



Auto-da-Fé

Elias Canetti , C.V. Wedgwood (Translator)

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"Auto-da-Fé" is the story of Peter Kien, a distinguished, reclusive sinologist living in Germany between the wars. With masterly precision, Canetti reveals Kien's character, displaying the flawed personal relationships which ultimately lead to his destruction.

Manipulated by his illiterate and grasping housekeeper, Therese, who has tricked him into marriage, and Benedikt Pfaff, a brutish concierge, Kien is forced out of his apartment - which houses his great library and one true passion - and into the underworld of the city. In this purgatory he is guided by a chess-playing dwarf of evil propensities, until he is eventually restored to his home. But on his return he is visited by his brother, an eminent psychiatrist who, by an error of diagnosis, precipitates the final crisis...

"Auto-da-Fé" was first published in Germany in 1935 as "Die Blendung" ("The Blinding" or "Bedazzlement") and later in Britain in 1947, where the publisher noted Canetti as a 'writer of strongly individual genius, which may prove influential', an observation borne out when the author was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981. "Auto-da-Fé" still towers as one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century, and Canetti's incisive vision of an insular man battling against the outside world is as fresh and rewarding today as when first it appeared in print.

Auto-da-Fé Details

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From Reader Review Auto-da-Fé for online ebook

Gülüzar says

20.yy’ın en önemli eserlerinden biri olan Körle’me romanı, Prof. Kien’in etrafında geçer. Kien dünyaya ile başları koparmış, 25.000 kitapla evinde yaayan bir dilbilimcidir. Kitap rafları için pencerelerini dahi kapatır ve evin yalnızca tavandan gökyüzüne açılan bir penceresi bulunur. Bir koridorla birbirine başlanan ve kapıları hep açık olan, tavanındaki pencereden alan bu ev Kien’in fildişi kulesidir. Çalınan odadaki küçük bir yatak odasında ev kitaplara ayrılmıştır. Dünya ve insanlarla ilişkisi sadece dilencilerin binaya girişini engelleyen kapı ile ve kitapların temizliği ile görevlendirecek ayrıca yemeğini yapacak olan hizmetçisi ile sınırlıdır. İnsanlar küçük gören Kien onlara oldukça yabancıdır aynı zamanda. Kendi dünyasının kralı olan aydın gerçek dünya ile ve insanlarla karşılaşınca, onu alanın en iyisi yapan bilgisi hiçbir işe yaramaz. Kaldı ki bilgiden çok bilgiyi ortaya çıkaran zekaya hayrandır Kien. Kavrayamadığı dünya bir oyuncak olur, insan ilişkilerini de yorumlayamaz. Fildişi kulenin dışında aslında hiçbir şeydir o. Çok güçlü, katıksız bir aydın eleştirisidir körle’me romanı. Kitabın Almanca orijinal adı “Die Blendung”, kama’ma demekmi. Kitabı okuduğum esnada, bana hep bildiğimiz anlamda gözlerin görme yetisini kaybetmesi değil de, bilgisinden gözleri kama’an bir aydının kendisi dahil hiçbir şeyi görememeye başlaması olarak düşünmüştüm. Sanıyorum Kien’in körle’mesini böyle tanımlamak daha uygun durer. Kitabın insanın en közdüran karakteri Kien’in önce hizmetçisi sonra eşi olan Therese. Birçok derlendirmede de dendiği gibi bana da faizmin vücut bulmuş hali gibi geldi. Eve gelmesiyle birlikte, ama Kien’in rızasını sağlayarak ama zorlayarak istediğini elde etmeye çalışsan, eve her an daha fazla yayılan Therese karışında Kien körle’me (gerçek anlamda) yöntemini uygulayarak ondan kurtulmaya çalışır. Fakat beklenen olur ve Therese yok sayılarak yok edilemez. Görmemezlikten geldikçe, istediklerini verince doycak sanılan Therese gittikçe bir kara deliğe döner; o, o kadar kolay lokma değildir. Önemli karakterlerden biri de Fischerle’dir. Ben kitaptaki özel karakterlerden biri olduğunu düşünüyor ve yorumlarda fazla haksızlık yapıldığını kanaatindeyim. Alınması diye de sadece ismi ile ilgili bir not düşünüyordum. Sminin sonundaki -le eki Türkçedeki -cik ekiymiş aslında. Ama bunun fischercik karakteri ile ilgili kışkırlar bitmeden biraz önce öreniyoruz. Ahmet Cemal geç bir dipnotla açıklaması, ne editör ne de yayınevi bunu başa alalmada okuyucu baştan bilsin dememi. Ben bu dipnottan sonra doştan kaybenden fischerle’yi fischercik diye çağırdım. Velhasıl, bir başyapıtı daha, geç de olsa bitirmi olmanın mutluluğu ile kitaptan güzel bir alıntı ile yorumumu sonlandırayım: “...bu yaratık, salt alkanlıkların ve geleneklerin saptadığı yörüngede yaayan, her şeye yüksekten bakan, ruhunun her yanı başlamış, ve geçen her günün birikimi yeni başlarla tıkanmış bir insandır; salt pratik amaçlar için yeterli olabilen bir yaratım insan: Varolabilme yürekliliğini taşımayan bir insan; çünkü dünyamızda varolmak, farklı olabilmek demekti; ama o tepeden tırnağa bir kalıptan, kurulmuş bir terzi mankeninden başkaca bir şey değildi; ...” diye okumalar.

Simona says

Dopo un inizio difficile in cui questo libro non decollava, mi fa piacere aver preso il volo e aver viaggiato. Cercando alcune notizie sull'autore, ho scoperto che il titolo originale del libro è "Abbagliamento", titolo che avrei mantenuto anche nella versione italiana, dato che descrive benissimo la sua essenza. I protagonisti di questo libro sono "abbagliati", come accecati da quello che vivono o meglio non vivono, come Thérèse, la governante, un essere torbido, meschino, avido di denaro, fino a Kien, un sinologo, un essere superbo, arcigno, la cui passione, mania per i libri lo ammalia e allo stesso tempo lo annienta al punto tale da non avere nessun contatto con il mondo esterno. Per lui esistono solo libri, libri, libri a perdita

d'occhio che custodisce gelosamente nella sua biblioteca privata.

