβξουν στην κινουμενη μμο τους. μως και ο ιδιος βγαλμνος απ την δια μτρα περπου δεν χει τα εφδια για να πολεμσει. Κραταει αποστσεις απ τα κοιν κ πιστεει τι θα γυρσει κπως μαγκ ο τροχς. Διατηρε την αξιοπρπεια του μχρι να του την λιανισουν και αυτ για τους πλον ασημαντους λγους. Ο μικροαστισμος σε λη του την νθιση, κατακεραυνωνεται απ τον Φάλντα, για μια ακμα φορ, που επιλγει ωστσο, να δσει μια πνο αισιοδοξας στο τλος, καθς πντα η ζω είναι larger than ourselves , κ η μια φορ που δεν θα σε ρξει αξζει λα τα πεσιματα που προηγθηκαν

Evripidis Gousiaris says

Σκληρ? αλλ? ταυτ?χρονα τ?σο γλυκ?.

Maria Bikaki says

«Μ?λις πριν λ?γο βγ?κε απ? του Λ?μαν, προσωπ?ρχη των Καταστημ?των Μ?ντελ, ζ?τησε μια θ?ση εκε? και την π?ρε, μια επαγγελματικ? συναλλαγ? πολ? απλ?. Αλλ? κ?που μ?σα του ο Π?νεμπεργκ νι?θει ?τι εξαιτ?ας αυτ?ς της συναλλαγ?ς, και παρ?λο που βρ?σκεται π?λι απ? την πλευρ? εκε?νων που βγ?ζουν τα προς το ζην, νι?θει πιο κοντ? σ' αυτο?ς που δεν κερδ?ζουν τ?ποτε παρ? σ' αυτο?ς που κερδ?ζουν πολλ?. Ε?ναι ?νας απ' αυτο?ς, μπορε? απ? τη μια μ?ρα στην ?λλη να βρεθε? κι αυτ?ς εδ? να περιμ?νει, δε μπορε? να κ?νει τ?ποτε γι' αυτ?, τ?ποτε δεν τον προστατε?ει. Αλληλεγγ?η των υπαλλ?λων, ?κκληση στον γερμανικ? λα?, η εθνικ? κοιν?τητα, υπ?ρχει μ?νο μια κοιν?τητα, η μικροβιακ? κοιν?τητα, δεν πα να ψοφ?σεις, τι σημασ?α ?χει, υπ?ρχουν εκατομμ?ρια σαν εσ?να».

?ντε τ?ρα να κ?νεις κριτικ? γι αυτ? το βιβλ?ο. ?πως θα λεγε και μια καλ? μου φ?λη «Πως τολμ?ς?» Πραγματικ? δε θυμ?μαι τι ?ρα κοιμ?θηκα χτες το βρ?δυ. Οι σελ?δες γ?ριζαν και δε χ?ρταινα την αν?γνωση. Η απ?λυτη χαρ? του αναγν?στη. Θε? μου αυτ? η ευτυχ?α ?ταν βρεις ?να βιβλ?ο που σου μιλ?ει τ?σο πολ? στην ψυχ?!!! Πραγματικ? ασ?γκριτο συνα?σθημα το ξ?ρετε πολ? καλ? ?λοι εσε?ς που ε?στε μ?λη σε αυτ?ν την κοιν?τητα.

