



The Beguiled

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The basis for the major motion picture directed by Sofia Coppola—named best director at the Cannes Film Festival for *The Beguiled*—and starring Nicole Kidman, Colin Farrell, Kirsten Dunst, and Elle Fanning

“[A] mad gothic tale . . . The reader is mesmerized with horror by what goes on in that forgotten school for young ladies.” —Stephen King, in *Danse Macabre*

Wounded and near death, a young Union Army corporal is found in the woods of Virginia during the height of the Civil War and brought to the nearby Miss Martha Farnsworth Seminary for Young Ladies. Almost immediately he sets about beguiling the three women and five teenage girls stranded in this outpost of Southern gentility, eliciting their love and fear, pity and infatuation, and pitting them against one another in a bid for his freedom. But as the women are revealed for what they really are, a sense of ominous foreboding closes in on the soldier, and the question becomes: Just who is the beguiled?

The Beguiled Details

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From Reader Review The Beguiled for online ebook

Emma says

Thoroughly enjoyed this novel, set in the time of the American Civil War. I had not heard of this until the film came out, but never got to see it. The story has a feel of *Gone with the Wind* with a touch of *The War of the Roses* (film with Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner) and was told from several different points of view. It took a while to get the characters straight but after that, I couldn't put it down! Slightly wordy in places, but a really good read for historical fiction lovers.

An ARC of this book was provided by Netgalley. All opinions are my own.

mathilde maire says

3.5/5

Like many people I think, I had never heard of *The Beguiled* before I had heard of Sofia Coppola's adaptation (I wasn't even aware of the adaptation of 1971 starring Clint Eastwood) (but then again I don't care much for Clint Eastwood.) I watched the trailer and was entranced by what I saw: a gothic tale set in the Civil War with a wounded Union soldier rescued by *Southern belles* from an all-girls boarding school. This screamed of my favorite trope (dangerous girls and women) and when I saw it was based on a book, I couldn't resist and bought a copy.

I'm not going to make you wait any longer—I loved it. I loved it and yet it is flawed. But first, let's start with the positive things.

So what did I love? Well, to begin with, I loved the atmosphere. You know how much I enjoy atmospheric reads and this one had it going on. The story is what we call in French a "huis clos"—which can be translated as "no exit" or "behind closed doors." The action only takes place in Miss Martha Farnsworth Seminary for Young Ladies and none of the characters can really get out. Thus develops throughout the novel a feeling of isolation and entrapment. It was also quite aesthetically pleasing (I can imagine easily why Coppola chose to adapt it into a film,) what with the description of the girls' dresses, etc.

And then there are the characters. The story is told from the points of view of all the ladies of the house: Miss Martha, the headmaster, her sister Miss Harriet, the five teenage girls and Matilda (or Mattie,) the house slave. I was particularly attached to two characters, Amelia, who discovers McBurney (the infamous Union soldier) and who is more woodland creature than actual girl, and 10 year old Marie Devereaux, who is precocious and mischievous and who knows everything about everyone. It was fascinating to see the effect of the soldier on the women and girls, inciting in them curiosity, love, lust or even hatred.

The first issue I have lies in the pacing. It is slow—too slow. I don't mind slow-paced stories but I really had some trouble getting into it at first. But after 30 pages or so, I became really engrossed in it.

Still, it felt repetitive at times since we often see the same action through the eyes of different girls. Another criticism regarding the multiple points of view is that I couldn't really differentiate between them all. In the beginning, I even had trouble saying who was who because the writing is exactly the same (except maybe for Mattie's POV) which is weird since the voice of middle aged Miss Martha should be rather different from

that of 10 year old Marie, no matter how precocious the latter is.

Despite these flaws, I still think this is a book worth reading, especially if you enjoy tales where women show their darker sides. The setting definitely added to my enjoyment of the book, so there's also that.

p.s. If you don't want to read the book and only want to see Coppola's adaptation, please keep in mind that she erased the two POC characters of the book: Edwina, who is supposed to be from a mixed-race background (and becomes in Coppola's version a white blond woman) and Mattie, the house slave who in the end turns out to be cleverer than most of the girls. For a story set during the Civil War, I find that disappointing and ignorant at best.