Un romanzo che mette in luce le nostre piccole, grandi manie, le nostre idiosincrasie, la nostra bramosia, il nostro sapere, la nostra cultura, ma anche i nostri limiti, che, a volte, sono insormontabili.

Özgür says

Profesör Kienimizin uzun uzun dü?ündü?ü ve bu dü?ünceleri bizlere sat?r sat?r dikteleyen, sanc?l?, kaotik, edebi f?rt?nas?..

Kendi gerçe?ini anlams?zla?t?rmaya çal??arak, tüm gerçekleri reddediyor gibi duru? sergilese de ben onun sadece gerçe?i anlamlandı?rma sürecinde tüm varl???n? izole etmesini okudum. Roman?n içindeki göz seviyesinden bakacak olursak, bu bir papaz?n sükûnet aray???ndan, dervi?lerin hac yolculu?una, bir organizman?n büyüme, yükselme sürecinden farksz idi.

Soyut dü?ünce Peter Kien'in tüm gerçe?i anlams?z k?lmas?nda sadece bir materyal i?levi görüyorken ayn? zamanda imkâns?z bir hale de getiriyor. Kien'in dünyas?nda kültüre, do?aya insanl??a kar?? olu?mas? çabalanan tüm orijinal fikirler anlams?z bir z?tl?k içerisinde bo?lukta sallan?p duruyor. Kien bir sonuç adam? da de?il zaten.

Kien, i?ini kusursuz yapt???na inanan ve yakalanma güdüsünün de kibriyle hareket eden katiller gibi davran?yor. Tüm ????? üzerinde toplam?? oldu?una o kadar inan?yor ki basit tasviriyle Therese'in hayat?na girmesine ve mahvetmesine! izin veriyor. Bu konu bence kitab?n en önemli k?sm?, kitab?n genelinde Therese farklı foto?raflar ve tasvirler alt?nda okuyucuya sunuluyor. Birinden birinde nefretinizi kazan?yor fakat nedense bu kad?n tasviri bende bir anahtar metaforu uyandırd?. Neden oldu?unu ?öyle söyleyeyim, Kien çözülmek zorunda olan bir bulmaca, geçilmek zorunda olunan bir kap?, zirvede oturdu?una inanan bir Titan. Tüm bu yukarı?l?klar sendromu onda daha da ötesini ne olaca??n?n s?k?lm??l???n? dürtmeye ba?l?yor ve ona ancak, basit, pespaye ve dünyevi dü?künlüklerin ayna tutabilece?ini anl?yorsunuz. Tam bu sahnede Therese tam da yapmas? gerekeni yap?p en saçma ve basit istekleriyle k?ymetli profesörümüzün akl?yla, seviyesiyle oynuyor. Onu evinden atmas?na bile Kien müsaade ediyor. Dünyay? görüyor, insanlara yakla??ıyor, tam da dü?ündü?ü gibi d??ar?s? denen dünyanın ne acayip oldu?u fikrini birebir gözlemleyip, pencerelerinin neden gökyüzüne do?ru oldu?unu takdirle onayl?yor.

Tüm bu söylediklerimin kar??s?na ba?ka bir pencere konuldu?unda ise, Therese'in bir ba?ka metaforik alg?s?n?n da Fa?izm simgesi oldu?unu hissettim. Okuyan, üreten, dü?ünen ve dünyanın ucunda bir çift gözden bile uzak olan bireyin, evine kadar girip onu oradan tekmeleyerek ç?kartan edebiyat?n sevimsiz ucube karakteri Bayan Therese..

Bu kadar büyük ve evrensel kabul edilen eserlerin dili biraz debdebeli olmas?na ra?men, Körle?me'nin anla??labilir, aç?k ve ak?c? bir dili var. Bunun sebebi san?r?m yaz?ld??? dönem gettolar?n, banliyölerin özellikle okumay? tercih edecek olmas?yla alâkal? diye bir ?eyler görmü?, okumu?tum.

Bir de kitapla alâkal? özellikle belirtmem gereken konulardan birisi, Cannetti'nin ba?arm?? olmas?. Demek istedi?ini aç?k aç?k anla??labilir düzeyde ve kalitede verdi?ini, dünyayla, kendisiyle, insanlarla olan derdinin anlatmay? ba?arm?? bir metin yazd???n? kitap hala ellerimdeyken net bir ?ekilde söyleyebilirim.

Görü?lerimi ald???m notlar çerçevesinde yorumlamaya çal??t???m için biraz da??n?k gidiyor san?r?m..

Kien'in kar??la?t??? Kambur Cüce karakteriyle kurulmu? olan dialog metinler, derinli?iyle çok etkileyici ama okumas? gerçekten zorlay?c? bölümlerdi. Zaten kitab?n ana temas?, anlatt?klar? ve temellendirdi?i süreç edebiyat olunca, kitapta edebi bir okuma zorlu?u var.

San?r?m daha uzat?labilecek bir anlat?m? uzatmak istemiyorum.

Körle?me okudu?um en iyi metinler aras?nda yer alacak.

Sayg?lar.

BlackOxford says

Read More for Mental Health

The literal translation of the German title of *Auto da Fe* is *The Blinding*, or perhaps more idiomatically, *The Deception*. The question this latter raises is: Who is deceiving whom? The unrelenting comic irony suggests that everyone is deceiving not only everyone else, but also themselves. All the characters are mad to some degree, and Kafkaesque to the extent that they emerge out of a somewhat hostile, vaguely Eastern European world in which they are striving to survive but about which they have little understanding. Each pursues his chosen 'ism' - idealism, materialism, hedonism, aspirationalism - with relentless determination and in determined secrecy since none are comprehensible to the others.

Peter Kien, the central figure, is a pseudo-academic recluse whose self-identity is defined as the precise opposite of his bother George. Brother George is a celebrated gynaecologist turned psychiatrist who, therefore, (thinks he) knows everything there is to know about women. Peter knows absolutely nothing about other people much less women. He knows only books, particularly books written in the Chinese language which he has never heard spoken, and most particularly books written by Confucius, with whom he has frequent intimate conversations and intellectual arguments. Without advice or consultation Peter marries his housekeeper. What could possibly go wrong?

