



Despondency: The Story of a Defeated Man

Paul A. Wunderlich, Pablo Andrés Wunderlich Padilla

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Trister Trännermann, a fifty-nine year old man, travels the world in search of happiness. He finds nothing but regret as the unforgiving shadow of his past relentlessly haunted him. He ends up in Antigua, Guatemala, where he finally decides to settle down for good in an attempt to evade his demise.

As he seeks to dismantle his misery, he dreams about a Mayan warrior who stabs him to death, and he sees a woman whom he's barely seen before. Upon waking, Trister seeks her counsel in order to understand why she, of all people, appeared in his dream. He wrestles with self-doubt as she taps into the ruins of his shattered soul where she comprehends that he has been mangled by more than merely self-rejection. He fears he will never find happiness and will die as a nomad, ever wandering the world in search of something he can hardly define.

Despondency: The Story of a Defeated Man Details

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Melinda says

I received a free book through Goodreads.

Let me start off by saying that I really did try to finish reading this book. However, it clearly wasn't suited to my preference. It's not to say that the book was awful or anything, it was a very fascinating read and brought up a lot of good points and theories, I just didn't have any desire to read it regardless of how I tried.

The book talked about the start of Trister's journey of self discovery and overcoming his weakness. For the most part, it felt like Trister was being offered to take the pills (just like in the Matrix), whether to continue to wander aimlessly or to face the truth and find himself. It really is quite a fascinating journey, especially when it involves Mayan warriors and being set in Guatemala. I enjoyed the use of symbolism and trying to decipher the meanings behind it in direct relation to Trister. I also enjoyed how there are others there to guide and help Trister on his journey of self discovery, they certainly are interesting characters.

Overall, this story is quite fascinating. It may not have worked out for me but you should give it a try and determine for yourself. I hope one day I will go back and finish this book.

Manuel says

great

Jennifer says

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How one rates this book depends on what 'genre' one decides to rate it as. For example, were I to rate this novel under the guise of merely 'fiction' or 'contemporary fiction', my rating would be 3 stars for the following reasons: the supporting characters in this book are placed too conveniently, and provide the main character with exactly what he needs at the exact moment he needs it. **HOWEVER**, I do not believe this book should be rated using the widely-accepted standards of the 'fiction' genre. This novel is first and foremost a *philosophical* novel; explored through the perspective of the main character. In the genre of '**philosophical fiction**'; standard guidelines fully allow for the author to use substantial creative license, and more often than not, the secondary characters within this specific genre are there for one reason above all others; to support and help carry forward the philosophy that the author is presenting to the reader through the main character. That is exactly what this novel does; therefore, I am going to rate it within the parameters of what fits this novel best: the 'philosophical' genre.

With that said, I want to clarify to readers that this philosophy; this journey as described in these pages, can be enjoyed by the spiritual and non-spiritual alike. This novel centers around the concept of 'self' and does

not enter into any religious discussions. It does not purport religion nor does it dismiss it; the topic simply is not present. Therefore, I can easily recommend this to any reader who has an interest in the topic of self-valuation, self-discovery and self-awareness. To say more on this particular topic would enter into 'spoiler alert' territory, which I want to avoid for the purposes of this review.

I am a fast reader so when I received a physical copy of this 188 page novel, I was certain that I would read through it in one or two sittings. That is not the case and I urge readers to take it slow. This novel is like a rich dessert; it's best ingested in small doses for maximum impact, understanding, and enjoyment. Just as the main character needs time to reflect on what he learns, so does the reader in order to absorb the many changes and metamorphoses that occur.

One other reviewer noted that the book is confusing at first. Yes it is and as I neared the middle-to-end of the novel, I realized that it is *intentionally* written that way. We start our journey with the main character, Trister; a 59 year old German drowning in despair; a depressed and wandering nomad who has been searching for a sense of purpose and happiness in his life in all the wrong places. At the beginning of the novel; we, the reader, know very little about Trister other than a vague back-story comprised of nothing more than a few random facts about his past history. With that said, Trister, who is searching to make sense of his bleak existence, doesn't know any more about himself than the reader does. It is through this method that the author begins Trister's journey, and the reader's along with him. This is one of the elements of the novel that impressed me the most.

So often in novels, the reader requires some sort of emotional connection to the character, based on elements of the character's life-story and emotional construct. In this novel, the reader essentially begins the novel in the dark, with very little knowledge of who the main character really is. As the ultimate theme of this novel is a journey of '**self-discovery**', what better way to 'teach' and 'guide' the reader through this process than to have us grow as Trister grows? Creatively speaking, it's a unique and (in this case) very successful method in which to plant the budding seeds of a philosophy, nurturing both the main character and the reader in tandem throughout the novel until the seeds have, by the end, reached maturity. Very well done.

