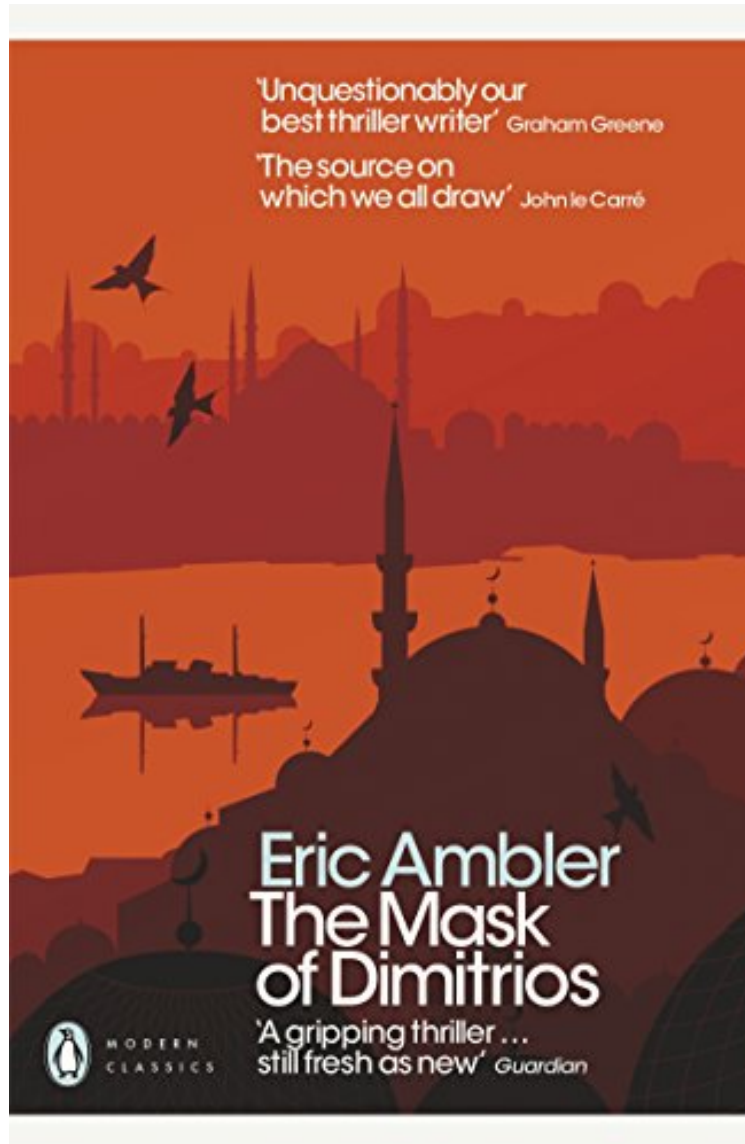


[Library ebook] The Mask of Dimitrios (Penguin Modern Classics)

The Mask of Dimitrios (Penguin Modern Classics)

Von Eric Ambler

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Von Eric Ambler : The Mask of Dimitrios (Penguin Modern Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mask of Dimitrios (Penguin Modern Classics):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A timeless masterpieceVon Ein KundelIt's amazing how quickly the books of second-rate writers become dated. I'm partial to thrillers, and my bookshelf groans with stories, set in the Cold War, that I will never read again. Their settings are as strange to me now as the Roman Empire or renaissance Europe. Their time is past. No so Ambler.

