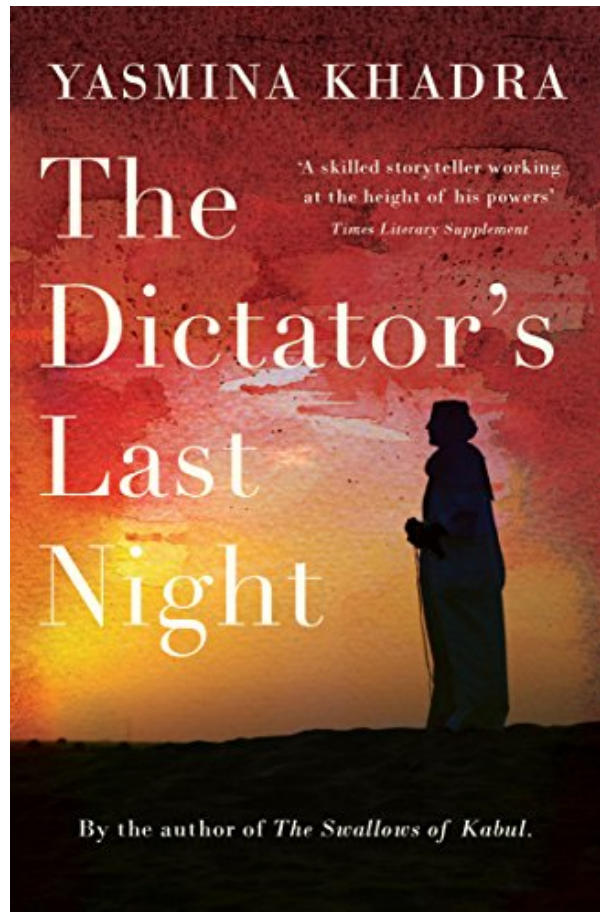
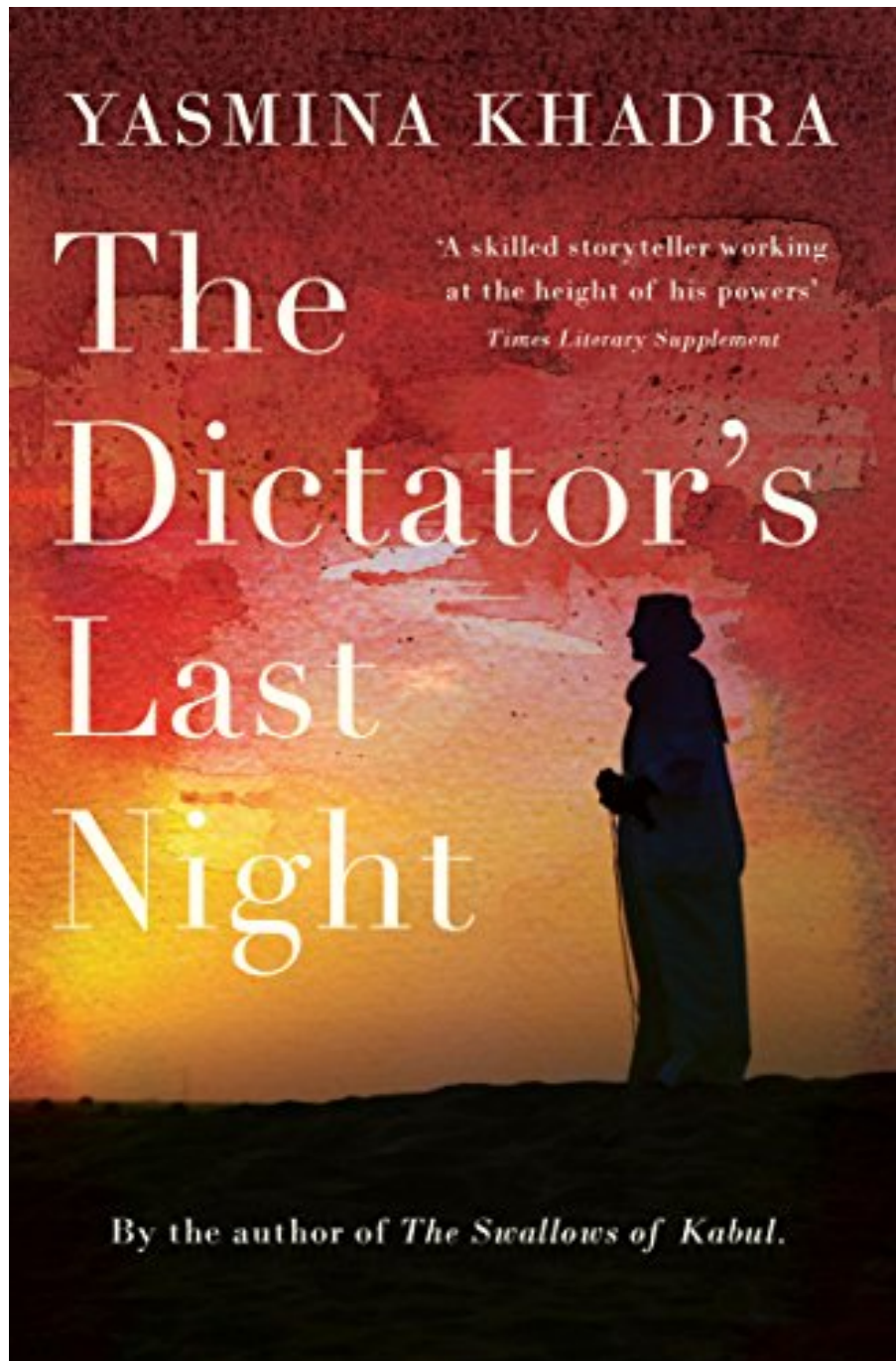


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Yasmina Khadra: Yasmina Khadra is the pen name of the Algerian author Mohammed Moulessehouli. He became director of the Algerian Cultural Center in Paris in November 2007 and in November 2013 announced his candidacy for the presidency of Algeria.

