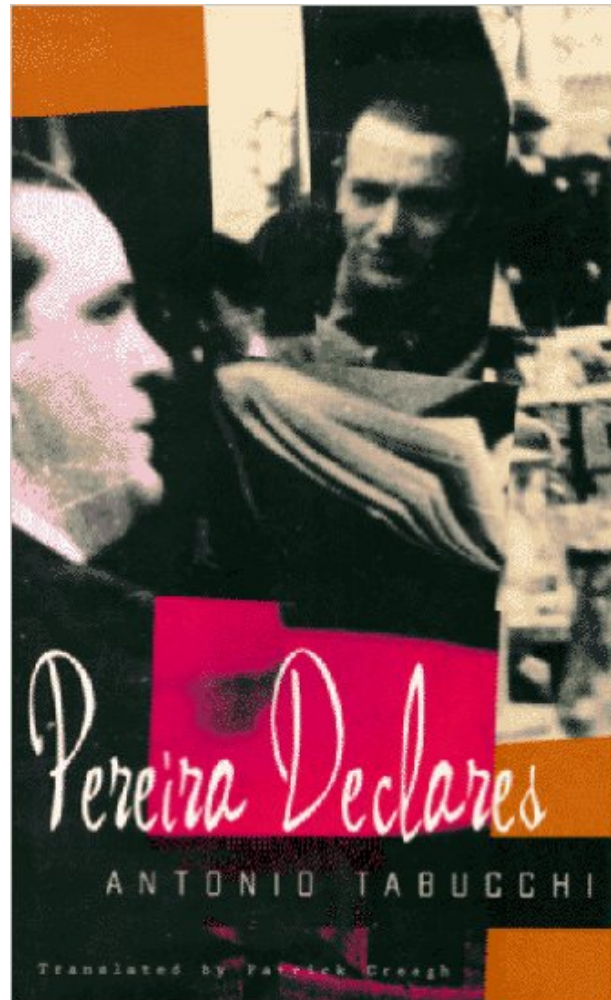


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Pereira Declares: A Testimony



Synopsis

"One of the most intriguing and appealing character studies in recent European fiction, and easily the best work of Tabucchi's to have appeared in English translation." —Kirkus Reviews
Dr. Pereira is an aging, overweight journalist who has failed to notice the menacing cloud of fascism over Salazarist Portugal, until one day he meets an aspiring young writer and anti-fascist. Breaking out of his apolitical torpor, Pereira reluctantly rises to heroism. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

Hardcover: 136 pages

Publisher: New Directions Publishing Corporation (April 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0811213196

ISBN-13: 978-0811213196

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 5.6 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,887,346 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #112 in Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > European > Italian #58671 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary #413126 in Books > Reference

Customer Reviews

I read this book convinced it was a true story. This is because the book edition I bought read, in addition to the title "Pereira Declares", also the sub-title "A testimony". Hence I thought it was a life testimony, a true account. In fact, that's why I bought it and read it, as I read mostly non-fiction. Nothing in the story gave it away as fiction - which I would later discover that it was. I grew up in Lisbon and recognized many places mentioned in the book. But what made the book read true to me was the characters. How believable each character is to me. Each of these people was someone I could have met in Lisbon. I am still astonished that they are fictional characters. Because their mental processes, their lives, their reactions, everything about them is completely familiar, completely Portuguese. Antonio Tabucchi, an Italian living in Portugal for many years, has empathically understood the soul of many in Portugal. When I later came to realize that the story was fictional, it was Tabucchi's complete understanding of the Portuguese soul that amazed me the most. And so, the story was made up. It didn't actually happen. Well, actually it did. It happened many many times. That is, many true stories that happened under the Salazar regime were variants

of this story.

Afirma Pereira is a wonderful short tale about one man's abrupt inclusion into the world of political opposition within a society that had sullenly accepted the gradual emergence of a paternalist authoritarian State. Pereira, the main character, is an ageing intellectual who has never fully recovered from the premature death of his wife. He believes that he is a Catholic, although his mind is full of doubts that his religious faith cannot resolve. He edits the cultural section of a small newspaper that 'tends towards Catholicism', and which believes in the resurrection of the soul. He is preoccupied with death and reincarnation - a concern that brings him into contact with the cause of his own reincarnation in the form of the young half-Italian, Monteiro Rossi. Set in Lisbon at the height of the Spanish Civil War, Tabucchi uses his undoubted lyrical skills to paint a picture of a Lisbon that is, at first sight, at peace with itself. Under the surface, however, it is clear that all is not right - and this is what Tabucchi brings out so clearly. Pereira's curiosity in Rossi - the son he never had, and the youth he never lived - gets the better of him, and he gets drawn in to the younger man's life. Pereira had always been aware that the political regime in Portugal was intolerant of opposition, but, like the majority of Portuguese, he preferred not to think about it - a walking example of Portuguese 'fado'. His gradual awakening becomes apparent as the news arrives that some workers had been killed by the police in the Alentejan town of Evora. Normally Pereira would have allowed this to simply wash over him - now it becomes a cause for concern. Suddenly he is more aware - he notices the graffiti on the Jewish butcher's shop, and realises that it offends him.

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