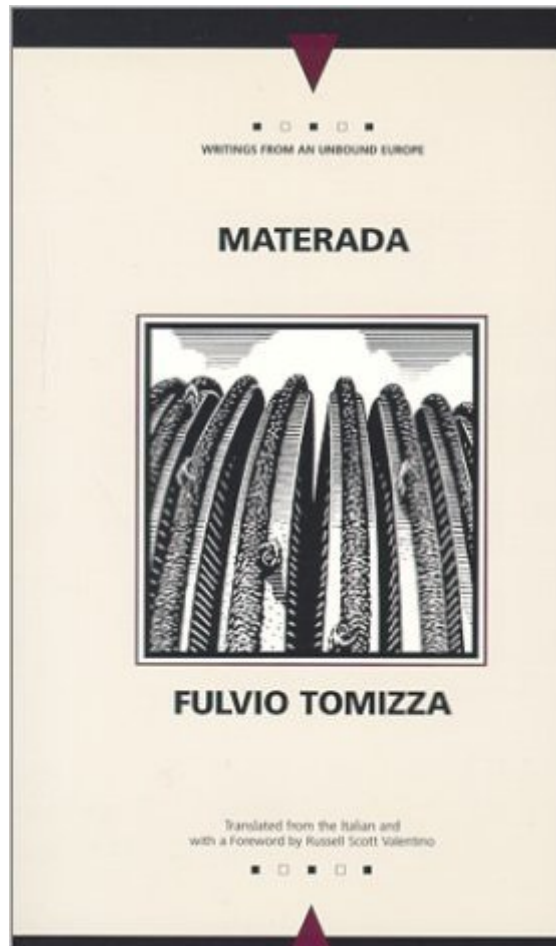


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Materada (Writings From An Unbound Europe)



Synopsis

Francesco Koslovic -- even his name straddles two cultures. And in the spring of 1955, in the village of Materada on the Istrian Peninsula, the two worlds of Francesco Koslovic are coming apart. A novel both lyrical and elegiac, Materada unfolds against the backdrop of the Istrian exodus -- the departure from their homeland of hundreds of thousands who had once thrived in the peninsula's rich ethnic mixture of Italian and Slav, Croat and Slovene. Complicating -- and hastening -- Koslovic's own departure is his vain attempt to keep land that he and his brother have worked all their lives. As Koslovic narrates the events leading up to his family's displacement -- and the feud that divides the family itself -- he brings a rare immediacy to the questions of ethnic identity that have rolled Central Europe in the twentieth century. A picture of a disappearing way of life, imbued with love for the tastes and tales and songs of his native Istria, Koslovic's story is also a testament to the inextricably intertwined ethnic roots of Balkan history.

Book Information

Series: Writings from an Unbound Europe

Hardcover: 134 pages

Publisher: Northwestern University Press; 1 edition (December 25, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0810117584

ISBN-13: 978-0810117587

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 5 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,358,532 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #144 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > European > Italian](#) #13660 in [Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Psychological Thrillers](#) #72212 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary](#)

Customer Reviews

It's the lyricism of the writing that first got me. On page two, I was already in the world the main character resides and remained captivated all the way through the novel. The first-person narrator is not depicted as any extraordinary person, but simply as a diligent individual who longs for his own land like many other farmers. It's admirable that the author projects complex historical, political landscapes of the region through the eyes of peasant farmers, realistic, literary "down-to-earth"

characters. The book doesn't over-sentimentalize or preach. Yet it helped me better understand the complicated regional tension/balance that history and politics have brought to Istria. Just a final note: Read the translator's foreword after you read the story. The foreword is very informative but somewhat dense, and you might feel a little taken aback from the story you are about to begin if you read it first.

Interested in Istria I bought "Materada", which is the name of a community near Umago in what is now Croatia. The story is narrated in a simple way by his main character, a farmer deceived by his uncle. The story of Francesco and his uncle is interesting as a family drama. However, the book also deals with the complex history of Istria, which used to be part of Italy and then ceded to Yugoslavia after WWII, creating one of the biggest exodus ever known in European history. I had a basic understanding of this part of history, but this wasn't enough. Francesco's narration is that of an insider, of course, but it made me feel like an outsider, specially during the first half. During the second half of the story, it focuses more on Francesco and what it meant to consider leaving your homeland, finishing with a beautiful chapter with the inhabitants of Materada attending a mass improvised by themselves. The book left me wanting to read more about this part of the world, although it wasn't as satisfactory as I thought it would be because of my lack of depth in the matter.

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