



Good Morning Comrades

Ondjaki , Stephen Henighan (Translator)

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Luanda, Angola, 1990. Ndalu is a normal twelve-year old boy in an extraordinary time and place. Like his friends, he enjoys laughing at his teachers, avoiding homework and telling tall tales. But Ndalu's teachers are Cuban, his homework assignments include writing essays on the role of the workers and peasants, and the tall tales he and his friends tell are about a criminal gang called Empty Crate which specializes in attacking schools. Ndalu is mystified by the family servant, Comrade Antonio, who thinks that Angola worked better when it was a colony of Portugal, and by his Aunt Dada, who lives in Portugal and doesn't know what a ration card is. In a charming voice that is completely original, *Good Morning Comrades* tells the story of a group of friends who create a perfect childhood in a revolutionary socialist country fighting a bitter war. But the world is changing around these children, and like all childhood's Ndalu's cannot last. An internationally acclaimed novel, already published in half a dozen countries, *Good Morning Comrades* is an unforgettable work of fiction by one of Africa's most exciting young writers.

Good Morning Comrades Details

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From Reader Review Good Morning Comrades for online ebook

Kavita says

Do you feel nostalgia for a communist past that never existed? Do you strongly miss your childhood even if it was lived in the midst of war? Do you think that school days were the best days of your life even if you could barely stand getting up in the morning? If this is your frame of mind, then there is no better book than *Good Morning Comrades* for you.

The debut novel of famous Angolan author, Ondjaki, *Good Morning Comrades* follows the daily life of Ndalu. The schoolgoing boy lives with his middle-class family and goes to a good school. He and his friends are taught by Cuban teachers, who garner great respect because of their dedication to the revolution. There is also a visiting aunt from Portugal, completely clueless in the ways of communism and Africa.

In many ways, the novel is lighthearted, depicting a portrait of life from the worldview of a child. Though shortage and war are ever-present in the background, the story is not emotionally heavyhanded and puts its point across brilliantly. The students are well-fleshed out, and school life in communist Angola was well depicted. The ability to follow instructions without questioning is deeply ingrained at school, and this affects the way Ndalu and his friends experience the outside world. Ndalu's school stories play a pivotal role in the narrative, where misinformation rules.

The lack of awareness of his own purchasing ability is brilliantly shown by means of a Portuguese aunt, who brings presents for everyone and has no clue why the President of Angola requires a guard. Of course, this means that the aunt had to be made completely dumb, but I feel I can forgive that in view of the otherwise amazing narrative.

The book brings out the strong influence of Cuba, Russia, and Portugal on Angola. I have rarely been impressed with child narrators, but this one was just perfect. I think *Good Morning Comrades* would be a perfect addition to anyone's bookshelf.

AJ P says

Read for office book club.

I was really excited to read this one. It takes place in Angola (and it's quite rare for a fiction book out of Angola to be translated to English) and it takes place on the cusp of the brief peace in Angola's civil war. Pluses, it was meant to address what it was like to have Cuban teachers, and living in a place where war was going on so long it was normalized. The back cover made it sound great.

Well... it wasn't. It was boring, there was zero plot, and beyond even that, there was zero character development. Plus, the stories the boy told of his daily life felt rather pointless. So as a story, the book was completely lacking.

Boosted to two stars because it still presented an interesting look at what living in a relatively privileged family in 1990 Angola may have looked like (and probably did as this story is supposed to be quite autobiographical).

Anyway, major disappointment here with the story if not the subject.

Mary Mav says

4,5/ le petit nicholas thrown in a serious situation during civil war in Angola. I was blown away

Kevin Pedersen says

This is a simple but evocative story about a boy in Angola who is about to finish school, structured around two big disruptions that threaten to come into his life. The first is all anticipation but ultimately baseless, as rumors and lies about a local gang causes a panic in the protagonist's school one afternoon. The second comes as a surprise but has more lasting consequences as the Cold War suddenly ends, sending Angola into a period of rapid change (a change that, it's not mentioned in the novella but comes out in a post-script, does not go well and leads to a bloody civil war).

Framing the story around these two poles works nicely, and there are nice moments of wit and description through the book. It's full of innocent but damning descriptions of life under Soviet Marxism, normalized through a child's point of view so nothing seems overtly political, which I'd say makes it more effective. Pretty breezy read, too, which doesn't hurt.

