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Posted on 17 May 2019 By Lawrence Norfolk

KINDLE ? The Pope's Rhinoceros ? Weplayit.co

All of us dream and have nightmares Sometimes a nightmare so luring, it might just be the salvation from the reality And Vineta is still there, he murmured, with all its temples and their

treasure And its people, too, his mother had said Our people When the water was clear, she told him, you might see them walking in the watery streets Svantovit was down there with them He could not save them, but neither could he desert them Cold waters of the North, scorching Italian sun, changing sea winds and a flow of the great river create a fitting background for a story, slowly unraveling before your eyes The story of a lost and still to be forgotten underwater city, of a boy, frightened and fighting for his life, of powerful men and cunning women, of betrayal and hope. It is not a straightforward plotline and you'd certainly have to wait for any real action to start Prepare to be drawn away from the main events to see the sights and there are plenty Human life in the eyes of herring, dawn in XVI century Rome, Borgo rats fighting in the palace corridors, a real gargantuan feast, and many small vignettes intertwined within the book, giving it a perfect baroque feel. The world of The Pope's Rhinoceros has no heroes, or rather it has many, yet unlikely Those are people playing the game against all odds, having agreed with the rules and following their own moral code however ambiguous it might seem Mercenaries, adventurers, politicians, and soldiers steadily go beyond the point of no return, and the world goes by Verdict The Pope's Rhinoceros is a must read for anyone who savours words and enjoys a big complex book every now and then. I had been bowled over by Norfolk's Lempriere's Dictionary when I read it a decade or ago but this Pynchonesque, picaresque follow up, while containing many of the ingredients I like in a novel, was a disappointment and a slog in the main The issue is that the book's sections are uneven the opener that sees monks battle to keep their monastery from sliding into the Baltic is stirring and very reminiscent of The Name of the Rose one can imagine The Beloved's The Sun Rising as a soundtrack while two episodes on board ship are gripping in the way that waterborne narratives tend to be. But a woefully under edited central section detailing papal and political intrigue in the middle of the book is seemingly never ending and a penultimate story where the cast is exiled to the jungles of west Africa is profoundly unsatisfying I like my prose flowery and Norfolk can write superbly but by the end my mind was drifting off to which other celebs are named after counties rather than concentrating on the task at hand David Essex, Olly Lancashire, David Gwent. KINDLE ? The Pope's Rhinoceros ? The Author Of Lempriere's Dictionary, Which Was Selected As A New York Times Notable Book Of , Returns With A Vivid, Antic, And Picaresque Fictional Tapestry Reminiscent Of The Name Of The Rose Which Spins Around One Of History's Most Bizarre Chapters The Th Century Attempt To Procure A Rhinoceros For The Amusement Of Pope Leo X It is not a quick read You have to really dig in and grit your teeth Dense and erudite are spot on, being full of historical and quotable goodies He's definitely thorough, he loves his history and it shows He's also not afraid of viscera, doling it out in heaps Norfolk's Renaissance is rank, ripe, fluid, unforgiving and peopled that's for damn sure Yeah, it's gross by 21st century sanitary standards, plodding and belaboring the natural human fluids and excretions, but fine it brings the narrative that much closer to you, engrosses you, so to speak bad dum bum Human beings stink and their bodies excret

There's nothing wrong with fiction being real. I too like my coffee black. I'll admit I skim when I feel he's wandering too far afield setting the stage. But still, wading through the outlying setting to the narrative makes the story that much tactile and rewarding. Just keep a dictionary handy, and trust when he uses a thousand-dollar word I think he knows what he's doing, at least in this context. The journey he describes wouldn't have been digestible in two hours worth of video editing, so why should it read like it might have. I struggled with this book, but forced myself to finish it, as it was the first book I bought for my Kindle. Norfolk's narrative is undeniably exciting, challenging and polychromatic. He delights in exploring the perspectives of non-human characters and in rich vocabulary. Having said that, Rhino is deeply unfriendly to the reader. I found it very difficult to keep up with what was going on, partly because of the swirling, circling nature of the narrative, but also because I cared very little about any of the characters. If Norfolk could combine his genuinely impressive powers of description and his originality with a decent plot and engaging characters, that book would be a masterpiece.