?να απ? τα πιο συγκλονιστικ? βιβλ?α που δι?βασα αυτ? τη χρονι?. Συγκλονιστικ? γι αυτ? την μοναδικ? του απλ?τητα μ?σα απ? την οπο?α περιγρ?φει μια σκληρ? κατ? τ' ?λλα πραγματικ?τητα. Μ?σα απ? τη σκληρ?τητα ?μως των γεγον?των που περιγρ?φει ποτ? δε χ?νεται η ελπ?δα, η π?στη, η αισιοδοξ?α. Σε πε?σμα μιας κοινων?ας που προσπαθε? με κ?θε τρ?πο να σε κ?νει να χ?σεις την ελπ?δα σου, που σε γεμ?ζει αγων?α για το α?ριο οι δυο πρωταγωνιστ?ς μας με μπροστ?ρη την αγ?πη που ?χουν ο ?νας στον ?λλο παλε?ουν για ?να καλ?τερο α?ριο. Π?φτουν, σηκ?νονται ξαν?, απελπ?ζονται, μας κ?νουν να τους συμπον?σουμε με τις αγων?ες που αντιμετωπ?ζουν καθημεριν?. ?να βιβλ?ο γροθι? μαχαιρι? στην καρδι? και την ?δια ?ρα τ?σο γλυκ? και τρυφερ?. Καμ?α ανεργ?α και καμ?α οικονομικ? κρ?ση δε μπορε? να γκρεμ?σει τους δεσμο?ς αυτ?ν των δυο παιδι?ν και του μικρο? τους μπ?μπιρα που ?ρθε για να φωτ?σει τις ζω?ς τους. Τ?σο επ?καιρο, ?να απ?θανο συγγραφικ? κρεσ?ντο του Hans Fallada που πρ?πει να βρ?σκεται σε κ?θε βιβλιοθ?κη.

Eirini Proikaki says

Γραμμ?νο σε μια εποχ? μεγ?λης οικονομικ?ς κρ?σης ,την περ?οδο που η Δημοκρατ?α της Βα?μαρης κατ?ρρεε και οι Ναζ? κ?ρδιζαν δ?ναμη,αυτ? το βιβλ?ο ε?ναι τρομακτικ? επ?καιρο.Μ?σα στις σελ?δες του δυστυχ?ς βλ?πουμε καταστ?σεις που ?λοι λ?γο πολ? βλ?πουμε να συμβα?νουν γ?ρω μας ? και μ?σα στα σπ?τια μας.

Δυο νεαρ? ερωτευμ?να παιδι? βρ?σκονται μπροστ? σε μια απροσμενη εγκυμοσ?νη και αποφασ?ζουν να παντρευτο?ν και να παλ?ψουν μαζ? για το καλ?τερο.Οι καταστ?σεις ?μως δεν

βοηθοῦν και το ζευγῆρι ἀναγκάζεται να μετακομῇ στο Βερολῆνο ὅταν ο Γιοχᾶνες χῆνει τη δουλειᾶ του.Κι ἐκεῖ ἴμῳς τὰ πρῶματα εἶναι δῆσκολα και το μῆνο που καταφῆρνουν εἶναι να φυτοζωοῦν,χωρὶς ἐλπῆδα και γεμῆτοι φοβο για το ἀῆριο.

Η γραφῆ του συγγραφέα,ἴπως και η ἱστορῆα εἶναι ἀπλᾶ ἀλλᾶ μῆσα ἀπο αὐτᾶ την ἀπλᾶτητα βγαῖνει ἴνας σπαραγμῆς.Εἶναι συγκλονιστικῆς ο τρῶπος με τον οποῶο η φτῆχεια και η ἴλλειψη ἐλπῆδας τσακῆζει την ἀθῶτητα αὐτῶν των παιδιῶν που ζουν μῆσα σε ἴναν συνεχῆ τρῶμο,που δὲν ξῆρουν ἀν θα ἴχουν να φῆνε τον ἴλλο μῆνα,που νιῆθουν οτι ἀν δὲν ἴχεις λεφτᾶ δὲν εἶσαι τῆποτα.Εἶναι ἴμῳς και τῆσο συγκινητικᾶ η ἀγῆπη τους και ο τρῶπος που η Εμᾶ στηρῆζει τον Γιοχᾶνες.

Bobby Underwood says

“They were standing right up to the shop window, well-dressed people, respectable people, people who earned money. But reflected in the window was another figure: a pale outline without a collar, in a shabby coat, with trousers besmirched with tar. And suddenly Pinneberg understood everything. Faced with the policeman, these respectable people, this bright shop window, he understood that he was on the outside now, that he didn’t belong any more...”