Mutual connubial disappointment of course ensues. She wants sex and furniture; he wants silence and books. He feigns blindness; she, an affair. He mounts an insurrection, rousing his army of books to fever-pitch against the woman and the furniture, except, understandably enough, for the pacifist Buddhist tomes and the French volumes which decline to fight over a mere woman. The English participate grudgingly since the impetus for war had come from the racially inferior Chinese. Before overt hostilities can begin, Peter, this *Napoleon de la bibliotheque*, betrayed by a treacherous library ladder, has crashed to the carpeted floor, bleary and bleeding.

Peter, his brother George, his wife, the porter of his apartment block, the dwarf who is out to cheat him, even the salesman with whom the wife seeks an affair, all 'live in their heads'. The realities they perceive, or rather define, are patently delusional, in that for each to achieve their desired state the world would have to be different than it is. It would have to conform with Confucian aphorisms, or the advice of a demented mother, or the speculations of economic and business pundits. Each character has his own ideological touchstone which he values above all else, including actual personal well-being.

All actual experience is rationalised through the fateful filters adopted by each. Peter articulates the general philosophy: "*Esse percipe*, to be is to be perceived. What I do not perceive does not exist." Having established this premise, one's strategy becomes clear. Peter simply removes his wife from his perception by

not seeing her: "Blindness is a weapon against time and space...The dominating principle of the universe is blindness...It permits the truncation of time when time is unendurable." Having become blind to his wife, he then discovers that he cannot become deaf to her, thus suggesting a strategic flaw which he cannot comprehend.

One class of books Peter finds objectionable: novels.

"Novels are so many wedges which the novelist, an actor with his pen, inserts into the closed personality of the reader. The better he calculates the size of the wedge and the strength of the resistance, so much more completely does he crack open the personality of his victim. Novels should be prohibited by the State."

This is Canetti's skeleton key. Writing during the ascendancy of fascist and communist totalitarianism in the 1930's, fiction is the only effective tool for overcoming the insanity of ideological logics. The insanity is in our heads not in the world. Peter dislikes novels because he knows how they work, and he is implicitly a believer in totalitarian culture.

The tone of *Auto da Fe* is somewhat dismal, despite its comedic flow, because the human condition Canetti describes is somewhat dismal. Our devotion to ideology is a chronic issue which becomes more evident as democratic politics becomes more visible and, as recently, more radical. The tendency appears to be to blame the 'system', to look for procedural and regulatory solutions. Canetti suggests that these solutions won't get us very far.

Returning to the original German title, 'blinding' is a synonym in mystical Kabbalism for the 'making and breaking of vessels.' These vessels refer both to language and to the human beings who employ it, often unwittingly, to deceive themselves. The mystical tenor of *Auto da Fe* fits well with a Kabbalist interpretation, as does its denouement when we persist in our linguistic errors. We may indeed be better off reading more fiction.

Postscript: the following appeared in my feed. Reading is indeed both a submissive and subversive activity. It is also dangerous since its effects are subtle and incalculable. Nevertheless restricting reading is always a greater disaster. <https://aeon.co/essays/how-books-can-...>

Lisa says

This is the world as we know it - crazy as can be!

It strikes me as strange that the English and German titles for this masterpiece are so different, and yet so fitting. Canetti, bilingual, multifaceted, a master of wordplay, must have delighted in the ambiguity. "Die Blendung", the German title, means "Deception", "Blinding" or "Delusion", whereas *Auto-da-Fé*, act of faith, refers to the horrible crimes of religious fanatics during the Inquisition.

What happens if you believe blindly, and violently, in one truth, and set out to spread it to others?

Elias Canetti is one of those strange writers that are hard to grasp, and get more complex with each book I read.

When I first read *Auto Da Fe*, it instantly became a favourite that I started buying in bulk to give away to moderately pleased family members and friends who did not necessarily share my love for complicated, intellectually sophisticated plots and darkest sarcasm.

It is an allegory of different, incompatible layers of society, living in close proximity to each other, and thus forcing interactions upon its various representatives.

The novel is divided into the three parts, showing the different perspectives from which Canetti looks at society, and their chapter headings speak for themselves:

A Head Without A World,
A Headless World,
A World In The Head.

A purely intellectual scholar tries to withdraw from the outside world and live in peace with his erudition and library routines (*A Head Without A World*).

He is invaded by almost illiterate, but life-experienced representatives of the world, who strive to make a profit out of everything while seeking pleasure in physical activities (*Headless World*).

"*A World In the Head*" represents the madness that occurs when different people clash and try to impose their world views on each other.

As all of them are convinced that theirs is the right way of thinking, the others invariably appear to be mad. This is a reciprocal feeling, and the question for the reader is to figure out what kind of madness has befallen which character, including the doctor who is supposed to cure the other characters!

The novel manages to be both hilarious and thought-provoking, much like Canetti's work in general. When I read his play, *Die Befristeten*, my general response was laughter, even though it dealt with the taboo of death and our relationship to it. In *Auto-da-Fé*, he weighs human convictions, life styles and traditions against each other, and offers different interpretations of the meaning of life, without giving any one of them a particular advantage.

The sad message is that the different mindsets would all be able to coexist harmoniously if human beings could just be tolerant enough to leave each other in peace with their respective personal obsessions.

The brutality starts when we interfere with the intent of becoming missionaries of our specific madness, or when we think we are powerful and clever enough to exploit other people's passions in order to enrich ourselves and to live better according to our own indulgences.

As always, Canetti masters his dialogues, opening with a stunning interview between professor Kien and a young boy in front of a book shop, immediately showing the connection between the two worlds in the novel, and their difficulties to understand and tolerate each other:

'What are you doing here, my little man?'

'Nothing.'

'Then why are you standing here?'

'Just because.'

'Can you read?'

'Oh, yes.'

'How old are you?'

'Nine and a bit.'

'Which would you prefer, a piece of chocolate or a book?'

'A book.'

'Indeed? Splendid! So that's your reason for standing here?'

'Yes.'

'Why didn't you say so before?'

'Father scolds me.'

'Oh. And who is your father?'

'Franz Metzger.'

'Would you like to travel to a foreign country?'

