

**Review: *Everyone in their Place* by Maurizio de Giovanni, Translated by Antony Shugaar**

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Maurizio de Giovanni's *Everyone in their Place* is not your local drugstore's crime novel. Set in the author's hometown of Naples just before World War II, as fascism is beginning to lay its roots, a talented and enigmatic commissario must solve the murder of a duchess who has drawn controversy by marrying into her status. Meanwhile, government and nascent fascist forces follow in the commissario's footsteps, attempting to whitewash the scandals he uncovers. In de Giovanni's third installment of what will be a four-part series, he serves his readers a rich and compelling mix of class struggle, love and loneliness, beautifully rendered characters and good old-fashioned intrigue.

De Giovanni has so intricately crafted his Commissario Ricciardi that the reader can feel his suits rumple and his mind comb a crime scene. He's a walking contradiction. Although the commissario is incredibly talented, magnetic, and charmingly oblivious of his own good looks, he remains a lonely heart, engulfed by his work but ostracized by his peers, his inflexible integrity constantly under pressure from his superiors. Essentially, you could call him an Italian Agent Mulder from *The X-Files*, except that instead of investigating the supernatural, he is the supernatural: the commissario has the ability to see and hear the dead eternally repeating their final moments. Through the eyes of his hero, de Giovanni paints the city as a haunted site, brimming with unfinished emotional business. Every ghostly victim the commissario encounters at a crime scene—or on the street, or at the table with him while he orders lunch—is an intimate cry for justice and closure. For the reader, experiencing the weight of this cry pinpointed on a single man calls into question the feasibility of a cleanly finished life.

And de Giovanni gives us so much life to look at. There are summer festivals for the poor and glamorous outings for the rich, and where they come together, the tension gives you goosebumps. The murder victim, the Duchess of Camparino, was the elderly duke's nurse before his first wife died. When they married, her charisma quickly made her a prominent social figure. The general murmur in the upper class was the duchess was a gold digger who got what she deserved, but to the rest of the city, she was a goddess. To his superiors' dismay, the commissario works his way through every layer of the social hierarchy, from the doorman, to the rebellious editor of the city paper, to a transsexual prostitute named Bambino, to the elusive head of the new fascist party. While he does his work, Ricciardi faces emerging pressures in his personal life as he is drawn from his reclusion and forced to choose between two women: a sexy singer who has him in her romantic crosshairs, and the girl next door with whom he has shared an unspoken love for many years, who grows impatient with her own silence. There is a wistful and urgent irony in watching Ricciardi struggle. He's a man who knows deeply what a tremendous impact one moment can have, but cannot bring himself to create any impactful moments of his own.

Both the living and dead in de Giovanni's novel are in a state of constant investigation. The city wrestles with a dramatic shift in power and an unclear future; family loses and finds itself in peculiar ways; and lovers pick through small interactions for meaning. But, most important, I was on the edge of my seat for the whole read. Even while bringing an intense profundity to his genre, de Giovanni manages to not lose track of what a crime novel is meant to do: catch the reader under the ribs—and twist.