

Moral Fibre: A Bomber Pilot's Story

Helena P. Schrader

Cross Seas Press

(436pp)

978-1-73531-399-3

The historical novel Moral Fibre follows a pilot and his love interest as they confront racism and cultivate bravery.

Helena P. Schrader's rich historical novel *Moral Fibre* follows a World War II bomber pilot, and those he cares about, as they find purpose, courage, and love.

Kit is a pilot with a problem. After refusing to fly a mission immediately following the death of his pilot and best friend Don, he has been labeled Lacking Moral Fibre (LMF)— a disgraceful term implying cowardice that carries with it a demotion or even a dishonorable discharge. A physician, Grace, does not see Kit as a coward, though; she offers him a chance to return to his work and pursue pilot training. Kit accepts, and is thrust back into the grind of war. He soon discovers his inner strength, facing perilous missions, lingering guilt, and growing feelings for Don's fiancé, Georgina.

The novel trades focus between Georgina and Kit, though it also sometimes focuses on secondary characters, like Georgina's father, a reverend; her friend Fiona, whose story line is only partially resolved; and Kit's navigator, Adrian. Both of the leads wrestle with their doubts: Kit is consumed with guilt that he lived while Don died, as well as with the shame of being labeled an LMF, while Georgina is terrified to love Kit and risk losing him, too.

Confronting racism is a major theme: the characters discuss the perspectives of the Nazis, but also racism within their own communities. The son of a white father and a mother who is half South African, Kit experiences racism within the military and recounts the hatred that his mother faced. People counter these cruelties with faith. Even Georgina's father questions how a person can believe in God when evil is present in the world, with his daughter drawing a connection to the suffering on the cross, which precedes the joy of resurrection, to suggest that suffering on Earth often precedes eventual victories. Questions of what ethical warfare ought to look like are also raised.

The story includes a great level of detail, providing a glimpse into the more technical side of war. Military acronyms and slang are abundant, and a glossary at the back clarifies their meanings. So much detail is given for so many of Kit's missions, however, that novel overextends itself and obscures some crucial details. Georgina's time teaching is a refreshing break from the technical language of the bombers' missions. Her victories are of a very different nature than Kit's, and yet are still positioned as important: she works to reach suffering students.

Working toward a quiet, joyful conclusion, the historical novel *Moral Fibre* follows a pilot and his love interest as they confront racism and cultivate bravery and appreciation for whatever time is given.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (May 25, 2022)

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