'Yes. To India. They have tigers there.'

'And where else?'

'To China. They've got a huge wall there.'

'You'd like to scramble over it, wouldn't you?'

'It's much too thick and too high. Nobody can get over it. That's why they built it.'

'What a lot you know! You must have read a great deal already.'

'Yes. I read all the time. Father takes my books away. I'd like to go to a Chinese school. They have forty thousand letters in their alphabet. You couldn't get them all into one book.'

'That's only what you think.'

'I've worked it out.'

'All the same it isn't true. Never mind the books in the window. They're of no value. I've got something much better here. Wait. I'll show you. Do you know what kind of writing that is?'

'Chinese! Chinese!'

'Well, you're a clever little fellow. Had you seen a Chinese book before?'

'No, I guessed it.'

'These two characters stand for Meng Tse, the philosopher Mencius. He was a great man in China. He lived 2250 years ago and his works are still being read. Will you remember that?'

'Yes. I must go to school now.'

'Aha, so you look into the bookshop windows on your way to school? What is your name?'

'Franz Metzger, like my father.'

'And where do you live?'

'Twenty-four Ehrlich Strasse.'

'I live there too. I don't remember you.'

'You always look the other way when anyone passes you on the stairs. I've known you for ages. You're Professor Kien, but you haven't a school. Mother says you aren't a real Professor. But I think you are — you've got a library. Our Marie says, you wouldn't believe your eyes. She's our maid. When I'm grown up I'm going to have a library. With all the books there are, in every language. A Chinese one too, like yours. Now I must run.'

'Who wrote this book? Can you remember?'

'Meng Tse, the philosopher Mencius. Exactly 2250 years ago.'

'Excellent. You shall come and see my library one day. Tell my housekeeper I've given you permission. I can show you pictures from India and China.'

'Oh good! I'll come! Of course I'll come! This afternoon?'

'No, no, little man. I must work this afternoon. In a week at the earliest.'

My favourite quote:

“Yes, this was his home. Here no harm could come to him. He smiled at the mere idea that any harm could come to him here. He avoided looking at the divan on which he slept. Every human creature needed a home, not a home of the kind understood by crude knock-you-down patriots, not a religion either, a mere insipid foretaste of a heavenly home: no, a real home, in which space, work, friends, recreation, and the scope of a man's ideas came together into an orderly whole, into — so to speak — a personal cosmos. The best definition of a home was a library.”

Teresa Proença says

Na contra capa da minha edição diz, mais ou menos, assim:

Auto-De-Fé é considerado um dos livros fundamentais da história da literatura ocidental e ler a obra de Elias Canetti é essencial para compreendermos a história do século XX.

Eu, com cerca de metade lido (e mais umas páginas em diagonal) digo assim:

Já estou lixada! Como Canetti me aborrece lá se vai qualquer réstia de esperança de compreender o século...

Um homem obcecado por livros (mas não sei se lê); casa com uma mulher para que ela lhe limpe a biblioteca;

Um anão corcunda (que tenta tirar a marreca à estalada) é casado com uma prostituta; enquanto ela trabalha ele esconde-se debaixo da cama e, no momento adequado, cutuca no freguês para o convidar para um jogo de xadrez;

E...

...já arrumei o Auto-De-Fé na estante dos abandonados, que eu não sou mulher para penitências...

Stephen P says

A choice. Numberless made within the ordinary mayhem of a day. A person makes choices from the beginning to the end -scheme of their life. Peter Kien wants to spend the passing of his time, supported from the inheritance of his father's death, within the library of his own creation. Books instead of people. Facts and theories devised by those ideas argued by the greatest Sinologist in the world, himself. Life is to be defined by knowledge and study. While no one but his housekeeper sees or knows, he builds clear borders and boundaries. All four rooms in his flat are filled with his shelves. He is having a tryst with his books.

Much that has been written about this book has rightfully focused on its theme of totalitarianism. My reading, which certainly doesn't deny this focuses more on the individual, the aesthetic accomplishments, with hopes that it resonates with a few of you.

Except for an hour walk early each morning to sneer at the bookstore windows for the trash they display and the public gobbles up, he has nothing to do with the world outside his library. Not only does life not run according to strict schedules and routine as is paramount in his daily research work but beyond his carefully laid borders is a mixture of individual perceptions, daydreams, delusions, urges and instincts, colliding, resulting in expectations and behaviors missing each other. Nothing is as it is. It is but the stealth and passions of conflicting illusions fighting out their separate dramas to maintain a comfort of denial and

diversion. Only if one is to give up one's self and life, participate in the ultra confined categories of what is proscribed as permissible, will agreements be reached. Most appear unconcerned that essences of their lives will not float past. They seem relieved in rolling in the squalor of greed, false politics, subgroups morphed to back their own chosen or assigned ideologies, own code of dress, appearance, speech. Much backslapping and in- jokes. Beneath it all, an unquestioned assignation of what is substituted for value.

Kien, with his photographic mind cares for nothing but his immaculate schedule of study and the endless back and forth over time of communications with other known Sinologists disputing endlessly, if eloquently, the finest points within this chosen context. This process of following the strictest of regimens, parsing fine blades of thought, is learning. The process of learning is in his life the highest form of being, of value. He eschews all worldly acclaim of his work. Known more as a legend in his field he does not respond to ongoing invitations to participate in conferences or to publish.

But...is it really doing or offering anything different to the world than the rest of the hooligan sub worlds? Is that our responsibility? Our worth in life? Helping the world? But...listen, what the Professor is doing is an activity of a much higher aesthetic order. It will enhance him. Enhance him? For what? He isn't leaving the house. Who cares. Who really cares about the finest distinctions made in Sinology? Does anyone care any more or less that Joe every Thursday night after work gets drunk at the same bar and on signal everyone raises their mug and sings in stomach bending laughter the same song. Is this just another placating diversion? These treasured volumes are no different by nature from what the Professor has sealed himself off from? But what if the seal, as in any amalgamation, developed the split of hairline fissure? An unnoticeable spread? Life seeping in or out?