Unemployment was at 42% in Weimar when Hans Fallada published this tender and often charming novel of Germany between the wars. In a country being devoured by hyperinflation, with more and more people falling into a nameless, faceless nothingness where they no longer mattered to any one, the newly installed Chancellor cut unemployment support. Nine days later, *Little Man, What Now?*, a book written in only sixteen weeks, was published, giving the downtrodden a voice. Fifty German newspapers serialized the book, and it became a worldwide sensation. It also brought Fallada disfavor when it was turned into a wonderful film in America, starring the luminous Margaret Sullavan as Lammchen, and the underrated Douglass Montgomery as Pinneberg. The film, you see, was made by Jews in Hollywood...

Fallada’s focus in the novel is a young German couple with a child on the way. The reader only knows the unborn child by the affectionate term used by Sonny and Lammchen — Shrimp. Through Pinneberg and Lammchen’s struggles, and their slide downward, we see peripherally a people desperate to latch onto either the lofty ideals of Communism, or the promises of jobs proffered by the Nazi Party. In a novel nearly apolitical, because it’s focus is the little guy, we see the conditions that give birth to what happened, and get a glimpse — not from hindsight, because this was published in 1932 — at an ugliness that would only grow more fervent, until it threatened to engulf the world.

There is a soft neorealism to Fallada’s narrative, which is tremendously intimate, and terribly charming. Yet interspersed with this realism is the kind of loveliness such as one might find in one of Remarque’s novels:

“The white curtains moved gently against the windows in the wind. A soft light radiated through the room. An enchantment drew them towards the open window, arm in arm, and they leaned out. The countryside was bathed in moonlight. Far to the right there was a tiny flickering dot of light; the last gas-lamp on Feldstrasse. But before them lay the countryside, beautifully divided up into patches of friendly brightness, and deep soft shade where the trees stood. It was so quiet that even up here they could hear the Strela rippling over the stones. And the night wind blew very gently on their foreheads.”

In essence, the entire novel is made up of realistic vignettes, the love story of a couple who marry upon discovering that Emma (Lammchen) is with child. Johannes Pinneberg (Sonny) very much loves his

Lammchen, and has to work in a different town just to survive. Their struggles are not unlike any newly married couple's problems, but poverty and the growing unrest and desperation in Germany between the wars begins closing in on them, inch by inch. Fallada shows in great detail how such times bring out the best in some people, but the worst in others. He also shows how employers, knowing how valuable having a job was, took advantage. All this is done with great charm, humor, and slice-of-life moments which are universal. Pinneberg must even play up to a girl and keep his marriage to Lammchen secret in order to keep one job. No job is safe, however, and no matter how hard Pinneberg tries, the couple slowly move toward the gutter. Pinneberg's pessimism, and his desperation to take care of his Lammchen, is perhaps best represented by this apolitical passage:

"There was a wild, wide, noisy and hostile world out there, which knew nothing of them and cared less."

In many ways, Lammchen is the stronger of the two, and she knows it. Pinneberg knows that despite his job, they are one step from hopelessness, and joining his comrades. The slide is so gradual, their day-to-day struggle so consuming, it is the reader who sees it best, through Fallada's remarkably intimate and charming vignettes. Even as they are relegated to a tiny loft above a cinema, and then Lammchen must spend hours darning socks for just a small amount to feed the Shrimp and themselves, because Pinneberg can no longer find work, there is charm, and some hope. But Pinneberg knows that it is only his friend Heilbut's kindness that is keeping them from the gutter. Lammchen's Sonny boy, is losing himself, and his dignity.

Lammchen senses this, but knows that one day things will be better, if they can hang on. Her greatest fear is that her Sonny boy will do something before they are back on their feet which will stain him, and haunt him long after the tide has turned. She reveals this to the lovable scoundrel Jachman near the end of the book, while they are waiting for Pinneberg to arrive. But Sonny is very late, and her fear for him is growing. It brings about an open-ended conclusion that is terribly moving. It is also terribly lovely, one of the most beautifully written scenes you'll ever come across in literature.

Fallada, whose own life was fraught with adversity, both outward and inward, based Emma (Lammchen) on his wife Anna Issel, and it is easy to see that Pinneberg is much like Fallada himself. This novel had tremendous success, easing Fallada's own financial problems for a time. Though it perhaps takes too long to get to its moving conclusion, few will be sorry they read it. One of the most remarkable things about the book is that it was penned during the events, as these things were happening to Fallada and others. Fallada lived this, and the intimacy of Sonny and Lammchen's story affords readers a bird's eye view of what was really happening. In doing so, it gives us a better understanding of history.