Liz says

I picked it up ahead of Coppola's movie coming out this week and I honestly think this is going to be one of those cases where the movie is better than the book. I've been waiting months for the book to come out of out-of-print status.

- 1) It's told from alternating points of view. It becomes a really fascinating example of unreliable narration because the various views correct each other and you come to read through the lies each of them believes about themselves. But there are 8 goddamn women and I could only tell 4 of them apart.
- 2) None of the women like each other. They're mean, catty, and hateful towards each other, which I credit to a male author. Sorry, there's bound to be some sort of sisterhood between at least two of the women in a case like this but there isn't any. It reads like a man's interpretation of inter-personal relationships. They're also incredibly narcissistic and selfish.
- 3) The book is clearly written by a playwright. It's 400 pages of dialogue and there are maybe 3 rooms/sets total in all 400 pages that the novel takes place. Very little description & action, so that it becomes really hard to tell what the fuck is going on. It reads very much like a play.
- 4) IT GOES NOWHERE. There are climaxes throughout the book that you think would lead somewhere and they don't. Build up of bad person --> person does bad thing --> person is caught --> everyone decides to ignore said action and gaslight themselves --> repeat. It goes nowhere because of the hateful treatment of the female characters to each other, they dislike each other so much that they dig each other deeper into this mess when it could have been easily resolved. They all lack the motivation to do anything about the situation without a clear reason why.
- 5) Any description of this book containing horror or suspense is false. The only suspense is reading all 400 in hopes of coming across the advertised suspense to find there is none. This book could easily be a "female" horror novel in the style of Crimson Peak or Rebecca but it was written by the wrong person.

I'm disappointed.

Voss says

Splendido crescendo, nella storia come nel tono in cui viene raccontata dalle protagoniste, verso un finale gelido come si attiene all'educazione di una brava donna della confederazione. L'alternarsi delle protagoniste nel raccontare la vicenda aggiunge sapore al racconto.

Pupottina says

Sabba nel collegio per signorine

Cosa accadrebbe se il diavolo andasse a far visita ad un'allegra brigata di belle ed innocenti fanciulle? Cosa accadrebbe se il luogo, dove queste belle fanciulle si sono isolate, le avesse cambiate a tal punto da renderle pericolose? Cosa accadrebbe se queste innocenti fanciulle fossero diventate un po' streghe? Ovviamente non streghe nel significato letterale del termine, ma in quello metaforico. L'isolamento cambia le persone. È un dato di fatto cui non si può obiettare.

Quindi, il romanzo "L'INGANNO", dello scrittore americano Thomas Cullinan, racconta l'incontro tra un potenziale diavolo e una combriccola di probabili streghe. Il romanzo pubblicato nel 1966 ha il suo punto di forza nella suspense, generata lentamente, pagina dopo pagina, un dialogo dopo l'altro. Sono soprattutto i dialoghi rievocati dai personaggi femminili di questa storia a creare la suspense. Ogni donna riferisce la storia dal suo punto di vista, così come l'ha vissuta o ha interpretato ciò che ha visto. Ogni donna ha più di un capitolo a lei dedicato in questo romanzo. Dai racconti di ogni donna emerge la sua psicologia, delineata nella sua complessità. Ogni donna, o ragazza che sia, ha i suoi difetti e i suoi pregi, ma soprattutto ognuna ha un sogno e, quasi per tutte, si tratta di una fantasia romantica, sentimentale, melodrammatica.

Il collegio femminile, in Virginia, e i suoi immediati dintorni sono l'ambientazione del romanzo. Il collegio femminile è il luogo nel quale due donne adulte, sorelle ed insegnanti, una serva e cinque allieve sono confinate a causa della guerra civile americana. In quel luogo, sperduto e quasi privo di contatti col mondo l'esterno, tra quelle donne, segreti e invidie reciproche sono destinate a scatenarsi, quando il loro isolamento viene interrotto dall'arrivo di un uomo, un soldato gravemente ferito.