The other aspect of this novel that deserves praise is its beautiful and poetic prose. There is a very stark contrast between the despondent and (initially) colorless and bleak main character Trister, and the use of vibrant, colorful language. I don't know if this paradox was created intentionally, but it works and it works well. Here is just one of many examples of the vivid imagery woven throughout the novel:

..."The word fled like a fluttering, invisible butterfly to its dormant position within the chambers of his thoughts. There, the word seemed to linger in inactivity, in quiescence, waiting for something to happen, like a timid blossom afraid to bloom."...

As beautiful and imaginative as the prose is, it is not overdone. One metaphor too many can take an otherwise beautiful book and turn it into a major annoyance; thankfully, an appropriate balance exists within these pages. Additionally, those who appreciate and expect novels to be properly edited will be pleased to know that this book is! That's a pet peeve of mine and I have been known to set aside a book entirely if it's riddled with grammatical and spelling errors.

Additionally, there are references to Mayan culture that do play a role in the journey of Trister. Those familiar with Mayan culture will appreciate the potential possibilities as to why Mayan culture may have been chosen to take part in the main character's struggle to find 'self'; and I believe that the setting for this novel, Guatemala, is not the only reason. For readers that may lack knowledge of Mayan culture; it will not affect your enjoyment or understanding of the novel in any way. If anything, it will enhance it.

For all my praise thus far, there are a few minor issues I encountered in this novel. While I stated in the first paragraph that philosophical novels have a certain amount of leeway when it comes to the secondary characters that provide a supporting role; there were a few times when I had to suspend belief a little too much for my comfort. For example, some of the characters that Trister initially meets (Belen and Moxy come to mind) were too eager and ready to assist, especially for not knowing the main character apart from a very brief encounter or two. However, that would have easily been forgivable had the supporting characters not had the *perfect* answers for Trister during nearly every discussion. I feel like both the main character and the supporting characters should have stumbled through more areas to make it all the more believable. The learning process for recreating oneself isn't easy, hence the reason I think that a few more awkward moments and mistakes could be of benefit to both character development and reader acceptance. As this is more of my personal opinion and as it has very little impact on the philosophy of the novel, I am not going to detract any stars for this. If it was a more prominent wide-spread issue that really affected the main story-line; I would detract a star.

With that said, I am incredibly impressed with this novel and I definitely recommend reading it. I'm sure some are wondering why I only rated this novel 4 stars if I hold it in such high-regard. The reason is simple; I take 5 star ratings **VERY** seriously and while this book was enjoyable, unique and impressive, it does not (at this time) fit my personal rating criteria to make it a 5 star read.

I'll briefly explain my rating system as I know it may differ from that of other readers. To me, 3 stars indicates I like the book; there may be a slight error or two but overall, 3 stars means a solid and enjoyable read. 4 star reviews indicate the novel is near perfect from proper punctuation to the main plot. I may have one or two very small gripes; but overall, I consider 4 stars to be my highest rating most of the time. I give 5 stars **ONLY** to those rare novels that have staying power; the novels that continue to impact me long after I've read them. I have been known to go back to a 4 star review occasionally and increase the rating to 5 stars if I find that I'm still thinking about the novel a few weeks or months later and edit my written review to note that.

I recommend this novel for anyone a mature 15 years of age or older. The only 'parental advisory' I can think of is some mild, very infrequent swearing. I am looking forward to reading more of this author's works. Cheers and 'happy' reading!

In full disclosure with FTC guidelines, I received a free copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads in exchange for an honest review. I do not know the author personally nor did the receipt of this book impact or alter my review in any way.

Tisha says

I received this book for free via Goodreads.

So I knew that this book was not a normal book in terms of plotting and that instead it was about someone taking a path of self discovery, and thus I tried to approach the book as such. The good thing about this book, as others have mentioned, is that it has nothing to do with religion when exploring certain philosophical concepts. However, my main problem with the novel is that I did not particularly care for the main character. I got that he was depressed and unhappy with life, but I just didn't care what happened to him and when the entire novel is about this character finding himself, then this is a big problem. This could be a personal thing, but my personal lack of empathy for the character seriously detracted from my enjoyment of this novel.

Another problem I had with this novel was with the conversations. Like I previously mentioned, I understand that the nature of this novel was the exploration of certain philosophical concepts, but the conversations the main character has with other characters seem to only revolve around his self discovery. And all the characters seem to conveniently know exactly what to say. The main character will then walk to another character and will again have an all too convenient conversation. It deterred from the natural flow of the novel, and for me, made the pacing feel staggers.

However, one thing that I thought was done very well is the descriptions- some of the passages felt very poetic.