Allowing the world to be sucked into his flat, Kien finds himself removed into the streets of unprinted life where he comes upon or it comes upon him, greed and filth at every level. It is here where that fraction of a fraction of a point is lost. Unlike, the great past television series, *The Wire*, where corruption of the system and soul is exploded before the viewers eyes adamantly focused on, a Baltimore street gang, the education department and the police department. Canetti frolics through too many strata diffusing somewhat the power of the effect. I say this with great reservation, not only because it is Canetti but there seems a strident effort to shade close to vaudevillian as a style of emphasis. It might have been even more powerful if pared a thin slice toward the dramatic, and half-step from the comic. These may be the words of an old fool living in a modern time and ignorant of the world of 1935. Fortunately he remains just this side of caricature which would be the death bell for this work, though there remains isolated incidents which do detract.

There is something wry going on here. A wink of the eye. As with Walser he stands at a distance smiling at the blunders and misapprehensions of his fellow humanity. However, Canetti's smile is a bit sadder, a touch of melancholy weighting it down at the corners. Possibly the other side of the vaudevillian card is a helpless sadness. He demands the verities of dis-reality to reflect the pliabilitys, of our constantly constructed inner realities, the plumbers tape and glue used to anchor our anxious worlds together. He, like myself, seems to have greater faith in the world between covers of a book, its abstractions that weave thought, understanding, into an experience sidling up closer to what may be a reality. Yet, there remains a sense that he is not completely certain.

The story, which can certainly carry itself is enlightened by Canetti's style of hovering in the omniscient third person. He shifts within the minds of his characters to omniscient provisions, to direct talk with the reader. This is accomplished smoothly. Unnoticed, the sorcerer keeps the narrative atilt yet moving forward. Always forward in what may initially feel like stillness.

Something else occurs. Not a literary event but a furthering of a rare literary accomplishment which brings

its unexpected presents. Canetti conjures with faint brush strokes a Peter Kien. In my mind as I read he is a tall, thin 40 year old esconced in his library, books, ongoing study and research. Little description of Mister Kien's physical appearance is provided. Somehow, from gestures, his housekeepers reactions, the description of his books and shelves, and certainly not least the genie-like rising between words, unspoken images of this man comes to life. The point is that for this reader I see Peter Kein differently, despite none of this mentioned in the text, at different times. I find it difficult to understand it as authorial intent. This seems to be what may arise during the heightened whirlwind of a creative process. Carving the end joints of his existence to the bare essentials he shrinks and ages for me on the page. The alchemical brew of gesture, few descriptive details, behavior and response ladled in a slow brim, the reactions of others during his one foray into the guttered streets of life during his punctual one hour morning walk, whitens his hair, thins his bones. His back is now bent, fragile hands shake. Later, hair darkening in my mind as I read, he stands shorter and broader. Further on he rises again tall and lanky. I know this person well. It is unsettling.

This is, *Auto de Fe*, Elias Canetti, yet he has invited me into this novel by dismissing the thud of a report of physical descriptions of his characters. He has left it to me to join him with my own images to fill in the vacant spaces. His craft, the building of the text and its terms, and little old me. So, I was wrong. He did intentionally create this feat, not only with Kien but most of his, our, characters, understood its overwhelming value as engagement, just not in a way I expected. Then, then, then, if this was not only my personal reactions but also to some degree orchestrated by a master, the irrefutable images I had of these characters not only changed during the book but consistently their fictional images behaved in ways different, even opposite from their appearance. So, without the use of concrete description of characters he works with the reader in steeping the blend of tea then with open palms capturing the steam lifted from the kettle's spout and creating an image of a character, a character more real than those existing outside the covers of this book, who then functions different from their rising and changing appearances. If...if...I am accurate then a part of the art of this book is that we are always changing and not what we appear, even or especially to ourselves. This life we hold so precious is an illusion but not in the cliched way. It is an illusion because illusions are necessary to create the divergences to not spend our lives blinking but to invest ourselves into whatever we need to do to create enough delusions of safety to provide room for comfort, enjoyment, and even the room to search about for meaning.

It is a melancholic message. A tough bitter one, truthful as it may be. There was good reason to lighten the frame by holding some scenes in an old vaudevillian theater of forgotten repute.

Will he find his way back to his flat, his books? Each character shark- swims. Pivotal and pointed, the streaming loops, diving plunges, gummed or raw-toothed intersects with hungry schemes of safety. Life is not about survival but the convenience of knowing that one will survive. It is the culling of extinction in daily and dreaming life. Diving, at each character's pace into the grimed process also defeats time. By each day, hour, second, taken up by this task or worrying it, there is little time for consciousness or anything else. Their obsessive paranoid greed leaves them in a cage of interlocking steel prongs, the sound of pecking just beyond one ear.

I cannot end without a warning. This is a book that stays with you. A certain weight and mass it gestates slowly raising questions at the most inopportune times, resting within and waiting with its slow melancholic smile.

ArturoBelano says

Kitap kulübüyle birlikte yeniden okuyorum. Bitti?inde buraya yorum gelecek.

Lizzy says

“Almost Kien was tempted to believe in happiness, that contemptible life-goal of illiterates. If it came of itself, without being hunted for, if you did not hold it fast by force and treated it with a certain condescension, it was permissible to endure its presence for a few days”

There could be nothing better than a book about someone, or a *'hero'* like Peter Kien, that loves books. Moreover, *Auto-da-Fé* is one of Elias Canetti's masterpiece. Kien knows what he wants from life: to spend his lifetime, supported by his father's inheritance, within a library of his own creation.

“Books have no life; they lack feeling maybe, and perhaps cannot feel pain, as animals and even plants feel -pain. But what proof have we that inorganic objects can feel no pain? Who knows if a book may not yearn for other books, its companions of many years, in some way strange to us and therefore never yet perceived? Every thinking being knows those moments in which the traditional frontier set by science between the organic and the inorganic, seems artificial and outdated, like every frontier drawn by men. Is not a secret antagonism to this division revealed in the very phrase 'dead matter' ? For the dead must once have been the living. Let us admit then of a substance that it is dead, have we not in so doing endowed it with an erstwhile life.”

There's much more, and if you read it you will find it can be somewhat unsettling, even at times distressing or melancholic. But above all it is beautiful, and I loved it!

