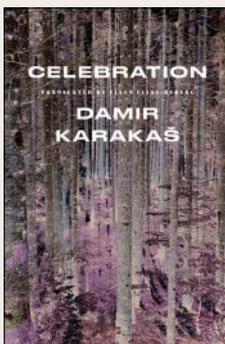


CELEBRATION

Damir Karakaš, translated from Croatian by Ellen Elias-Bursac

1. *Celebration's* setting is a pre-industrial village in Lika, an inland region of Croatia. What is the protagonist Mijo's experience of village life, and how does it inform his perspective and choices?
2. The novel is divided into four sections, each set in a different time. What is the impact of organizing this story using reverse chronology? How does time move within each of the four sections?
3. How does the novel portray the centrality of Lika's forests and other landscapes? What relationship do forests and land have to human history?
4. The novel takes its name from the celebrations organized around the founding of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941. What does *Celebration* suggest by portraying the journey to the celebration, but not the event itself?
5. What informs Mijo's decision to join the Nazi-allied Ustaša force in the 1940s? How does his relation to the Ustaša and to war in general change over time?
6. Describe the novel's use of language and its pacing. In addition to words, what other strategies does the novel use to communicate with its readers?
7. How does the novel relate to non-human beings like birds, trees, wolves, dogs, and cattle? In the context of rural subsistence, what values inform human relationships to animals and the environment?
8. Like many stories of war, *Celebration* is focalized through male characters. How does the novel portray gender relations? Are there ways in which Mijo's relationships challenge or expand the conventions of war stories?
9. Compare Mijo's vision of his "tall, square-shouldered sons walking behind him, singing brightly" with his father's experience, carrying his father on his back and with his son "in the same bent position slowly trudg[ing] behind him" (pg. 20, 116). What do these images suggest about the succession of generations in Croatia? Are there meaningful differences between Mijo's father's life, his own, and his sons'?



Published: September 10, 2024

ISBN: 978-1-949641-66-0

eISBN: 978-1-949641-67-7

Paperback | \$17

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Two Lines Press | San Francisco, CA
twolinespress.com

