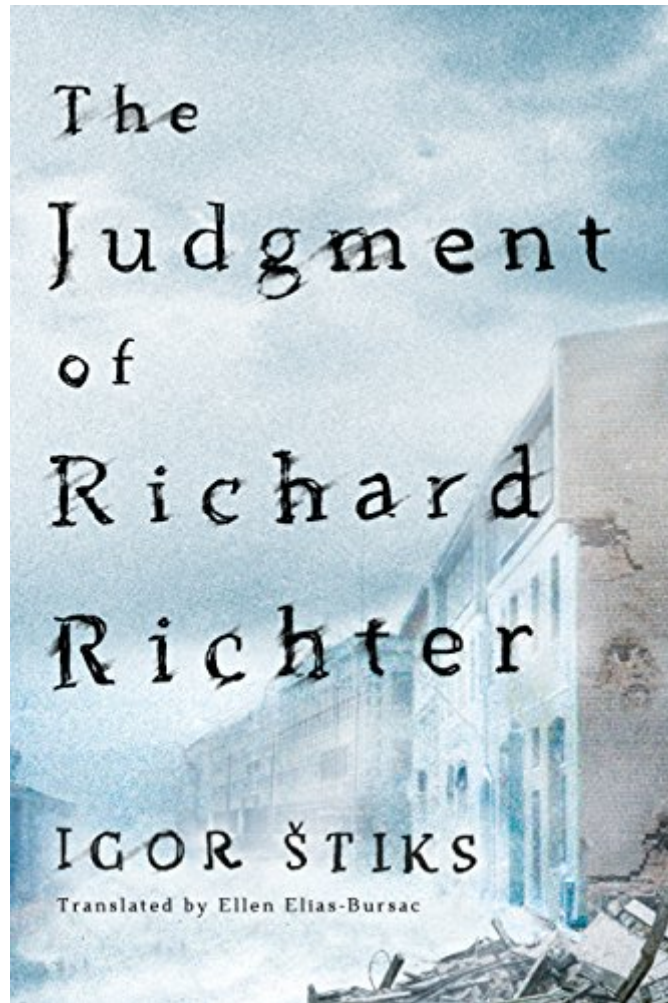




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The Judgment Of Richard Richter



Synopsis

In this gripping, war-torn epic novel, author Igor Å taks, a nominee for the IMPAC Dublin Award, tells the story of a celebrated writer who travels to Sarajevo to unearth devastating family secrets and the lies that have defined his life. Author Richard Richterâ™s mother and father were always phantoms, both parents having died by the time he was four. His life, now at a crossroads, has been a jumble of invention, elusive memories, and handed-down stories. But when Richard finds his motherâ™s hidden notebook, written by her during World War II, he discovers a confession that was never meant to be read by anyoneâ”least of all, her son. Richardâ™s quest for the truth about his life leads him to an embattled Sarajevo. In the chaos of the besieged city, he discovers something more: a transformative romance and unexpected new friendships that will change the course of his search. But fate has been playing with all of them. And just as fate determines the lives of the characters in his novel, a betrayal reaching back half a century has yet to loosen its gripâ”on Richard, on everyone he has come to love, and on those he has no choice but to try to forgive.