'Dimitrios' is based on people, not place. He created so many memorable characters: the Turkish secret policeman, clownish off-duty, ruthless and cold-eyed at his work; the Bulgarian good-time girl, whose head and heart told her different things; the hen-pecked official in Belgrade, with his greedy wife; the respectable cafe-owner who slides, without resistance, into the lucrative world of prostitution and drug-smuggling; the successful Swiss businessman whose business just happened to be selling secrets. These are not people I have come across in real life, but they all strike me as flesh-and-blood characters. I could imagine having a fascinating conversation with any of them. In terms of place, the end of the Cold War has actually helped Ambler. We (I'm British) seem to have returned to the Europe of the inter-war years: corrupt, amoral, nervy, and prone to occasional outbursts of horrific violence. The significant difference, of course, is that we have no Hitler around now. In 'Dimitrios', Hitler is never mentioned by name, but he is always there, hovering, as it were, just out of the corner of your eye. Ambler's prose is wonderful. He tells a complicated story so well, lingering just long enough to sketch in profiles of people and places, before getting on with the plot. Three passages linger in my memory: the massacre of the inhabitants of Smyrna; the entrapment of the Yugoslav official; and Peters' description of how intelligent and worldly-wise people become addicted to heroin. Ambler's prose is spare and cynical, yet there is a dash of pity as well. Unlike so many novelists today who give the impression that their characters are no more than specimens on the lab bench, you feel that Ambler saw his characters as people. For a novel whose subject-matter is so dark, the reader finishes it feeling satisfied and enriched. An enjoyable and profitable read.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Classic Espionage: Realistic, Vivid and Noir!! Von Donald Mitchell To read or not to read the great spy novels of Eric Ambler? That is the question most people ignore because they are not familiar with Mr. Ambler and his particularly talent. Mr. Ambler has always had this problem. As Alfred Hitchcock noted in his introduction to *Intrigue* (an omnibus volume containing *Journey into Fear*, *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, *Cause for Alarm* and *Background to Danger*), "Perhaps this was the volume that brought Mr. Ambler to the attention of the public that make best-sellers. They had been singularly inattentive until its appearance -- I suppose only God knows why." He goes on to say, "They had not even heeded the critics, who had said, from the very first, that Mr. Ambler had given new life and fresh viewpoint to the art of the spy novel -- an art supposedly threadbare and certainly cliché-infested." So what's new and different about Eric Ambler writing? His heroes are ordinary people with whom almost any reader can identify, which puts you in the middle of a turmoil of emotions. His bad guys are characteristic of those who did the type of dirty deeds described in the book. His angels on the sidelines are equally realistic to the historical context. The backgrounds, histories and plot lines are finely nuanced into the actual evolution of the areas and events described during that time. In a way, these books are like historical fiction, except they describe deceit and betrayal rather than love and affection. From a distance of over 60 years, we read these books today as a way to step back into the darkest days of the past and relive them vividly. You can almost see and feel a dark hand raised to strike you in the back as you read one of his book's later pages. In a way, these stories are like a more realistic version of what Dashiell Hammett wrote as applied to European espionage. Since Mr. Ambler wrote, the thrillers have gotten much bigger in scope . . . and moved beyond reality. Usually, the future of the human race is at stake. The heroes make Superman look like a wimp in terms of their prowess and knowledge. There's usually a love interest who exceeds your vision of the ideal woman. Fast-paced violence and killing dominate most pages. There are lots of toys to describe and use in imaginative ways. The villains combine the worst faults of the 45 most undesirable people in world history and have gained enormous wealth and power while being totally crazy. The plot twists and turns like cruise missile every few seconds in unexpected directions. If you want a book like that, please do not read Mr. Ambler's work. You won't like it. If you want to taste, touch, smell, see and hear evil from close range and move through fear to defeat it, Mr. Ambler's your man. On to *A Coffin for Dimitrios*. During the pre-World War II era, it was common for ordinary citizens to be pressed into espionage activities, whether knowingly or not. Many people rate *A Coffin for Dimitrios* to be the greatest novel built around that theme. Almost everyone agrees that it is Mr. Ambler's best novel. Charles Latimer began his career as a lecturer in political economy at a minor English University and wrote three scholar volumes. Suffering from depression from his studies of the Nazis in the third volume, He wrote a successful detective story and was soon launched on a career as a writer that took him away from academia. A chance trip to Turkey after an illness in Athens causes him to meet a real policeman, Colonel Haki, who is a fan of his stories. They meet for lunch to discuss the colonel's literary ambitions. Casually, the colonel shares the dossier of a criminal, Dimitrios Markropoulos, to make the point that "the murderer in a roman policier [is] much more sympathetic than a real murderer." The dossier is filled with probable crimes with lots of gaps in time and knowledge between locations and crimes. Latimer learns that Dimitrios is now lying dead in the morgue, and develops an odd compulsion to see him. The colonel complies and Latimer decides he wants to know all about the dead man. The bulk of the story relates to finding the man behind the dossier through talking with his former associates. As the detection follows, new mysteries appear and Latimer finds himself in the middle of something much larger than himself. For those who like complicated plots, this book is a delight. Each stage of the search for Dimitrios is like a separate short story that asks and answers a piece of the mystery. Some will undoubtedly see the links from one of these short stories to the next as sometimes being on the flimsy side. That's intended, rather than being a flaw. The larger theme of this book is about the weird appearance of the hand of Providence in our lives. But it's Providence viewed with a sense of

