



Dictionary of the Khazars - Androgynous Edition

By Milorad Pavić

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An international bestseller, Dictionary of the Khazars was cited by "The New York Times Book Review" as one of the best books of the year. Written in two versions, male and female, which are identical save for seventeen crucial lines, Dictionary is the imaginary book of knowledge of the Khazars, a people who flourished somewhere beyond Eurasia between the seventh and ninth centuries. Eschewing conventional narrative and plot, this lexicon novel combines the dictionaries of the world's three major religions with entries that leap between past and future, featuring three unruly wise men, a book printed in poison ink, suicide by mirrors, a chimerical princess, a sect of priests who can infiltrate one's dreams, romances between the living and the dead, and much more.

Androgynous edition.

NY Times:

In truth, this is a book that is best read just about any way except cover to cover. For all its seeming complexity, it surrenders easily - even gratefully - to a reconstructed reading, and there are probably fewer choices for doing that than the author would have us believe.

Charles Fenyvesi, The Washington Times:

What a spooky, zany, preposterous masterpiece... This a virtuoso forgery surpassing the value of the non-existent original; in short, a brilliant polychrome yarn spun by a compulsively Homeric storyteller...

Robert Coover, The New York Times Book Review

He thinks the way we dream... There are some written narratives often thought of as innovative. Such a book is the Yugoslav poet and scholar Milorad Pavić's witty and playful Dictionary of the Khazars, which, with its chronologically disturbed alphabetized entries and its cross-referencing symbols, allows each reader to "put together the book for himself, as in a game of dominos or cards." The reader may pursue a topic as with a dictionary, read the book from beginning to end, from left to right or right to left, or even "diagonally", working "in threes". He may even, Mr. Pavić suggests, "read the way he eats: he can use his right eye as a fork, his left as a knife, and toss the bones over his shoulder".

The Philadelphia Enquirer

Pavic's novels could be classified as magic realism... It's an experiment in flight, an attempt to defy the gravity of ordinary life. It's also the only novel I know of where the heroine falls in love with the reader. Who could resist that? We have no choice but to fall in love right back.

"I wrote Dictionary of the Khazars (1984) as a "lexicon novel". It can be read as dictionaries are used. I made sure that each term in my "dictionary" can be read either before or after any other term. So the work lost beginning or end, for each reader can give it a beginning or end wherever he chooses to start or finish reading. In translation the positions of the terms changed in every alphabet, but that did not affect the entirety of the book at all. I added a "male" and a "female" version, and in the 21st century I united those versions and made an androgynous edition." - Milorad Pavic

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