For those interested, there is a good article about Fallada here: <http://hansfallada.com>

Someone was forced to take down the youtube link I had previously posted for the charming Hollywood film (there was one made in Germany also) based on the book. It stars Margaret Sullavan, who is luminous, and Douglass Montgomery, who is equally wonderful. It ends differently from the novel, however. For modern readers, it is a strange circumstance where I would almost recommend viewing the lovely 1934 film first — if possible — because it will help you get into the older style of Fallada's intimate narrative of Little Man, What Now?

Luxor says

Años 30. Alemania vive una de las peores crisis de su historia (caldo de cultivo para el nazismo). Fallada

describe una sociedad cruel y miserable en la que algunos de sus miembros, como Chico y Corderita, una joven pareja de recién casados, tratan de sobrevivir sin perder su dignidad. Un canto al amor como tabla de salvamento ante la marginación.

Precioso, terrible y muy actual.

Lubinka Dimitrova says

"Kleiner Mann, was nun?" is exactly what the title says - a small man, living his small life, with his small family, striving to survive day by day. This "smallness", while at times quite numbing with its ordinariness, lingers with the reader for a long time for a long time after finishing the book. I kept on thinking about my own small life and struggles which often make me forget that there must be more "life" in our lives...

The story itself is fairly basic. I liked how Fallada wrapped the lessons about history and the economic/political situation around the simple tale of a young couple trying to raise a family and survive in the Depression. The characters were a little stereotypical and could have had a bit more depth, but in general they were quite interesting. The book was a bit long, but Fallada is a good enough writer so my interest remained undiminished. I intended to say that Alone in Berlin is a better book for me personally, but now, after a few days have passed since I finished this one, I really couldn't decide between them.

Ray says

Set in Germany in the great depression of the 1930s, this is a simple yet effective story. It involves the trials and tribulations of a couple setting up a life together and starting a family at a time of great hardship. It features the dreary monotony of the constant struggle to try and make ends meet, and the slow inexorable slide to penury. It all sounds very depressing, and yet at the same time there is a nobleness of spirit and a determination not to give up which I found very moving.

The sheer hopelessness of the situation, with wages at very low levels and 42% unemployment, was daunting yet somehow the couple get by. We also see cameos by assorted relatives and colleagues that add colour and spice to the mix. The author uses these to provide light relief, showing us a cross section of Weimar society - a drunken carpenter, a naturalist menswear salesman "suits you sir", a Nazi work colleague and an accommodating mother in law who may just be a Madam.

There is a role reversal through the course of the the book as the husband becomes progressively disillusioned whereas his wife shows her mettle as she slowly metamorphoses into the main breadwinner. By the end of the book the couple have reached a sort of precarious equilibrium, just about managing, and it even ends on a positive note as it looks as if the wife has worked out how to increase their meagre income a little.

In the background there are ominous undertones as a certain monotesticular Austrian corporal is on the march.

The tone of the book is light - even comic at times - despite its bleak subject matter, and it has a really contemporary feel for a book that was written eighty years ago. I enjoyed reading it and I can certainly see why it was a hit pre war.

Alan says

although at points I felt this was rushed, as though the author was just putting down what he felt like (eg naturism an answer to economic crisis! Although that did add to its charm), this was an absorbing, fascinating read. A couple on the poverty line face life in 1932 Germany, the Weimar republic on the brink of collapse, and Nazis on the rise. The counting of every pfennig, the absurdities of the hierarchies in the various shops and offices where the unfortunate Pinneburg (sorry that may be wrong - haven't got the book with me at the moment) works, the landladies and streets of Berlin where the couple go to live are all exquisitely done. There is humour too, and the characters, particularly the protagonist's mother, a kind of heavily made up and opinionated madam and her lover the kind but criminal Janneche(?), are all so well done you feel you've met them, had them round to dinner. Best of all was the wife Lammchen, who does things wrong (like a disastrous pea soup), is always in trouble, but keeps the family together. Maybe a mite sentimental in the end and at times a little wonky, it was hard not to love this book.

