

## What's Left of the Night

**Ersi Sotiropoulos**

**Karen Emmerich, Translator**

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Beautifully reconstructing three days in Paris, Ersi Sotiropoulos traverses the complex hallways of the poet Constantine Cavafy's mind in *What's Left of the Night*.

A poignant meditation on the origins of an individual's art, the novel traces Cavafy's footsteps during the final stop of a European trip he took with his brother in 1897. Struggling to find his poetic voice, he has yet to attain the renown that will eventually come to him. Paris seems to hold promise, but rather than finding his footing in the circles of Paris literati, most of whom bore or even disgust him, he is drawn into the self-torture of his own repressed homosexuality. When a Russian ballet company checks into Cavafy's hotel, one of the male dancers intrigues and excites him, sparking his erotic imagination and culminating in him spending a night of heightened imaginative pleasure outside the dancer's door.

Karen Emmerich's translation renders Cavafy's internal strife—the driving force of the novel—in melodic, anguished, well-researched prose. Equal parts a character study and a treatise on the creative mind, the novel boldly provokes questions about the relationship between an artist's life and his art, specifically the quality of art that is born out of immense suffering. Rather than succumbing to shame, whether self-inflicted or socially imposed, the novel suggests that the cure for such darkness lies in transmuting misery into works of beauty. For Cavafy, this seems to have been the answer.

Haunting and enthralling, *What's Left of the Night* successfully fosters an almost mystical communion with Cavafy and his torment. Ultimately, pinpoints of light peek through the gloom and illuminate the refuge that art can offer.

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