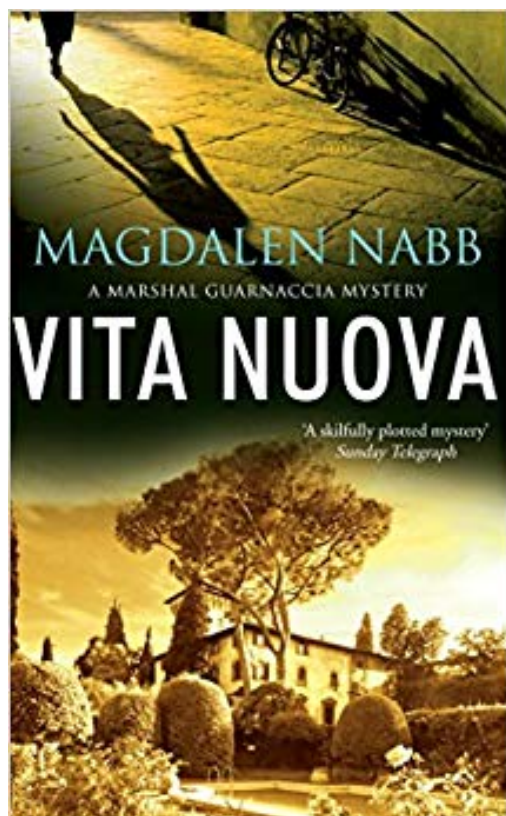


Vita Nuova by Magdalen Nabb



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Reviews of the Vita Nuova by Magdalen Nabb

Unereel

Author Magdalen Nabb died recently, bringing an end to her much appreciated Marshal Guarnaccia Investigation books. I haven't read all of the novels in this Florence-based crime series, but I suspect that "Vita Nuova" was not the best of the group. For me, a 3 1/2-star effort.

While there is laudable humanity and honesty in the Guarnaccia character, the very measured speed at which the character works and the continual repetition of the dialogue in the text as the Marshal ponders and re-ponders the evidence, slow the story line down to a crawl at times. There are moments when the hero's deliberate obtuseness and slow thinking become frustrating for the reader more used to a diet of razor-sharp and cynical detective stories--of Italian or other settings.

This particular crime novel begins with the brutal murder of a female member of one of Florence's nouveau riche families (not sure what the Italian equivalent is), and leads to some unpleasant revelations about the skin trade and trafficking in women and children. The ugliness spreads as members of the city's political and economic elites are implicated with the slow expansion of Marshal Guarnaccia's investigation in new directions. As is often the case in Italian police procedurals, there is political danger for the honest cop when he or she gets too close to criminal/political relationships and Guarnaccia eventually finds himself in very hot water when one of his own bosses appears to be part of the crimes under investigation.

In the end, the Marshal's good heart and common sense do solve the case and win the reader over. This is close to vindication for the long and winding road to denouement. So a regretful good-bye to the Marshal and even more regret for the loss of author Nabb.

Ballagar

I enjoyed many of Nabb's books, and like the way she offers tidbits of Florentine history to anchor her stories to that city. Some of the books are better than others, but this one is a slow, boring read and also depressing. The trafficking in Albanian and Romanian young women, girls and children is hardly an entertainment. The dangerous situation these illegal immigrants find themselves in is the subject of some other Italian police mystery stories, like those of Donna Leon. Clearly, it's a real problem in today's Italy, but it's pretty dark and disturbing. This book fell flat for me mainly because it dragged on too slowly with pages and pages spent describing boring stake-outs and dialog that repeated too often. I ended up speed-reading through the last third. I do recommend Nabb, but suggest the earlier books as being the best of the bunch. One brief comment on the reviewers: I am suspicious of any reviewer who claims to have read thousands and thousands of books, and seems to like them all. I find some of the better reviews are not the ones with 5 stars.

Ximinon

good as usual.

Painshade

I just finished this book, and I do recommend it. I love Italy, and Nabb really knew her territory. I think she was successful in presenting her plot and characters. She also was adept in crafting her prose. There was also a slight twist at the end which was unexpected. Well done.

Narder

With the death of Nabb, her great Marshall is going to be missed. Florence has never been done so well. You could see the streets and hear the echoes of day to day life.

This is a series to be read and reread.

Uanabimo

Not so great a mystery, but who can resist the depiction of Florence?

Zainn

Having read Meet in Malmo I chose another book with a Scandinavian setting but found it not so fascinating as those written by Torquil McLeod

Just above Florence in her bedroom someone shoots and kills twenty-five years Daniela Paoletti. The victim is connected as the oldest daughter of an affluent Florentine nightclub owner. Marshal Guarnaccia puts aside his personal concern of life after the military to investigate the shooting homicide of the single mom PH.D candidate.

Guarnaccia quickly realizes there is no apparent motive for someone to shoot the woman six times in her tower bedroom and not target anyone else, but also concludes that Daniela's family has issues. Her father remains in the hospital recovering from a stroke and his wife appears in a state of perpetual intoxication. However, most unsettling to Marshal is talk of female trafficking from Eastern Europe into Italy.

This is a strong Italian police procedural that plays out on two levels. First there is the homicide investigation that leads the hero to an even bigger case haunting the world; the abduction and sale of females into sexual slavery. Additionally a second subplot has Guarnaccia concerned with personal difficult decisions as he ponders if life is passing him by starting with his deep thinking about early retirement. The late Magdalen Nabb affirms why she has been consistently one of the best mystery writers of the past decade.

Harriet Klausner

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