



Firebird

Mark Powell

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Mark Powell's political thriller *Firebird* is also a literary exposition on current states of corruption and warfare.

Leviathan Global is a multinational octopus with tentacles in several different industries, almost all of which have unsavory reputations. Hugh Eckhart, a world-weary and intelligent man, is of the sort who pontificates about Christian martyrs while at a wine-and-cheese soiree. Eckhart's life becomes a battle when he stumbles upon a secret government dossier that proves that Leviathan Global is involved in a bloody war in eastern Ukraine. Their involvement is surrounded by all manner of awfulness, from assassinations to the buying and selling of political offices.

The book is most compelling because of its portraits of the American smart set. Its villains have outward charm and sophistication; they are made up of politicians, diplomats, military officers, professors, and lobbyists. But they are also criminals and gun runners who hide behind the ivy splendor of Yale's campus as they orchestrate misery in Eastern Europe in order to make money. For the victims of their avarice, they feel nothing. For the working class people of New Haven, they feel nothing but contempt.

The writing is heavy with literary illusions and prose poetry. Eckhart's words and ramblings are especially colorful and give gravitas to scenes of international intrigue and violence. The story moves like a freight train against the landscapes of Donetsk and Slovakia, and its conclusion, with its final, cynical words, encapsulates the idea that the much-lauded "adults in the room" have lost *noblesse oblige* and replaced it with naked self-interest.

Firebird is a political thriller that perfectly captures our age of popular discontent.

BENJAMIN WELTON (January / February 2020)

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