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# Deviation

LUCE D'ERAMO, TRANSLATED BY ANNE MILANO APPEL

WHAT THE REVIEWERS SAY

**RAVE LIDIJA HAAS, *HARPER'S***

Luce D'Eramo's extraordinary novel *Deviation*... is, as its title may imply, a rejection of the idea that literary form can be neatly separated from psychic and political life. Autobiographical without ever being simply or transparently so, the story is so eventful that it initially threatens to make the style of its telling invisible—the content upstaging the form—when in fact the drama and difficulty of that telling will become central to the book. It's no mean feat even to summarize the novel's plot, which emerges in uneven, nonchronological, tonally disparate sections, written at different times and dated as such, their edges left jagged, the elisions and distortions of earlier parts revisited and highlighted in later ones ... A novel is the classic form through which to convey a drastic shift in individual consciousness. By dramatizing its own struggle to be written, this one displays the process of changing your mind and trying to take responsibility for yourself and your place in the world ... She keeps shedding her bourgeois skin but it always regrows, protecting her from what others must suffer, trapping her by turns in self-serving and self-punishing delusions ... She is aware of the way her memory continually alters the past and especially the self that occupied it. The book's vividly drawn early sections are presented as memories long repressed ... Yet they are also revealed as highly artificial reconstructions that must be painfully torn down and reassembled to find what has been left out.

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**RAVE MARTHA ANNE TOLL, *NPR***

Finally, 39 years after its debut, comes its first-ever English edition, vividly translated by Anne Milano Appel ... This devastating chain of experience cannot be told in linear fashion. The story must 'deviate,' as the memory and weight and brutality of D'Eramo's past unfolds in bursts ... If we appreciate Karl Ove Knausgaard for his introspective tenacity, then we must genuflect before Luce D'Eramo ... It is not simply D'Eramo's personal story, but also her ruthless quest for self-knowledge, that render *Deviation* a literary tour de force.

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#### RAVE ALEXANDER MORAN, BOOKLIST

D'Eramo's stand-in narrator evocatively describes the abject sights and smells of her experiences in a factory, and later in the Dachau concentration camp ... Perhaps most like D. M. Thomas' controversial *The White Hotel* (1981), or the unflinchingly brutal realism of Pier Pasolini's *Salò*, D'Eramo's tale is built from disparate memories as they returned to her later in life, and she consciously tries to avoid giving shape or structure to this fictionalization of her experiences. The result is a difficult, disturbing, and yet brilliantly ambiguous exploration of humanity's darkest time.

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#### POSITIVE PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Readers see Lucia calming terminal patients, staring down a police dog, shedding identities like snake skins, all while formerly repressed memories of the war keep bubbling up in her narration. D'Eramo vividly conveys the cruelty and wretchedness of war. An excellent translator's note from Appel clarifies the sometimes confusing chronology of events and the mix of memoir and fiction in this audacious novel.

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#### POSITIVE KIRKUS

Told sometimes in the first and sometimes in the third person, D'Eramo's account addresses not just wartime experiences, but also her subsequent life in a wheelchair, paralyzed by the accident and dependent on drugs; some of the episodes she recounts are as hellish as anything she experienced in the labor camps ... The book resembles Malaparte's in some of its hallucinatory aspects, but it also recalls work as various as Iris Origo's *War in Val D'Orcia* and Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Castle to Castle*. Though a minor contribution to the larger literature of World War II, a strange, heartfelt account of someone who served a role few would confess to.

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