Le donne lo assistono, lo curano, se ne invaghiscono. Le fanciulle lo sognano come futuro, possibile marito. Non rimarranno per sempre in quel collegio femminile. Ognuna progetta di fuggire da lì al fianco di quel giovane soldato, bello e forte, ma anche astuto e scaltro. La sua maliziosità emerge fin dalle sue prime parole. Per ognuna ha occhi teneri e sentimenti apparentemente puri. È l'unico maschio. È il gallo nel pollaio. È il diavolo che mette a repentaglio l'innocenza delle fanciulle e l'integrità morale delle insegnanti e della serva. Il gioco diventa sempre più pericoloso, poiché il suo agire fraudolento innesca imprevedibili reazioni a catena.

Le donne dovranno fare i conti con loro stesse, mentre il misterioso giovane si diverte a intessere relazioni e a far palpitarci i cuori di ognuna promettendo di realizzare i loro sogni e alimentando i loro sogni e le loro speranze. L'aitante giovane sa dimostrarsi diverso con ognuna, tanto da impedire al lettore di creare una biografia lineare o semplicemente autentica. Forse lui è semplicemente un adulatore, un uomo contento e abile nel saper approfittare di tante innocenti creature. Le sue parole persuasive, i suoi molteplici racconti personali sono reali o sono bugie? Quanto c'è di vero in ciò che racconta? Chi è veramente il giovane soldato nordista, John McBurney?

In un crescendo di suspense, le menzogne si trasformano in tragedia. La trama è avvincente e coinvolgente. Tanti sono i colpi di scena che rendono imprevedibile questo romanzo scritto nel 1966. Scoprire chi è che inganna chi è il piacere che lo scrittore concede al lettore paziente, al termine delle oltre cinquecento pagine di cui il romanzo si compone.

Melanie says

BORING! I am giving 2 stars because I liked the atmosphere the author created but it was just so boring. This book was not on my radar but a friend suggested we read this and see the movie. It took me forever to read cuz it was so boring. Hope the movie is better. Did I mention I think it's boring? Moving on.

Karla says

ETA (6/15/17): I guess I better specify I'm referring to the 1971 film version with Clint Eastwood & Geraldine Page, now that Hollywood's lazy, unimaginative ass has decided to do another remake of something that was pretty perfect to begin with.

Somewhere between a 3 and 3.5....

IN A NUTSHELL

A seemingly charming Irish soldier full of blarney and charisma is brought into a Virginia girls' school to be healed of his wounds in battle. But he ends up inflicting pain on nearly everyone before being sacrificed to the greater good of the female animal kingdom.

When reading or reviewing this book, it's impossible to not bring the film version into it. I saw it for the first time recently, and it was such an atmospheric, layered and disturbing flick that I immediately got hold of the book. Now, having read it, I think I should have done it in the reverse order. Reading the book was a letdown after seeing the movie.

Sure, the book's not nearly as disturbing, but the action within it also isn't nearly as interesting.

The book seems to be about lies and the believing of lies, the preying of one upon another, and the effect of isolation on a small group. They are so desperate for normality, that when a man enters their small world they leap on it as a way to pretend the war doesn't exist. He's the flower around which all their bees buzz. But the bees soon realize, individually, that the flower isn't as attractive as they thought, and they eventually follow what, as young Amelia states, is one of the rules of the animal kingdom: "An intruder is never accepted peaceably by the existing species." The inhabitants of the Miss Martha Farnsworth Seminary for Young Ladies comes to that conclusion as well.

But, man, does it take a while to get there.

The film condensed the book a lot and added more spices to the mix, especially with the character of Martha. The script is turned into more of a character study of her and her trio of forbidden lusts (view spoiler).

The alternating narratives in the book provided a whole mess of details and backstories that enhanced some of the film's characters, but some of them went nowhere (view spoiler) The way Martha and Edwina interact in the novel and feel about each other didn't indicate anything of that sort. So it felt like a cheap reveal at the

end.

Cullinan's other novel I've read, *The Besieged*, had many details provided by unreliable narrators, with questions lingering right to the very end and beyond. However, it felt tighter and more focused than this book, which had a sprawling, formless feel to it with many repetitions.