Elias Canetti, was a superb writer. He won a Noble prize in literature. I also recommend his three-volumes autobiography *The Memoirs of Elias Canetti: The Tongue Set Free/The Torch in My Ear/The Play of the Eyes*.

An all-time-favorite, highly recommended!

Joshua says

If you are 300 pages into this novel, keep reading, it gets better, much better. If you are thinking of starting this novel today, think carefully and know that you do not have my recommendation. I struggled quite a bit with this book. The three star rating is a compromise between the 1 and 2 star rating I was certain I would give this book until about page 380 (after which we are clearly in at least 4 star territory) when I finally encountered some lyricism in Canetti's prose, a likable character, and something more than a bunch of solipsistic maniacs bumping into one another and bickering over money.

I disagree with the comparisons in the Goodreads description to Hermann Broch and Robert Musil. I think a more apt comparison would be Samuel Beckett, but don't get too excited yet. For the first two thirds of this book Canetti wrote about in a sparse prose style about odd and delusional characters in rather mundane domestic situations. The problem is that while Beckett's sparse prose has an elemental force behind it and still manages to conjure seriously rich imagery, Canetti's prose lacks this driving force and conjuring ability. The terse sentences reflect the characters' scattered and shallow thoughts and fail to achieve anything more than a fairly comprehensive portrait of several extremely unlikable characters.

Also the depiction of women through the guise of Peter Kein's wife and the disgust for all women and their mental faculties shared by a majority of the male characters in this novel was quite disconcerting and I'm not convinced Canetti took sufficient steps to distinguish the fictional biases of his characters from his implied own. I don't know anything about the author personally but this novel has a strongly misogynistic theme, supported by a wide cast of characters, that is hardly rebutted by the assumption that the views are too extreme to have belonged to the author.

Here's the thing though, at some point, the language really began to click and Canetti elevated his writing to whole other level. I have the exact page and passage marked and will share below. The main character Kien, wants to believe his wife is now dead. She is symbolized throughout the novel by her starched blue skirt. In an effort to purge his reality of all thoughts of his wife, Kien attempts to eradicate the very existence of the color blue:

"The logical argument against the existence of blue is further strengthened by the empirical. with closed eyes, Kien sought some image which in the general opinion would be described as blue. He saw the sea. A pleasing light rises from it, tree-tops with the wind passing over them. Not in vain do poets, standing upon a summit, compare the woods below them to the sea. They do it again and again. They cannot avoid certain similes. There is a deeper reason for this. Poets are men of the senses. They *see* the wood. it is green. In their recollection another image awakens, no less vast, no less green: the sea. so the sea is green. Over it is the vault of the sky. It is full of clouds - they are black and heavy. A storm is rising. But it cannot break. nowhere is the sky blue. the day passes. How the hours hasten! Why? Who is chasing them? May not a man see the skies before nightfall, see their accursed colour? It is a lie. Towards evening the clouds part. A sharp red breaks through. Where is the blue? Everywhere is burns, red, red, red! Then night comes. One more successful revelation. No one doubted the red."

After this passage, the book really took off for me. Canetti sustained the imagery he established above, extended it, and wrote with a previously undetected and much appreciated lyricism. The final portions of this novel assure that Canetti had the powers of a supreme writing. I wonder if Canetti only came upon these powers in the midst of writing this, his only novel. It's a shame that the qualities that Canetti's writing exhibits in the end of this book do not pervade the entire novel - if they had I'm sure this piece would rise through the ranks and rival many of my favorites. Ultimately, however, despite the pleasant taste left in my mouth by the ending, I was disappointed with this book and have quite mixed feelings about recommending it to any but the most serious and patient of readers.

Ezgi says

Birinci ve üçüncü bölümleri gayet etkileyici olan kitabın ikinci bölümünde tuza? a dü?üp ilerlemeyi b?rakabilirdim. Nitekim okuma süremi epey uzattı bu bölüm.

Keza, okuduğum eli yüzü düzgün kitap incelemelerinde de bu konuya değinilmi?. Fischerle'nin bölümü (2.

bölüm ve kitap) uzat?lman?n yan?nda a??r? da??t?lm??.

"Dünyas?z bir kafa" ve "kafas?z bir dünya" isimli iki bölümün sonundaki "kafadaki dünya" bölümünde bir sentez beklediyseniz (benim gibi) yan?ld?n?z demektir. Yine de en az?ndan bu bölümde yazar, okuyucuyu psikolojik olarak az da olsa rahatlatm???. Georg Kien'in duruma el koymas?yla derin bir nefes almayan yoktur san?r?m.

Bay?larak okudu?um üçüncü bölümde önceden Odysseus ve ilyada okumu? oldu?uma çok sevindim. "Kad?n dü?manl???" sav?n? (bir sav da de?il ya neyse) bu eserlerden al?nan bölümlerle destekledi?i paragraflarda i?i, sesli gülmeye kadar vard?rd?m. Bunun yan?nda kad?n dü?manl???n?n ifade edildi?i k?s?mlar rahats?z ediciydi de:

"Penelope'nin ise yirmi y?l Odysseus'u beklemi? oldu?u anlat?l?r. Do?rudur y?llar?n say?s?, ama neden beklemi?tir? Kendisine talip olanlar aras?nda hiçbir? üzerinde karar k?lamam??t?r da ondan!"

Peter Kien'in tüm bu söylenmelerinden as?l problemlerinin ne oldu?unu ??p diye anlayan karde?i Georg Kien as?l takdir edilecek adam. Üçüncü bölümün en orijinal fikri de san?r?m buydu. Sorunlar?n? bile do?rudan ifade edemeyecek kadar makineye dönü?mü? bir bilginin, ruh doktoru karde?i taraf?ndan çözümlenme ?ekli...

Nefreti ve empati eksikli?ini anlatmada oldukça ba?ar?l? olmu? bir kitap bu. Ki?inin sadece kendi varl???n? kutsamas? ve ötekileri hep hakir görmesi...En vas?fs?z?ndan en vas?fl?s?na kadar bu kitapta herkesin içinde bulundu?u durum bu. Bu noktay? da yakla?an fa?izme ba?lam??lar ancak kad?n dü?manl???n?n bu kadar celalle savunulmas?n?n neye ba?l? oldu?u ile ilgili bir yoruma rastlamad?m.