Comfortably says

Οι σ?ντροφοι ε?ναι ?να βιβλ?ο που μ?σα απ? τις περιπ?τειες μιας παρ?ας παιδι?ν σκιαγραφε? τη ζω? στην Αγκ?λα - πιο συγκεκριμ?να στη Λου?ντα - στα τ?λη της δεκαετ?ας του 80 και εν μ?σω της κυβερνητικ?ς θητε?ας του MPLA και του εμφυλ?ου στη χ?ρα. Δε θα βρεις πολλ? σημε?α να ταυτιστε?ς σαν αναγν?στης π?ραν ενδεχομ?νως απ? τη νοσταλγ?α για την αθω?τητα των συναισθημ?των των μαθητικ?ν χρ?νων, τ?τε που δε θ?λαμε να μεγαλ?σουμε π?ρα απ? τα σχολικ? μας χρ?νια. Μολατα?τα και παρ? την απλο?κ? γραφ? του - αν και εξαιρετικ? ζωνταν?ς οι περιγραφ?ς του Οντζ?κι σε μυρωδι?ς χρ?ματα και συναισθ?ματα - νομ?ζω ?ταν συγκινητικ?. Δε ξ?ρω τι με συγκ?νησε τ?σο.. ?σως η προσπ?θεια εν?ς εφ?βου να ζ?σει ισ?τιμα/παρ?ληλα στον/με (τον) κ?σμο των "μεγ?λων". ?ταν μαθα?νεις να ζεις σε μια πραγματικ?τητα και ε?ναι το μοναδικ? reference point σου π?ς αντιμετωπ?ζεις το ενδεχ?μενο μιας ν?ας πραγματικ?τητας? Η επαν?σταση, η συντροφικ?τητα, ο Τσε, η Κο?βα, τα δελτ?α παροχ?ς τροφ?μων, ?λα τ?σο αφοπλιστικ? κανονικ?. Το Καλημ?ρα σ?ντροφοι δν ε?ναι ?να βιβλ?ο για παιδι??. Ο?τε ?μως ?να παραμ?θι για μεγ?λους. Ε?ναι η αποτ?πωση αυτο? που κ?ποτε ?ταν η κανονικ? ζω? του Νταλο?, ? αλλι?ς του Οντζ?κι. Αντ? ε?πα ?ταν με ρ?τησαν για το βιβλ?ο.

Sofia says

Ondjaki's writing style is very simple, making it an easy read. However, the way that the narrator tells the story so simply is shocking when you realize the reality that he lives in, and how normal it is. This book has very well developed themes which make it a great book for discussion groups.

Macanot says

Que delícia de livrinho! Uma história que é um retorno à infância, a esse país distante que é o passado. Um livro escrito pela criança que o adulto recorda que foi. Gostei muito.

Ladyce West says

Acabei de ler o delicioso, divertido e suave livro *Bom dia camaradas* do autor angolano Ondjaki. Este não é o seu primeiro livro, mas é o primeiro de seus livros que leio. E que maravilhosa surpresa! Este é um livro de memórias de um jovem dos seus primeiros anos da adolescência. Na verdade, são memórias simplesmente de uns meses de escola. Eles se passam ao mesmo tempo em que a Guerra de Angola está chegando ao fim. Uma guerra que é vista do contexto da família desse menino, da rotina familiar e das aventuras normais de quem está freqüentando a escola. Ele e sua família são membros sólidos da classe média angolana. E o que aprendemos é como esta classe média lidou com a guerra, assim como percebemos suas esperanças para o futuro.

A história se desenvolve entre a chegada e a partida de sua tia, que mora em Portugal e que passa diversas semanas visitando a família em Luanda. Esta visita dá a Ondjaki a oportunidade de descrever Luanda, Angola e os hábitos locais através dos olhos e das perguntas de uma viajante, uma pessoa de fora. Nosso jovem herói, no entanto fica constantemente surpreso quando compara as perguntas dela com as respostas que precisa dar. Ele é pego de surpresa quando tenta explicar o que é a vida real em Luanda. Esta troca de perguntas e respostas, muito bem tecidas no texto, são freqüentemente muito engraçadas e às vezes, até mesmo, hilárias, porque podemos ver os dois pontos de vista, do estrangeiro e do local e a incompreensão que respostas e perguntas geram.