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Customer Reviews

I usually wait for reviews to pour in before choosing my Kindle First pick of the month. None of the other books particularly captured my attention. At the time, no reviews for this book were posted; I relied upon the editor's remarks as well as the mention of the awards this book received. I'm glad I chose this book. The Judgment of Richard Richter was a literary treat. Don't choose this book if you want a light read or a happy ending. If you are familiar with Oedipus Rex, which the editor mentions that this book references, you know this book will contain darkness. If you want a book in which you can decipher allusions to classic works of literature and drama, pick this one. If you enjoy tracing and comparing motifs throughout a novel, pick this one. As for the writing itself, be prepared for long sentences; Hemingway this writer is not. I did think the book started too melodramatically in the first two chapters (and resurfaced in the thoughts of Richard throughout). However, when considering the importance of the dramatic play to this novel in the allusion to the Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex, its overt mentions of Oedipus, and the play the character Alma adapted from the novel Homo Faber, I began to read the dramatic thoughts of Richard in a different light. Even if you know that Oedipus killed his father and married his mother, go to Wikipedia or elsewhere to read a more thorough summary of the play. I also read a summary of Homo Faber when it was first mentioned. You will thus know more about the allusions made in The Judgment of Richard Richter and parallels between some characters. The Judgment of Richard Richter is a multi-layered work which will reward the attentive with many motifs to ponder and unravel. I don't wish to offer a summary or spoilers, so I'll point out some themes to think about over the course of the novel.-- How much of Richard's behavior and actions are perceived by him to be driven by free will and how much are fated?-- How does war affect life? Does it tend to breed secrets? What actions does war forgive, if any? Consider this in the stages of prewar, midwar, and postwar.-- Consider the motif of destruction, both literal as in Richard's demolition of his aunt's wall (which seemed selfish to me in that he suddenly reappears in his elderly aunt's life and wants to remodel her home to fit his needs) which leads to the notebook discovery, and figuratively as in the lives of himself and others. Notice how the characters cope with destruction. For example, some do positively through creativity in putting on a play, although the play is a tragedy and puts into motion personal destruction.-- Compare World War II and its effects on Richard and his family with the war in Sarajevo and its effects on Richard and his new-found acquaintances.-- How does wartime affect love?-- Are some secrets best kept? Or should we know the truth despite its possible ramifications? If we know a potentially painful truth, how should we deal with it in regards to its effects on others? Although it's dark, The Judgment of Richard Richter is a satisfying novel. Although some revelations are not big surprises to the reader, the literary path

contains multitudes to discover.

Author Richard Richter was an orphan by the age of four and was raised by his aunt. After finding an old notebook of his mother's written during World War II, Richard's life is changed forever. He sets out on a quest to find out more about his father. The search for answers leads him to a war torn Sarajevo where Richard soon learns that the truth doesn't always set you free. To say this book is unusual is putting it mildly. I don't like to give spoilers in my reviews but I will say I thought the big reveal of Richard's father was too predictable. It's hard to say whether the author intentionally made it obvious or was hoping to catch the reader off guard. While I didn't enjoy that aspect of the book, the aftermath of how Richard dealt with that information at least held my interest. I thought the setting of Sarajevo in 1992 really added to the story as well. The story unfolds as the city is being torn apart by war and the author does a good job in showing what the city was like during that time period. One of the other problems I had with the book was I felt the writing was melodramatic at times. I'm not sure if part of that is because this book was translated from another language, but there were numerous times where it just was a little too much. The worst examples of this are when you are reading Richard's thoughts, particularly in the beginning of the book.

Firstly, I did not read reviews of this book. At the end when I read about the author and translator, it dawned on me that this novel was translated and interpreted in English. It is VERY difficult to follow and switches between places / perspectives / times, sometimes with only a new paragraph to indicate this change. The epilogue actually uses diamonds to transition which was really helpful. It was predictable and too difficult to follow. The main character had more angst and melodrama than a hormonal teenager.

Five stars for the ambience of the story, besieged Sarajevo during the Bosnian war of the 1990s. The author gives the reader a compelling image of how the people try to keep a sense of "normality" while being constantly bombarded by the surrounding army. Keeping one's culture alive by staging - and attending - a theatrical performance is important enough to risk one's life. The theater is where the relationship between the protagonist, a foreign correspondent and writer, and the lead actress starts. Three stars for the unfolding of the relationship between the two. This tragic love story's motivations and emotions fail to convince, especially the protagonist's, whose reactions are often inexplicably excessive even if we consider how his quest to find his identity impacts the love story. Besides the fact that the revelation can be easily intuited dozens of pages before it's revealed. One

star for style and plot development. Too wordy, too repetitive, too slow. I have to confess that I skipped entire paragraphs trying to get the story moving. The promise of a horribly tragic development, promised from the beginning of the narrative, to justify the protagonist's extreme action at the end is not, in my humble opinion, delivered.

I found some of this story difficult to follow but ultimately loved the history and mystery. Thought Simon was it. I look forward to reading another of Igors novels.

The story combines an intricate tale of connected life's with the backdrop of two conflicts. It's a compelling story and a satisfying read.

I enjoyed this book very much. I'm still puzzling out one part. Once I understand better, I'll likely upgrade review to five stars.

I was happy with my Prime pick this month, for a change. I enjoy deep psychological books, plus I have never read a book about Sarajevo. Recommend this book!

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