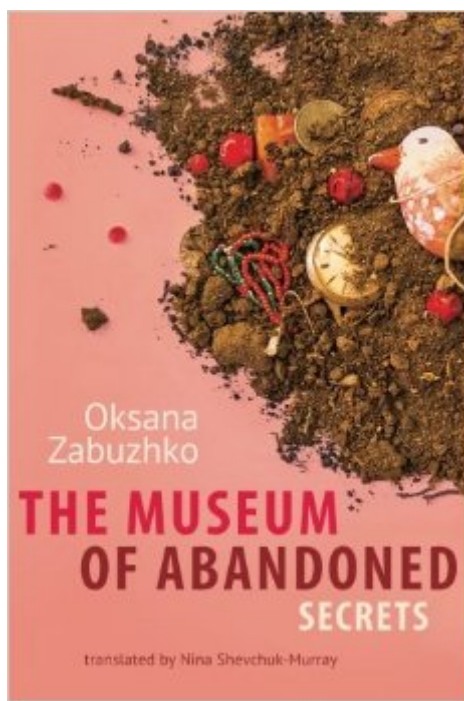


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The Museum Of Abandoned Secrets



Synopsis

Spanning sixty tumultuous years of Ukrainian history, this multigenerational saga weaves a dramatic and intricate web of love, sex, friendship, and death. At its center: three women linked by the abandoned secrets of the past—secrets that refuse to remain hidden. While researching a story, journalist Daryna unearths a worn photograph of Olena Dovgan, a member of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army killed in 1947 by Stalin's secret police. Intrigued, Daryna sets out to make a documentary about the extraordinary woman—and unwittingly opens a door to the past that will change the course of the future. For even as she delves into the secrets of Olena's life, Daryna grapples with the suspicious death of a painter who just may be the latest victim of a corrupt political power play. From the dim days of World War II to the eve of Orange Revolution, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* is an epic of enlightening force that explores the enduring power of the dead over the living.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Museum of Abandoned Secrets" is a fascinating, well-written and enjoyable novel, but it is not really one novel -- it is two novels -- alternating chapters of: Novel 1: a black comedy -- sprawling, picaresque -- about the romance of two Gen X intellectual yuppies in the year 2003 in the corrupt, materialistic and chaotic post-Communist upper crust Ukrainian society -- and Novel 2: a sad, lyrical World War II and Cold War novel about two middle class lovers serving as soldiers in a tiny forest-based guerilla unit in the WWII Ukrainian insurgent army that fought the Poles, the Nazis, the

Russian Communists, the Italians -- well, virtually everyone -- in an attempt to create a free Ukraine. Since the book is really two novels rather than one, it clocks in at 678 pages. The two novels are tied together by the narrator -- one of the two yuppies -- who is a prominent television journalist making a film about the lives of the romantic couple in the tiny guerilla unit and their tragic ultimate fate. She enters a love affair with a descendant of one of the two ill-fated forest guerillas. The two novels are different in style. The social comedy -- think a longer version of Nikolai Gogol's "Dead Souls" in its themes -- or Zadie Smith's "White Teeth" -- constitutes a sweeping, hilarious panorama of Ukrainian society after being freed from centuries of multiple wars and dictatorships. The stories are amusing, classic FSU (Former Soviet Union) stories -- the moral and intellectual confusion of people in a country where the rulers, flags, official language and approved national religion changed every few generations as a new conqueror marched through.

Daryna "Lolly" Goshchynska, the daughter of a persecuted dissident, is a successful TV journalist in contemporary Ukraine. As she deals with her job, emerging socio-political realities, and relationship issues, Lolly's family history forces her to come to grips with the abandoned secrets of Ukraine's grim 20th century history and how they affect what her nation is becoming. Inspired by a photograph of Olena "Gela" Dovganivna, a beautiful nationalist of the resistance movement that fought the Soviets after WWII, Lolly embarks on an investigation that leads her into a love affair, dreams of a doomed romance, and a murder mystery. Although this book is a TOME I got a big kick out of it, particularly as despite having a smattering of historical knowledge of the mid-20th century Ukraine, I tend to have a vague Balkanized image of the Soviet empire's still newly-independent former colonies. I also enjoy the author's Proustian writing style, her humorous meditations on her country's social development, the artful revelations of the simultaneous persistence and wilful ignorance of history, and the elegaic way Zabuzhko handles the dreams of Aidy, Lolly's lover, in which he lives out the doomed romance of the partisan lovers: his namesake Adrian and his aunt Gela. The translation is highly readable, but the tale is so long I sometimes lost the thread and had to go back - even then it wasn't always easy! However my real problem has more to do with my own ignorance I guess; even for someone with a smattering of knowledge about the postwar resistance movements against communism, Ukrainian historical geography needs a little elucidation.

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