Ondjaki demonstrou também maravilhosa habilidade de narração quando representa a conversa do nada dos jovens adolescentes, que constantemente melhoram a realidade para não perderem a oportunidade de contarem uma boa história. Apesar disso, Ondjaki é sucinto e consegue mostrar como em períodos de crise, qualquer história pode ser crível, e pode fazer pessoas reagirem com força extrema. Tudo isso Ondjaki faz com um tom leve e o diálogo coloquial bastante claro de um menino entrando na adolescência.

Este livro é de leitura rápida. É pequeno, com apenas 146 páginas. Mas é um charme. Eu queria mais. Gostaria de continuar sabendo do resto das histórias dessa família. Esse livro tem todas as características de um livro que se tornará um clássico da literatura para jovens leitores, em qualquer lugar do mundo. Para nós brasileiros, há a descoberta também de uma língua deliciosamente rica. O português de Angola nos presenteia com vocábulos diferentes e com uma musicalidade ímpar, que canta aos ouvidos dos leitores. Há um glossário no final do livro, mas não precisei consultá-lo durante a leitura. Preferi deixar que as palavras que eu não conhecia estabelecessem seu significado por conta própria.

Recomendo esse livro. É uma leitura agradável e nos premia com muita informação sobre Angola. Vá, corra para ler, não se arrependerá.

Esta resenha já apareceu em inglês na Amazon e no Living in the postcard.

George K. says

Μικρ? αυτοβιογραφικ? μυθιστ?ρημα, η ιστορ?α του οπο?ου διαδραματ?ζεται στα τ?λη της δεκαετ?ας του '80 και στις αρχ?ς της δεκαετ?ας του '90 στην Αγκ?λα, εν μ?σω εν?ς σκληρο? εμφυλ?ου πολ?μου. Σαν αναγν?στες παρακολουθο?με την καθημεριν?τητα μιας παρ?ας παιδι?ν στη Λου?ντα, τα οπο?α προσπαθο?ν να ζ?σουν σαν κανονικ? και φυσιολογικ? παιδι?, παρ?λες τις κ?θε ε?δους αντιξο?τητες. Πρ?κειται για ?να ενδιαφ?ρον και ευκολοδι?βαστο βιβλ?ο, γραμμ?νο απλ? και χωρ?ς φτιασ?δια, με αν?λαφρη δι?θεση, το οπο?ο προσφ?ρει ωρα?ες εικ?νες και δι?φορα συναισθ?ματα, εν? παρ?λληλα καταφ?ρνει να περ?σει και κ?ποια μην?ματα για τη ζω? στην Αγκ?λα του κοντινο? παρελθ?ντος. Γενικ? η ατμ?σφαιρα ε?ναι ευχ?ριστη, παρ? τα ?ποια δυσ?ρεστα μπορε? να υπ?ρχουν στο παρασκ?νιο της ιστορ?ας, εν? δι?χυτη ε?ναι και η νοσταλγ?α για την παιδικ?/εφηβικ? ηλικ?α.

Friederike Knabe says

Good Morning Comrades is the delightful debut novel by Angolan author Ondjaki (pen-name for Ndalu de Almeida). Published in 2001 in Portuguese and engagingly translated by Stephen Henighan (2008), it launched Ondjaki's writing career that has brought him recognition and several international literary awards. For this novel, which tells the coming of age story of Ndalu and his school friends, Ondjaki mined his own memories of childhood and experiences while growing up in Luanda (the capital) during the conflicting and difficult times of Angola's early years of independence.

Seeing the world through the eyes of a growing boy, daily life, however, is preoccupied with school, games, friends and family. The parades, the power struggles between the regime and its opponents are noted but not understood and have little bearing on the daily life of the children. Their naïveté protects them from getting into trouble; they don't ask questions; the world is fine as it is. When, for example, Ndalu is chosen to make a May Day speech on the radio and his own prepared text is replaced by another text for him to read, he doesn't question this decision. Nor does he question the privileges of his own family in comparison to the poverty of others in his class. They are all together and support (as well as tease) each other. He does wonder, though, why his aunt, visiting from Portugal, does not know anything about ration cards and could, at home, buy as much chocolate as she liked.