humor. As the book begins, Mr. Ambler notes that "if there should be such a thing as a superhuman Law, it is administered with sub-human efficiency. The choice of Latimer as its instrument could have been made only by an idiot." After you finish enjoying the delightful story, please consider where else you are comfortable reading books set in the past for their observations about that past that are universal and timeless. For instance, does King Lear, or Hamlet speak to you today even though their settings are long since gone? 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Ambler: Godfather of the modern spy novel Von na7776@worldnet.att.net With "A Coffin for Dimitrios," Eric Ambler delineated every aspect of how a world which was soon to explode in World War II would fall back into place, at once more tightly and more loosely bound together. Were it not for Ambler, James Bond -- and by extension George Smiley, Harry Palmer, and the rest -- would never have seen the Light of Day. Ambler's style is bleak, his characters world-weary and gesture-drawn, sketchy types who steal meekly across the shadows. In the case of this novel, it is Leyden, a Dutch D.P., who finally exits his inner world, from where he draws the mysteries he writes, to enter an outer world just as frenzied. Starting from Turkey, he follows the trail of a nasty man, a killer and schemer named Dimitrios, via the Orient Express and several forays into towns destroyed by the Turks, by the Greeks, by, ultimately, the same History which has subsumed Dimitrios' past. Is Dimitrios a Greek or a Turk? A petty thief, an artist of crime, or a mobster? What Leyden discovers only propels him back into a safe, insulated world: the Britain whose own political and social boundaries will be compromised. From its beginning, "A Coffin on Dimitrios" overtly challenges its reader. Colonel Haki, head of the Turkish secret police, asks Leyden how real mysteries, as opposed to Leyden's inventions, are so banal, so dirty, in the end repetitive, violent, and mindless. A case in point is the murder of Dimitrios, whose drowned body attests to the final end of a daring crook. Leyden is inspired by this real-life happening and tries to chronicle, if not on paper, the life of this character. What he finds are shifting identities, motives, and allegiances, and a glimpse, but only by gun-flash, of a new crime which has legitimized itself, lives in bourgeois suburbs of Paris, and practices its metier through corporations and boards of directors. Rarely do these arch-criminals take matters into their own hands, unless on the eve of their own unmasking. These themes: corporate crime, gritty European locales, and a non-professional hero, were themes Ambler was to use again and again, exploring them from the other side of the law forty years later in *The Siege of the Villa Lipp*. It is a testimony to his talent and foresight that they were still valid and credible then. *A Coffin for Dimitrios* delivers, moves with effort, strains palpably to a climax, recontains itself and moves on, while leaving questions which could and can not be recontained. Ambler's definitive work

Kurzbeschreibung English crime novelist Charles Latimer is travelling in Istanbul when he makes the acquaintance of Turkish police inspector Colonel Haki. It is from him that he first hears of the mysterious Dimitrios - an infamous master criminal, long wanted by the law, whose body has just been fished out of the Bosphorus. Fascinated by the story, Latimer decides to retrace Dimitrios' steps across Europe to gather material for a new book. But, as he gradually discovers more about his subject's shadowy history, fascination tips over into obsession. And, in entering Dimitrios' criminal underworld, Latimer realizes that his own life may be on the line. Pressestimmen 'Not Le Carre, not Deighton, not Ludlum have surpassed the intelligence, authenticity or engrossing storytelling that established *The Mask of Dimitrios* as the best of its kind' *The Times* 'If you want to experience the feel of the Continent in the 1930s, you will find few better guides' - Robert Harris Kurzbeschreibung English crime novelist Charles Latimer is travelling in Istanbul when he makes the acquaintance of Turkish police inspector Colonel Haki. It is from him that he first hears of the mysterious Dimitrios - an infamous master criminal, long wanted by the law, whose body has just been fished out of the Bosphorus. Fascinated by the story, Latimer decides to retrace Dimitrios' steps across Europe to gather material for a new book. But, as he gradually discovers more about his subject's shadowy history, fascination tips over into obsession. And, in entering Dimitrios' criminal underworld, Latimer realizes that his own life may be on the line.