



The Lost Musicians

William Heinesen, W. Glyn Jones (Translator)

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Set in the Faroese town of Torshavn at the beginning of the 20th century, this is the story of a group of musicians - the Boman Quartet - who find sanctuary in their music amid a series of dramatic and tragic events.

The Lost Musicians Details

Date : Published March 15th 2007 by Dedalus (first published 1950)

ISBN : 9781903517505

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Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Fiction, European Literature, Danish, Literature, Novels, Scandinavian Literature, Cultural, Denmark, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review The Lost Musicians for online ebook

Mark McKenna says

The Lost Musicians by William Heinesen is a look back into the early years of the twentieth century when the alcohol prohibition movement that was sweeping the world made its way to the distant Faroe Islands.

It's not only alcohol that winds up being banned, but also music and *joie de vivre*. Apparently these were inextricably bound -- either in Heinesen's mind, or in the minds of the Baptists that powered the prohibition movement.

So in a way The Lost Musicians is about the ascendancy of religious fundamentalism and the gloom and hypocrisy that attends it. And in another way, it's not about that at all. Even though prohibition drives the plot it remains hidden for much of the book, only to pop out at various climactic moments.

The real day-to-day (page-to-page?) stars of The Lost Musicians are its quirky characters and their love lives; their odd experiences and beliefs. The unnamed city of The Lost Musicians is based on Torshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands. Torshavn was the world of Heinesen's childhood and became the world of his adult imagination, set free in this tale.

So we get characters like "Ankersen the Bank", the city's banker-turned-evangelist, "Ura the Brink" a prostitute-turned-seer; her son, the evil Matte-Gok with his nefarious plans; the three brother musicians, Moritz, Sirius and young Kornelius, a rough sea dog "Ole Brandy"; a taciturn alcoholic dwarf the "Crab King" etc, etc.

Watching these figures from Heinesen's past bounce off one another was for me the chief pleasure of the book. Also the sea was, as you might expect, a central character of the book. It's used constantly as a backdrop and is vital to the lives of almost everyone in the story. Some of Heinesen's most beautiful descriptions are of the sea and its moods.

It was interesting to learn that William Heinesen was also a well-known painter, one of his works graced the cover of the edition I read. And with all the music in this book (including specific pieces and performance techniques) he must have been a musician as well. He was also a famous poet (like one of his main characters, Sirius).

In my experience poets write very beautiful and very quirky novels. The Lost Musicians is definitely one of them. I enjoyed this glimpse into the past, into a lost, art-filled, sea-centered world.

Thomas Haaland says

A moving, many-faceted instant classic, written in delightfully eloquent Danish.

Jan Kløvstad says

Ein fest av ei bok, delt inn som ein symfoni i fire delar. Kapitteloverskriftane er utruleg gode, menneskekildringane djupsindige og humoristiske. Ei av dei aller ebste bøkene eg har lese!

Steve says

This is a novel in the vein of George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe* and others, giving a rich portrait of a place by following multiple characters and their overlapping lives. What kept this from working as well as it might have, though, was how much of it felt like stage-setting or superfluity. Toward the end, plotlines intersect and tension rises as all the characters are touched by central events. But for much of the book there's no sense of connection as whole lines of plot and character develop in what seem like important ways only to vanish without mattering at all later on. So as much as I enjoyed wandering around the world of the story, and as enjoyable as the characters were, I felt like the book could have started later on in the story without missing much.

Carsten says

En fortælling om 5 spillemænd og deres venner og familie. Temaet er Det gode i mennesket og deres kamp imod det onde (indremissionen, grådigheden m.m.) repræsenteret bl.a ved den hellige Sparekassebestyrer Ankersen og hans indremissionske afholdsforening "Ydum". De 5 livsglade spillemænd holder meget at fest, musik og alkohol, hvilket ikke falder i god jord hos Ankersen. Derfor SKAL de omvendes

Bogen er delt op i 4 satser som et stykke musik.

Heinesen maler et morsomt og kærligt portræt af de forskellige typer i byen. Han skriver ikke på en fordømmende måde, om de personer som vil de 5 spillemænd det dårligt, men forholder sig neutral og registrerende. Han er mere interesseret i at påpege de alvorlige konsekvenser som ekstrem religiøsitet og grådighed kan afstedkomme.

Man bliver hurtigt suget ind i fortællingen, og fatter hurtigt sympati for spillemændene på den stormombruste ø i Atlanterhavet. Dette er mit første bekendtskab med Heinesen, men bestemt ikke det sidste !

Paul says

Set in the Faeroe Islands of the early 20th century, *The Lost Musicians* follows the lives of numerous characters in the islands capital. The pace of life and the pace of the book is slow. The characters meander along, taking pleasure in their families, their surroundings and their music whilst the rise of religious sectarianism and prohibition casts a shadow over events. The translation feels a bit flat, and at times it feels like a series of loosely connected essays, then when major events happen in the lives of the characters it passes in a couple of phrases and a shrug of the shoulders.

Like other books I have read set in isolated, island communities the environment and atmosphere of the place seeps into the story. Also there are many characteristics and attitudes that I recognise from living in Scotland (particularly around attitudes to music, alcohol and religion). It is all familiar, but through an alien filter.

Interesting, but meandering.

Martin Roberts says

Awfully stilted translation. Gave up after 100 pages.

Susan says

The following internet links will give you more information and also provide you with lovely videos of the Faroe Islands.

William Heinesen

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Heinesen
<http://www.danishliterature.info/2d9000c...>

Faroe Islands

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faroe_Islands
www.faroeislands.com

<http://www.youtube.com> (in the search box put "Faroe Islands".) There are many lovely videos of the islands
<http://www.youtube.com> (in the search box put "Eivor Palsdottir" and then choose the video "Faroe Islands My Mother") to hear a modern day singer singing in the Faroese language.