The school features prominently in the novel, in particular classes with the Cuban teachers. They are often the subject of the children's discussions. Still, over time they develop a real affection for them – without questioning why they are there in the first place – and when they (like most other Cubans in the country at the time) leave Angola they are sad to see them leave. Their departure coincided with the year end of the last school year. The young people will be scattered into different directions and, for the first time, Ndalu experiences personal loss, sadness and insecurity about what the future will hold.

Good Morning Comrades is a simple, yet vividly told story. The reader easily connects with Ndalu and his friends. Below the surface, Ondjaki touches on many issues that the young country and its people had to deal with. Stephen Henighan's very informative Afterword is highly recommended reading as it places the novel in its historical context and greatly contributes to a deeper understanding of its importance in the literary

treatment of Angola's early years as an independent country that was caught very much in the middle of the Cold War and its competing international interests.

Ailyn Vidal says

¿Qué puedo decir? Es la pregunta que siempre me hago al escribir estas mini reseñas que a nadie le interesan. Quizá las hago más para mí, para recordar cómo me sentí o qué de importante tuvo el libro. Me llevo de este en particular conocimientos, pocos pero nuevos, sobre Angola. Me llevo un sentido de patriotismo bello, un amor verdadero por tu país que solo puede ser inculcado desde la infancia. Y la estupenda sensación de una infancia vivida de nuevo, esta vez en Luanda en los años noventas, a los doce años y con muchos amigos revolucionarios. Gracias, camarada Ondjaki.

carpe librorum :) says

Há algum tempo que não me ria tanto com um livro! Após o almoço, esplanada nesta bela tarde de Verono, ri a bom rir, feita parva com a "camarada professora-foguete", o "Bruce Lin", "vox vágen", "ché kingue"... o glossário no final deu um certo jeito no início, se bem que há muito calão que também existe por cá e outro que reconheço do Brasil. Lembra-me "Capitães da Areia", num outro tempo, outro continente, é certo, mas mesma temática.

Ignorante como sou da história angolana, fiquei com imensa curiosidade de conhecer melhor e já me pus a investigar. O autor é da mesma geração que eu, mas quão diferentes as vivências! A prosa é poética, de uma candura doce e perfumada que dá para cheirar e comer. Adorei conhecer o abacateiro espreguiçadeiro, o Camarada António "vinte minuto" e ler com sotaque angolano! Vou "matabichar" a cultura riquíssima deste país com sumo de frutas tropicais de nomes estranhos :D

Stacia says

Simple & charming child's-eye view of life in Angola during revolutionary changes & civil war in the 1990s.

The Afterword provides a lot of good historical context about Angola's history, as well as the various changes that were going on in the 1990s. Even though the book is fiction, the author has said that it is semi-autobiographical, based on his own childhood in 1990s Angola.

Recommended, especially for those who enjoy books from around the world.

Ana Paula Alves says

Neste maravilhoso livro contado do ponto de vista de um miúdo, Ondjaki levou-me a recordar os belos anos que vivi em Angola. As brincadeiras, as gírias, os colegas, os hábitos, os gritos e as despedidas. Tudo isso levou-me a um tempo que não volta mais, mas que gostaria mesmo que voltasse.

O livro é leve, engraçado e profundo ao mesmo tempo. Eu sorria durante toda a leitura e desatei a chorar no final. Muito bem escrito e com mensagens muito bonitas, “Bom dia, camaradas” é uma leitura que vale cada segundo!

Bjorn says

Out of the mouths of babes... *Good Morning Comrades* is set in Angola in the early 90s, among civil war and supposed post-colonialism spearheaded by the liberating comrades from Cuba and the Soviet Union, with roving gangs of bandits and political unrest. And all witnessed through the eyes of a 12-year-old boy who's never known anything else and is just as cheerfully proud of it all as you'd expect of a good citizen.

I'm always a bit worried when I stumble upon a novel written by a poet; there's always the risk of trying to write like a poet, weighing the novel down with language. But like a *good* poet, Ondjaki knows the value of language, how to tell a story simply, without the narrator realising just how many different layers there are to his story, how much of history echoes in his language.