Ui, como me custou terminar este livro. Se houve partes do livro que gostei de ler, outras eram realmente intragáveis e esta falta de homogeneidade foi uma coisa que me surpreendeu e desapontou, depois de um início bastante auspicioso. Fiquei com a ideia que o autor muito bom a fazer descrições de paisagens e ambientes, mas confuso, para não dizer caótico, na delimitação do enredo geral. Várias vezes dei comigo a pensar mas o que que isto tudo tem a ver com a porcaria do rinoceronte. Pior do que isso, foram passagens enormes e personagens que se sucediam uns aos outros sem que, pelo menos para mim, adiciassem nada histórica, e acontecimentos e diálogos sem nenhum. Enfim, um daqueles livros que nos faz sentir um bocadinho estupidos por, frequentemente, não estarmos a perceber nada do que estamos a ler. Muito irritante. Decididamente, tenho que ultrapassar este meu defeito de me custar tanto deixar a meio um livro que já comecei.

A unique book that defies categorisation, this is a huge, surreal, complex, all encompassing sixteenth-century picaresque shaggy dog or should I say rhinoceros story full of humour, complex plot twists, period detail and arcane vocabulary, ranging from the Baltic coastal island of Usedom via Rome to West Africa and back, taking in large chunks of history, geography, geology, papal politics and many other subjects. Not an easy read, particularly the opening which spends several pages explaining the geological evolution of the Baltic in almost wilfully obscure language, but ultimately a rewarding one, and an impressive feat of research and imagination. I give up. This novel has been a trusty paperweight and book end for a few years now. The bookmark has moved forward a few pages at irregular intervals. Usually, each dip into the text puts me off reading for a while. I get the impression that the author consulted a thesaurus twice for every sentence on every one of the 753 pages. Perhaps literary reviewers enjoy this sort of book, as it gives them the chance to demonstrate how clever they are. But it's not for me. Enough is enough. There are other things to do in life.

Svaka strana, ma svaka rečenica u knjizi je odlično napisana, samo ih ima previše. Previše u smislu da ovdje ima građe za tri cela i ne

obavezno povezana romana, plus okrajci Pisce treba neka humana du a da upozna sa konceptima protagoniste, epizodiste i statiste, a posebno sa razlikama me u njima. Ako to izuzmemo roman je odli an, Norfok je re io da poka e kako ume da vlada celim rasponom klavijature od burleske preko dvorskih intriga do u asa rata i magijskog realizma, i stvarno nam je pokazao, samo hm ne e se svima dopasti sve tri knjige, eto Na momente me je ba izlu ivao, ali ako izuzmemo sam po etak nije mi palo na pamet da je ostavim. Dakle Preporuka, ali uslovljena ako spadate u nestrpljive, krenite od sto sedamdeset i neke strane i dela pod nazivom Rim , bi ete mi zahvalni Nema na emu. The Pope s Rhinoceros has been called Lawrence Norfolk s second novel I don t believe its value comes mainly from its novel hood Rather, it has some amazing, even mind blowing scenes tied together by recurring characters, some of which are intriguing or amusing, some less so. The storyline is not easy to summarize the book is like a very rich cake that cannot hold its shape The time is the high Renaissance early XVI century Niklot, our hero, an aboriginal native of the island of Usedom, in the Baltic Sea, barely survives lynching by crazed locals because of his heathenish rituals Having escaped an attempt to drown him his mother was not so lucky he wanders through the Central German forests for several years, living as a wild child He is captured by a wandering band of fraudsters who make a living by pretending to be retreating soldiers Eventually the villagers of a town they intended to swindle turn on them, and turn them over to a real army, the Spanish one Niklot, now named Salvestro, is befriended by a dim witted giant Bernardo and by an older soldier, Groot All take part in the attempted siege of the town of Prato, conducted by the Spaniards on behalf of the head of the Medici family, the youthful Cardinal Giovanni de Medicis, son of Lorenzo de Magnificent For some unnamed reason as is common throughout the book the Cardinal pretends to accept Prato s surrender through an agreement with the city s bigwig, Aldo Tebaldi, but in reality allows the city to be plundered by the Spanish troops, and everything ends in an orgy of raping and murder that eventually extends to Tebaldi s family, who were being guarded by Salvestro, Bernardo and Groot headed by a Spaniard named Colonel Diego The Cardinal attempts to blame Salvestro et alii for the Tebaldi family massacre, but our hero and Bernardo manage to escape led by one of the appealing characters in the book, a young proto witch named Amalia Colonel Diego and Groot are blamed for the escape of the supposed murderers , and are dishonored Salvestro leads Bernardo back to Usedom in an attempt to recoup their fortune by fishing out a treasure that was supposedly buried at the bottom of the sea when the heathen city of Vineta located on a small peninsula off the coast of Usedom sank during Henry the Lion s attempted siege over two hundred years before The attempt fails miserably, and the villagers again try to kill Salvestro, whom they recognize as Niklot Both Salvestro and Bernardo are saved by an order of monks, whose monastery is collapsing into the sea Brother Joerg convinces Salvestro to lead them to Rome, where they will obtain some unnamed type of help in the rebuilding of their monastery money architects who knows Salvestro obliges but Rome does not welcome the

