

The People's Republic of Everything

Review

Carrie Laben

2018

a review of

The People's Republic of Everything by Nick Mamatas. Tachyon Publications 2018, tachyonpublications.com

Nick Mamatas, who first entered the radical literary scene two decades ago as one of the translators of Jae-Eui Lee's *Kwangju Diary*, has been a consistent yet consistently surprising voice since.

The People's Republic of Everything is the fourth collection of Mamatas' short works and highlights his far-flung explorations from steampunk to noir, laced with his own particular style of political outrage and hope.

A high point for both anarchists and lovers of literature is the inclusion of the full corrected text of his short 2006 novel, *Under My Roof*, described by Mamatas as "a satire about nuclear war and nuclear families," never before available with the author's preferred ending.

In the novella-length, "Arbeitskraft," a group of phosphorous-maimed match girls confront the role of technology in, and against, the capitalist system.

"The Great Armored Train" pits theory against fact and love against war aboard Leon Trotsky's train during a battle on the Polish frontier, critically portraying the effects of theorists on the working-class people around them. "Tom Silex, Spirit Smasher" tells a story of hidden labor and lost creativity.

Notes at the end of each story present a political and cultural context allowing readers who are unfamiliar with, say, difference engines or the vagaries of the film industry to understand more about the genesis of the story. In some cases, the notes are nearly as entertaining as the stories themselves.

Mamatas never stops grappling with questions about how political and economic systems leave sticky, often smeared fingerprints on individual lives.

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