Kusaimamekirai says

1931, Berlin. The Weimar Republic is in its death throes, the Nazi's inexorable rise to power creeps on, and Johannes and Emma Pinneberg are newly married with a baby on the way. While Emma, affectionately known as "Lammchen" by Johannes has some Communist sympathies, they are by and large apolitical. This novel more than anything is about survival in a harsh world where nobody really cares or even notices if you fall behind.

Throughout the story they struggle to be employed, find decent housing, and have even the simplest trappings of a normal life. They are both on the whole however, extremely decent people, which makes their circumstances all the more tragic.

Perhaps what struck me the most about them however is that whatever indignities the world threw at them (Johannes' mom in particular is an awful human being), they always seemed to have their love to fall back on. Not love in a syrupy, idealistic way but an actual sense of when everything around them is crumbling, they know they always have each other to fall back on. In a world with so many heartless creatures, the Pinnebergs ferociously defend their dignity and never allow themselves to be compromised by the evil around them.

They are in many ways the quintessential Fallada characters in that no matter how far they may fall, there is always something good about them. Yes, this story is sad and it's easy to lose hope for the Pinnebergs with each new setback. But that they never lose hope or their love for each other makes this at heart a beautiful and wonderful read.

Nicole~ says

3.5 stars

This tale is a sweetly naïve, charming description of a couple's relationship and survival through economic hard times in Berlin 1932. It is a response to social stories of the day, of bleak futures on the horizon as poverty, conflict and social disorder dominated everyday life. Fallada draws on his observations of many Berliners left jobless and despairing by the depression. In 1932 when *Little Man What Now?* was published, 42% of German workers were unemployed and further cast into desperation as unemployment support was

cut. Realism dictates the themes of the novel as Fallada illuminates the essentially invisible day-to-day struggles of staying above the breadline, the terror of being on the thin edges of employment, and the fear of financial insecurity while trying to provide for a family. His fictional world of Berlin was praised as "no fiction at all," but rather an authentic report of life - a novel for 'the people.'

The novel's strength is in the acute perspectives and observations of its characters, mainly through Johannes Pinneberg, a man of little means; and his wife, Lammchen, as they confront an unexpected pregnancy, the contentment and wonderment of the newly-wedded, the fulfillment of work regardless of its meagerness, the anxiety of unemployment and then utter despair. Pinneberg finds joy in the prospect of becoming a husband and father, but hopes of providing for a family turn dismally in a string of unfortunate events. ***"Down the slippery slope, sunk without trace, utterly destroyed. Order and cleanliness, gone; work, material security, gone; making progress and hope, gone. Poverty is not just misery, poverty is an offense, poverty is a stain, poverty is suspect."***

Pinneberg's love for Lammchen, who rises above her proletarian parents; his confidence in her judgment; her courage and steadfastness when her husband becomes one of the 6 million unemployed, are validations for the novel. Lammchen, modeled after Fallada's wife, the levelheaded and stabilizing influence of his life, Anna Issel: shines as the novel's equally supportive and incorruptible heroine. ***"But you know, money isn't the answer. We can get by, and money isn't what's needed. It's work that would help Sonny, a bit of hope. Money? No."***

Fallada deliberately restricts political tones, although the more astute reader might recognize, buried within the folds of the story, a clearly developed political context of the time. He concentrates more on the couple's romantic idylls, contrasting those with despair and hope, irony and humor, the ups and downs of daily life, never allowing their troubles to completely overwhelm them. Even in the moment of Pinneberg's dejected, lowest point, Lammchen's bright outlook won't allow it.

And suddenly the cold had gone, an immeasurably gentle green wave lifted her up and him with her. They glided up together; the stars glittered very near; she whispered: 'But you can look at me! Always, always! You're with me, we're together..' It was the old joy, it was the old love. Higher and higher from the tarnished earth to the stars.

Fallada suggests no resolution to the dismally urgent situation of unemployment, but as he often does in his novels, leaves the reader with a glimmer of hope; in this case to ponder the question: 'What Now?'