?u yorumlar? ba?ar?l? buldum:

<http://www.derindusunce.org/2015/08/3...>

<http://www.derindusunce.org/2008/12/3...>

Domenico Fina says

Il senso della realta` a me sembra il tema piu` pressante di tutti. E Auto da fe` e` forse il romanzo che piu` di ogni altro mostra l'obnubilarsi in una mania che oscura il resto e la vita stessa.

Faccio un esempio dall'attualita`. Therese, la governante che si occupa del sinologo Kien, passa l'esistenza a inveire contro l'aumento del prezzo delle patate, lui passa l'esistenza a sondare idee, vive nel mondo dei libri. Entrambi vivono senza comunicazione, che non sia nella loro testa.

A persone come Therese immaginiamo di far intendere che la retorica nuoce alla salute, che si sta costruendo una prigione di parole, che potrebbe pensare ad altro, piu` fruttuoso e salutare, che i prezzi aumentano, che spesso è mero automatismo, che imbestialirsi per 20 euro in più all'anno è fatica sprecata. Se sbagli un semaforo con la tua automobile e lo moltiplichi per 365 verrà fuori che andando in macchina sperperi molto di più di 20 euro, a vanvera, all'anno. Estendere, con lo stesso criterio, a tutte le attività giornaliere e la testa ti gira a vuoto.

La vita la salvi se vai naturalmente, secondo necessita`, musicalmente incontro alle cose e ai prezzi. Eppure ragionando in questo modo - come me ora - si finisce per scontrarsi fatalmente con colui che ti dice, sì, bravo, leggi i presocratici, eh. Continua così. Ma che ne sai. Che ne sai di affitti, spese, famiglia, amanti, mutui, stufe a pellet, cambio gomme termiche... e così via fino alla consumazione dei giorni e del cervello. E mentre tu leggi i presocratici, un ipotetico Therese si è appena bruciato 10000 euro in bitcoin, ma a te sta spiegando che sei ingenuo, che lui risparmia 24 euro all'anno avendo cambiato il nuovo gestore telefonico, e che tu sei pigro se non lo cambi, sei uno che la dà vinta allo sporco mercato.

In Auto da fé (titolo originale "Abbagliamento") i personaggi sono convinti di sapere come si vive e fanno pure come spiegarlo; oggi ancor di più, tutti persuasi che risparmiando 3 euro al mese, per un totale annuo

di 36 euro, ma che ne sai tu che leggi Canetti, cambiando gestore telefonico, eccetera eccetera eccetera, la vita sarà in nostro pieno, brillante, mirabolante possesso.

Vit Babenco says

“A bookseller is a king, and a king cannot be a bookseller.”

Can one carry along a huge library in one's head? The protagonist of *Auto-da-Fé* surely can.

And when the abstract intellect collides with the dull routine of reality both become shattered into nothingness.

This grand cynically modernistic novel easily comes among my top ten of favourites in literature.

If one's consciousness is in conflict with reality what should be changed: one's consciousness or reality?

“Blindness is a weapon against time and space; our being is one vast blindness, save only for that little circle our mean intelligence – mean in its nature as in its scope – can illumine. The dominating principle of the universe is blindness. It makes possible juxtapositions which would be impossible if the objects could see each other.”

Let the darkness shine...

“Someone throws a button into your hat. You've told me so yourself. You see it's a button and say thank-you.

If you don't say thank-you, you give the show away and your clients smell a rat. So you agree to be cheated.”

However great can be the ideas we cherish in our heads they are effortlessly destroyed with illiteracy and vulgarity.

Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly says

Since you are at goodreads.com, you're most likely a bookworm (unless you're one of the thousands of juveniles here who pretend they like to read only to get to know people they can hook up with). But how bookworm of a bookworm are you? If you're at least the type who would feel sad leaving a bookstore without getting to buy a book, then reading this novel would, at times, be just like staring at a mirror. You can see you here.

Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1981, Elias Canetti, a German, wrote only one novel. This one.

When you are destined to win the Nobel Prize in Literature but is too lazy to write more than one novel what would be the appropriate basis for the plot in that one and only novel you will place your name on? Books.

And what would your main protagonist be? A bookworm. How bookworm of a bookworm? The worst kind, an extremist book lover.

Meet Peter Kien, 40-year-old, tall, emaciated, specialist in sinology, owner of a library with twenty-five thousand volumes housed in four big rooms in an apartment where he lives alone. He lives for, in, with, by (what other prepositions are there?) his books. Heaven for him is inside his study, reading, writing one thesis after another, surrounded by his beloved books. When he goes out for walks, he finds bookstores the only places worth visiting. He has a map of his town with bookstores encircled in red. When he accidentally drops a book he is in anguish, like he had dropped his own infant child. You soil it, he considers it "injured." He does not like meeting and talking to people. Talk to him and his mind flies elsewhere. He can only pay attention to a conversation when the words "book" or "books" are mentioned. He talks to books and the latter talks back to him. Reality for him is primarily what is written in books. Their counterpart outside of his books are unoriginal--

"As he was passing by the cathedral, warm, uncanny sounds reached his ears. He would have sung in the same key, had his voice, like his mood, been at his command. Suddenly a spot of dirt fell on him. Curious and startled, he looked up at the buttresses. Pigeons preened themselves and cooed, none was to blame for the dirt. For twenty years he had not heard these sounds; every day on his morning walk he passed this spot. Yet cooing was well known to him out of books. 'Quite so!' he said softly, and nodded as he always did when he found reality bearing out the printed original...."

This is a novel without heroes. Except for a few victims, and Kien's brother who appears briefly towards the end, all the characters here look sinister and mad. Virtue is nothing but misinterpreted vileness. Moments of levity are like the smiles and laughter of the insane.

First published in 1935 it foreshadowed not only the American world chess champion Robert "Bobby" Fischer (see the thread I opened in goodreads.com, "Prophetic 1001 Books"), himself off in the head, but also the horrors of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

An arresting read from start to finish which gloriously ended up in flames.

