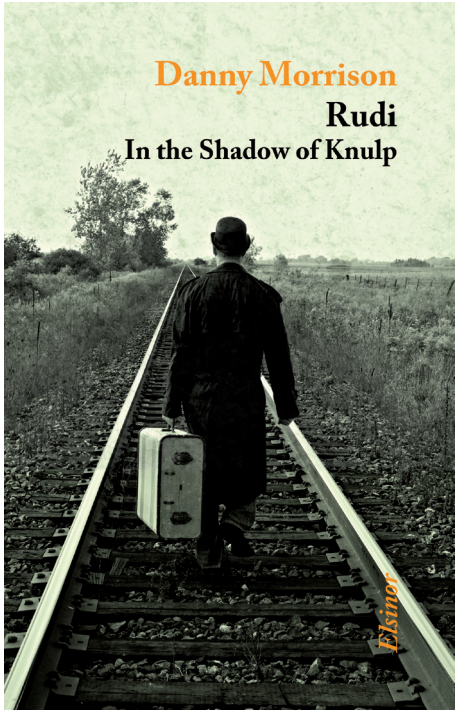

April 2013

Danny Morrison

Rudi

In the Shadow of Knulp

Afterword by Jörg W. Rademacher
Paperback, 160 pages, £ 11,99; € 14,90 [D, IE]
Elsinor Verlag 2013
ISBN 978-3-939483-21-2

Contents

Rudi is a loner with a secret, a tramp, who in his youth was once a promising scholar in love with and mesmerised by 'the sumptuous, voluptuous Isabel'. But everything was spoilt and fell apart and in despair he considered ending his life but for something he once read, that "it is nobler and finer to be felled by life than by one's own hand". And so for decades, restless and homeless, he goes through the motions until, one day, a young friend, Rebecca, attempts to prise from him the story of his life.

Danny Morrison, long an admirer of Hermann Hesse (the quote above is from *Steppenwolf),* first came across Hesse's *Three Tales from the Life of Knulp* while he was serving an eight-year prison sentence. He has now adapted and transferred this powerful and moving story to twentieth-century Ireland.

Comments

"There's much to admire. Besides the Orwellian-clear writing there's the landscape through which Rudi moves, recreated with the vividness of a Thomas Hardy novel ... and at the centre of everything this lonely, almost saintly figure of Rudi, thoughtful, sad, struggling to make sense of his own life and of those around him."

Jude Collins, writer & broadcaster

"Rudi stands in the tradition of those Beckettian figures with their desire to remember, to tell, and their inability to tell. When, in the end, Rudi does tell, it comes as a great surprise."

Ruth Frehner, Zürich James Joyce Foundation

The Author

Danny Morrison was born in West Belfast in 1953. He always wanted to be a writer but the conflict in his country forced him to devote his youth to the advocacy of civil rights and the cause of Irish independence. From his teens on, he became a prolific pamphleteer, an IRA activist, an elected politician, and an internationally-recognised spokesperson on the behalf of Irish republicanism.

He has written several works, including the novels – *West Belfast* (1989), *On the Back of the Swallow* (1994) and *The Wrong Man* (1997), which was later adapted as a play, performed to critical acclaim in Belfast, Dublin, London and Edinburgh (2005). His literary development and support of peace, reconciliation and compromise, were prominent features of his prison letters, *Then The Walls Came Down* (1999). His memoir *All the Dead Voices* (2002) represented a crucible of his philosophical thoughts on the meaning of life, family and home, the title borrowed from Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*.

Danny Morrison is the chairperson of Féile an Phobail (Festival of the People) in Belfast and the secretary of the Bobby Sands Trust, named after the hunger striker and MP who died opposing British rule in Ireland.

Excerpt

The attacker shivered and waited in the shadows at the rear of the Diamond Bar for what seemed like an eternity. A patron stumbled out into the cold air, croaking the song he left behind, as he made his way to the toilet in the courtyard. Another drunk left the bar and lurched towards the gate to go home, but wavered and was lured back by the fug and the thought of more free drink.

If Jeff wasn't alone when he came out, he would be tracked from a distance and for opportunity, this night or another soon – as time was pressing and he would shortly be leaving Ireland for good.

A spirited rendering of *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*, led by Jeff's younger cousin Sammy, could be heard coming from the hive of the bar.

Another ten minutes passed.

When the door opened a coffin of light fell across the yard.

It was Jeff, at last.

As he zigzagged across the dimly-lit yard he was having problems prising free the buttons of his fly and appeared not to be in as jovial a mood as the company he had just left.

The attacker readied himself, took a deep breath, ran out from the shadows and from behind plunged the knife deep into the side of his victim, who gasped in anguish and buckled as if from the impact of a bullet.

The attacker appeared to hesitate, but had the presence of mind to withdraw his knife, then turned and ran towards the Shambles, as Jeff collapsed in a pool of blood.