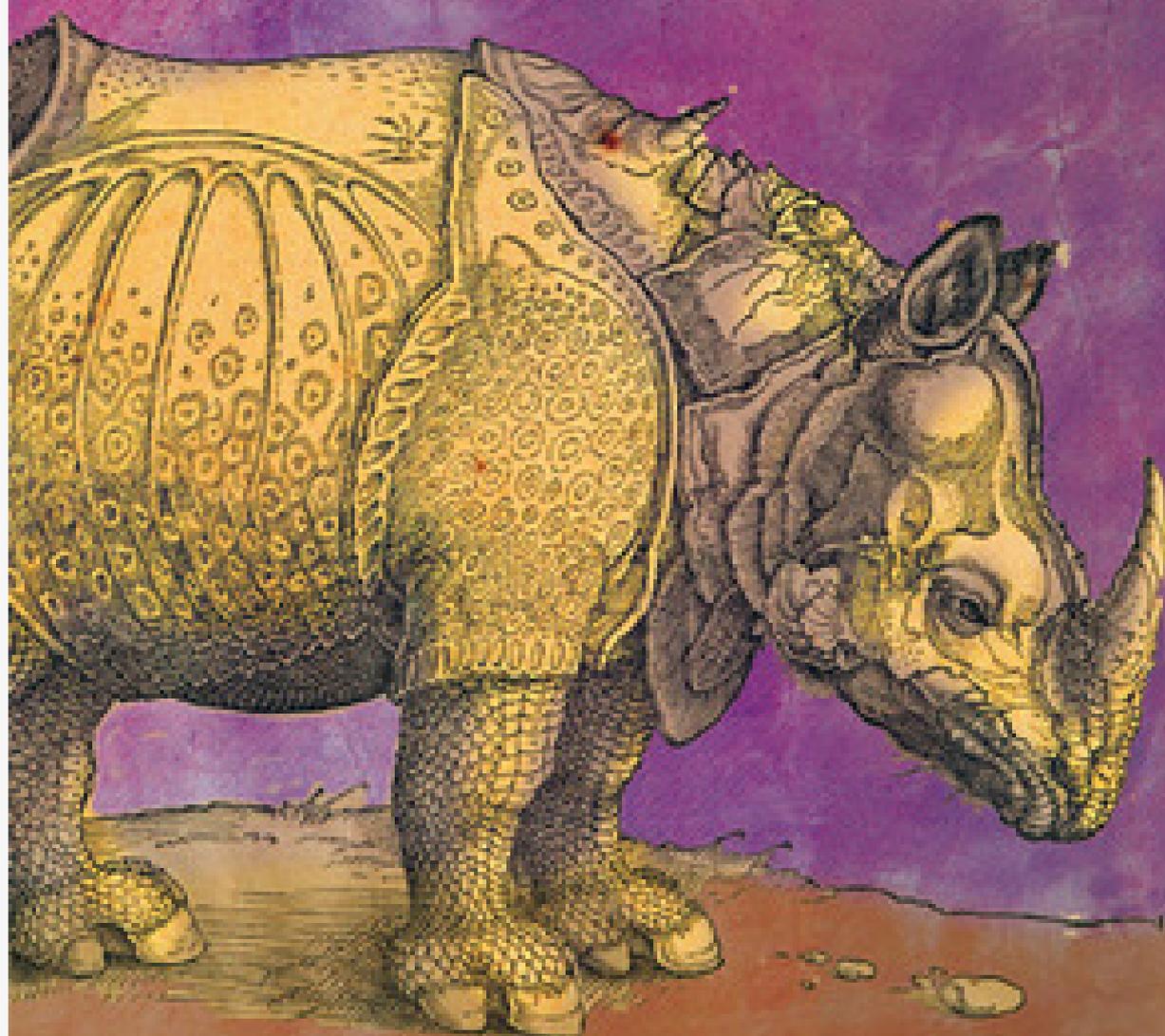
monks or their guides The former Cardinal de Medicis, now crowned as Pope Leo X is not interested in anything as pedestrian as monks and monasteries, but is only concerned with obtaining a rhinoceros, which he hopes will fight with elephant Hanno, donated to him by the Portuguese King Manoel So the Usedom monks scatter, some becoming builders, some vagrants, and father Joerg is eventually left almost alone as he tries to obtain an audience with the Pope for months and months Meanwhile, Salvestro and Bernardo along with their former enemy, colonel Diego are forced to sign up on a doomed voyage to Africa guided by an African princess whom they found living as a slave to a high class prostitute in Rome to fetch a rhino for His Holiness The voyage and adventures in Africa not perhaps the best rendered part of the book are partially successful, in that they manage to bring the beast back, but dead due to a shipwreck off the coast of La Spezia The Pope, grateful even for a dead Rhino, confers to Salvestro any wish he might choose to express He expresses a wish to hear the Pope s confession, which refers to His Holiness s shameful actions during the Prato campaign Then Salvestro, brother Joerg and another monk return to Usedom, where Salvestro is finally murdered by the locals. The book, as has been hinted is very uneven Many scenes are memorable for a sort of nightmarish quality and exaggeration that is sometimes worthy of Rabelais a feast in a Roman Church during which several live animals are torn apart and devoured by the parishioners, a poetical competition on a flooded stadium naumachia , a hunting party led by Pope Leo, the crass jokes of Cardinals Bibbiena and Dovizio historical characters , a concert by ur punk band, King Caspar and the Mauritians The description of a Roman potentate s labyrinthine palace is not short of Eco s library in The Name of The Rose The elaborate rendition of the life of a colony of rats, or the routine in the Papal kitchens, are nauseating but beguiling, and again not short of