Nate says

Canetti is my god. I hung on every word he ever wrote for most of college and then some. His one novel, this book, is probably the most deeply disturbing novel I have ever set hands on. A masterpiece of modern literature, placing Canetti among the great western writers of the 20th century, this is the story of Peter Kien, the book man. Originally Canetti set out to write a "Comedie Humaine an Irren" with this being the first installment, ala Balzac but about insane people (he lived across the street from Vienna's largest insane asylum at the time he wrote this book). Instead of a whole series like Balzac, he only wrote about one Insane character, the book man. As another reviewer said, though, everyone is mad/insane, a product of Canetti his concept, the setting and, importantly, the enacting of his world view and philosophy of communication. There is no meaning, nor understanding EVER, instead the characters brutally throw words and their own solipsism at each other like rocks, reacting only when hit by someone else's rock (see also Canetti's theory on the "acoustic mask" and theater).

Here and now, years later, Canetti continues to be the bedrock of my life philosophy (In particular part three of this book and the character of George Kien, Canetti's Nobel laureate speech, his books "The Conscience of Words" and "Crowds and Power"). Per Canetti: "Der Dichter ist Huetter der Verwandlung." (The poet is guardian of transformation) Read this book to understand how life pressing this notion is: without transformation and the poet we have only the nightmare world of Auto Da Fe.

Sinem A. says

kitap üzerine söylenmi? çokça ?ey var o nedenle ben daha çok bana neler hissettirdi?inden bahsetmek isterim. yaratt??? karanl?k ve tekinsiz atmosfer insan? inan?lmaz biçimde içine çekiyor. hatta bazen öyle ?eylerden bahsetti ki özellikle ilk ve son bölümlerde korkmamak deh?ete kap?lmamak i?ten bile de?ildi. 2. bölümün uzunlu?u beni de biraz rahats?z etse de uzun zamand?ır beni bu kadar dü?ündüren ve tedirgin eden bir kitap okumam??t?m.

K.D. Absolutely says

Elias Canetti (1905-1994), a Bulgarian novelist and playwright, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981. He wrote several plays, a memoir in trilogy, several non-fiction works but only one novel, **Auto-da-Fe**. The way this is written, the term *auto-da-fe* must be Portuguese and it means the execution of non-believers during the Portuguese inquisition.

However, Canetti wrote the novel in German and was first published in 1935. It is set in the decaying, cosmopolitan Vienna, where the young Canetti himself studied in the 1920s, before the WWII when he had to flee the Nazis and live in France and England. Critics compare this work to those of Russian masters Gogol and Dostoyevsky due to its fantastic yet demonic mood but I thought I was reminded of *The Trial* by Franz Kafka. Well, maybe because I read *Crime and Punishment* long time ago and I just read Kafka's book early this yet. I have not read any of Gogol's works yet.

Anyway, the book is long: 464 pages. 99% of the words are common. Sentences are short so they are easy to read and understand. However, understanding the sentences put together in paragraphs is the challenge. Many times, I had to read again and throw in my interpretations to follow the thoughts of the characters. Doing that, it stole several hours of my sleeping time in the past 5 days. Well, the first book, Part One: A Head Without a World is so interesting as it is all about the 40-y/o **Peter Kien**, his 25,000 books and his housekeeper, who later became his wife, **Therese**. Peter is a sinologist (one who studies China) and he is greatly fixated and obsessed with his books up to the point that he is always afraid that they might go up in smoke so he hires Therese to dust and take care of them. Because he also reads and writes almost round-the-clock, he is also afraid of losing his sight, he is sexless (no libido), thin and frail (no appetite) and does not care about other people. Therese, many years older than him, is afraid of him dying and she ending up as penniless. So she keeps on asking for his will. To secure herself, she devises a way to steal the books. Being a sex-starved wife, she also commits adultery with a younger man that she has met in the shop.

Part Two: Headless World has an added interesting character, a crooked, hunchbacked dwarf **Fischerle** who has the delusion of becoming a world chess champion. In fact at one point he introduces himself as World Champion Fischer (not Fischerle). I am no chess player although I understand its basic moves. The last time I played, my 14-y/o daughter checkmated me in 4 moves so I don't play anymore. This novel is supposed to be a dark comedy but I got slightly offended by what this dwarf says: '*A person who can't play chess, isn't a person. Chess is a matter of brain, I always say. A person may be twelve foot tall, but if he doesn't play chess, he is a fool.*'. However, this part will, of course, be enjoyed by chess players as they will feel glorified and praised tremendously.

Part Three: The World in the Head remarkably ties up all the loose ends. It introduces another characters, the proto-Nazi caretaker and retired policeman **Bendikt Pfaff** and Peter's Parisian psychologist brother, **George**. Both added to the interpretative confusion to the dark delusional brew before the novel ended to a violent logic disintegrating to the final inferno: the burning of books and the death of the laughing Peter. This part's long chapter *Warywise Odysseus* which is basically the dialogue between the brothers, Peter and George, is the most interesting part. However, my knowledge in mythology (Greek, Roman and what have you) is so limited that again, I fell left out.

So, for the feeling of slight offense and my having felt left out, I am giving this seemingly work-of-art novel only a 3 stars. It is not my rating for this masterpiece of German modernism but it is my rating for myself

and the book. I should give chess another try and I have to start reading that thick mythology book my brother bought for me last month. Oh and what should I do with my 1,532 books in my possession? I should bring some of those read 301 books somewhere else. Maybe some to the province, some to the other house, some to giveaway during my book club's meet up, some should be passed on to my brother, my friend, my officemate. Oh I hope they won't get wet when it rains hard again in last year's *Ondoy* or they don't get burned during the El Nino next year....

Davide says

L'inizio è meraviglioso. Ho chiarissimo il ricordo della sensazione di scoperta, di avventura, di godimento prolungato. Solo a scrivere queste due righe mi viene voglia di ricominciare subito!

Deniz Balç? says

Her okurun çok geciktirmeden bir ara okumas? gereken bir eser. Zira "Körle?me"nin ?????nda analiz edece?iniz her kitap, bana kal?rsa okunan eseri kavrama noktas?nda okuyucuyu bir ad?m öteye götürecektir. Muazzam bir ba?yap?t!

9.5/10

Petra X says

[bar cats and chocolate-bearing men (hide spoiler)]