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People say I am a megalomaniac. It is not true. I am an exceptional being, providence incarnate, envied by the gods, able to make a faith of his cause.

October 2011. In the dying days of the Libyan civil war, Muammar Gaddafi is hiding out in his home town of Sirte along with his closest advisors.

In this gripping imagining of the last hours of President Gaddafi, Khadra provides us with fascinating insight into the mind of one of the most complex and controversial figures of recent history.

Yasmina Khadra is the pen name of the Algerian author Mohammed Moulessehouli.

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- Binding: Paperback
- 112 pages

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The Dictator's Last Night

By S Riaz

This novel takes as its subject matter the controversial figure of Muammar Gaddafi, seen through the last night of his life. Gaddafi has retreated to Sirte after the fall of Tripoli in the Libyan Civil War; where the former dictator is holed up in a disused school, waiting for the arrival of his son, Mutassim, and hoping to break out and find refuge in another part of the country. While he waits, Gaddafi reflects on the Arab Spring, his life and those around him.

It is difficult to create a moving and sympathetic portrait of a man who divided opinion so strongly – both in

his lifetime and since his death. Portrayed in the West as a vaguely comic figure, he was obviously feared by many in his own country, and, indeed, his own entourage, and the author manages to create a realistic portrayal of a man who is cornered and yet defiant. Reflecting on his Bedouin childhood, insults and slights – remembered and pored over – revenge, power and success; Gaddafi turns from feelings of despondency over his perceived situation, anger at the astounding ingratitude of his people and ministers and an inability to accept any dissent or criticism, even while asking those around him what went wrong...

Through Gaddafi's fictional memories, the author manages to give us the essential history of a man who rose from poverty to change his destiny; heading a coup d'état in 1969 to depose King Idris and having extraordinary power. By containing the book within this short, but incredibly stressful, time period, the novel feels extremely tense and gripping. Although we know the outcome, I did find the whole book simply riveting and was unable to put it down at the end. This would be an incredible choice for reading groups, with so much to discuss. Lastly, I received a copy of this book from the publisher, via NetGalley, for review. Highly recommended.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Disappointing

By Kate Vane

I had such hopes for this novel. I read the news but there's so much I don't know about Libya and its former leader, Muammar Gaddafi. I thought this first-person account of the last few hours of his life would give me insights into the politics, economics and culture of the country which he ruled, and the factors that led to his downfall. And Gaddafi, with his vanity and guile and bizarre behavior, would make the ultimate unreliable narrator.

The novel begins with Gaddafi in hiding in a disused building, with just a few loyalists around him, contemplating what he sees as the failure of his allies and the treachery of his people. We are taken through a series of conversations, interspersed with his memories and thoughts on key events in his life, ending with his attempt to flee and his violent death at the hands of a militia.

The structure should make for great drama, so what went wrong? I think the key difficulty is the voice. Of course, any narrative, particularly a first person one, is a device, but it's not clear who is speaking here. Are we reading Gaddafi's innermost thoughts? Or is he, even now, trying to live up to his public persona? It's not quite either. The prose at best is functional and there doesn't seem to be a fully developed character animating the words.

What we get instead are some clunky exchanges of dialogue, and reminiscences which don't really take you beyond the headlines.

I didn't feel I'd got a deeper sense of who Gaddafi was. How did he rise up from nothing? What was his appeal? What drove him?

There is some odd phrasing too. I'm not sure whether this is due to the original or the translation. But who, under any circumstances, never mind when lying in a drain facing imminent death, would muse, "A guide, though entrusted with a messianic mission, when he has official responsibility for a country, does not turn the other cheek"?

The book feels like one of those dramatised reconstructions you get in TV documentaries, where underemployed actors struggle valiantly to give life to chunks of exposition. Disappointing.

\*

I received an ARC from the publisher via Netgalley.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

... Khadra's book but he is still one of my favorite author. In his special super simple way he ...

By Gonza

It had been a while since the last time I read a Yasmina Khadra's book but he is still one of my favorite author. In his special super simple way he has the ability to tell a very difficult story where we can almost empathize with one of the most dangerous and tyrannical man of the last 30 years. His own vision of Libia and of his role in guiding it outside the power of the western country and the reasons behind his defeat mostly; a pity that there isn't very much about the way he became the "brotherly guide", with a little help from some "Italian Friends", but ok, this book is all about the last night of the Rais before his defeat.

Era passato un po' di tempo dall'ultima volta che avevo letto un libro di Yasmina Khadra, ma lui resta comunque uno dei miei autori preferiti. Nel suo modo super semplice e lineare di raccontare le cose, abbiamo qui il racconto il prima persona da parte di Gheddafi, con il quale riusciamo anche ad empatizzare a tratti, nonostante sia stato uno degli uomini piú pericolosi e tirannici degli ultimi 30 anni. La sua personale visione della Libia al di fuori della sfera di influenza dei paesi occidentali, il suo ruolo di guida del popolo e le ragioni della rivolta che hanno portato alla sua sconfitta. Peccato ci sia poco riguardo alla sua salita al potere, quella per la quale possiamo ringraziare anche qualche "amico italiano", ma ok, tutto sommato questo libro avviene tutto nell'ultima notte prima della sconfitta del Rais.

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