Patrick Suesskind s masterful Perfume. Some things work less well The character of Brother Joerg is inconsistent At the beginning he is a forceful geography teacher, but then he becomes a virtual blind and mute wreck who allows his flock to be dispersed and eventually lost The rivalry between Portuguese and Spaniards over the division of the globe between the two naval powers is not clarified, and it could be without loss to the plot The efficient killer Rufo is left hanging he wanders off page about two thirds of the book and never turns up again As noted above, the portions that take place aboard ships, or in Goa or Africa are not as interesting as those that occur in Europe, and neither are the characters or the episodes featured I couldn t see why the Usedom monastery wasn t rebuilt, why bullying monk Gerhardt did not get his comeuppance unlike Groot, who got his to the hilt , and why Salvestro returned to get slaughtered Or, indeed, why the hugely likeable Bernardo was not allowed to join a wandering troupe of dwarfs as the mandatory giant, as seemed his destiny at some point. So why do I give this book four stars Because the good parts are very good, and the bad parts are much better than the good parts of other books I ve read recently Because many of the characters are unforgettable Amalia and Bernardo are both excellent, and the Pope is masterful, along with his cohort of drunken cardinals and cynical minor

bureaucrats The demented noble Roman Colonna is formidable, and the S M red headed goddess, La Cavallerizza Sanguinosa has an undefined role but always manages to make a splash when she turns up Norfolk is a man with a tough stomach, who knows his story, and is not afraid of the baroque Minimalism has its uses, but historical fiction is not one of them.

L A W R E N C E
N O R F O L K

"Mr. Norfolk's heady originality and intellectual energy are apparent on every page."—*The New York Times Book Review*

THE POPE'S
RHINOCEROS



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Shiloh

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