I'm not really sure what to think about the character of Johnny. He's a gutless liar, a sneaking thief, a conscienceless horndog, and yet totally sincere. He lies so much he doesn't know when he's lying. The last chapter doesn't even set things straight because I wouldn't put it past him to lie to his mother. So I'm not certain we're meant to know what was actually in Johnny's head throughout the whole story, whether he was really GOOD or BAD. Both parties - he and the women - do what they can to survive, using whatever skills and cunning they have to come out on top.

Well, it's a stab in the dark, anyway.

So my advice is, if you haven't seen the movie yet, don't. Read the book first. That is, unless you're not interested in the book whatsoever. I mean, the book does have a sizable cartload of food for thought, but the pacing is slow enough so that reading it AFTER seeing that well-acted, crazy mindf*ck of a film is anticlimactic. The last half to 2/3rds of the novel kept going and going and going, with wheels spinning more often than not. The end of the movie had me flinching and biting my nails. The book was more of a "meh" as it wound down to the finale.

I'm very glad I read it, however, and might go back to it in the future after the memory of the film has dimmed a bit and try not to compare the two so heavily. Right now I feel that the movie took a somewhat sloppy and dull book and made it a compulsively watchable dark dark movie.

Sometimes the movie IS better.

This scene?
(view spoiler)

Much better in the movie. :P

Yukino says

Parto col dire che le stelle in realtà sono 3.5.

Questo libro l'ho trovato in biblioteca nelle novità. E siccome volevo andare a vedere il film, ma poi non sono riuscita a vederlo, ho colto l'occasione e l'ho preso al volo ?.

La storia è molto semplice. Durante la guerra civile, in un collegio femminile della Virginia, una delle ragazze porta un soldato dell'Unione ferito. Il libro è scritto dai punti vista delle cinque ragazze, delle due istitutrici e della serva di colore. Ogni capitolo cambia prospettiva, ma il bello è che la storia non si interrompe. È difficile da spiegare. Ed è bello leggere i pensieri di ognuna, scoprire la storia di ognuna dalle altre. Capire cosa pensano una dell'altra. Davvero intrigante. Anche perché altro che signorine per bene...all'inizio è molto lento, ma poi piano piano il ritmo sale. E la tensione si taglia con un coltello. Bello davvero..e poi finisce con il botto. Spiazzante. Anche se mi è piaciuto molto, l'ho trovato troppo lento in alcuni punti, per poi concludersi velocemente. Lasciandomi un po' con l'amaro in bocca. Peccato. Cque credo che vedrò il film appena possibile. Voglio proprio vedere come è riuscita Sofia Coppola a ricreare

questa tensione e tutti i personaggi.

Laura says

I was expecting a little more from this movie directed by Sofia Coppola, with Nicole Kidman, Kirsten Dunst, Elle Fanning.

The unexpected arrival of a wounded Union soldier at a girls school in Virginia during the American Civil War leads to jealousy and betrayal.

Nancy Oakes says

At the end of this novel I was left sort of speechless, and left in awe after finishing it.

As the blurb tells us, as the story begins we find ourselves in Virginia, "during the height of the Civil War." The residents of the Miss Martha Farnworth Seminary for Young Ladies find their routine interrupted when thirteen year-old Amelia Dabney is out picking mushrooms one day and comes upon a wounded Union soldier. Surrounded by cannon fire, she helps him to his feet and takes him to the school. Corporal John McBurney tells her he'll be there long enough to get his injuries tended to, and then he'll leave immediately and "be no further trouble."

That's what he says, but as the story progresses, we learn that we can't always take McBurney at face value. Far from it. As each of the women and the girls at the house interact with him, his presence interrupts the regular, familiar routine of the house and worse, setting off a bizarre chain of events that no one could have predicted. Wait. I take that back -- the one person who realized from the beginning that "You chil'ren have brought destruction in this house" is the slave Mattie, who sees McBurney for what he really is, but who cannot convince the rest of the women otherwise before it's too late.

The story is related through the alternating points of view of the small group of females at the school, which gives it a much more complete feel than it may have had from a third-person narrator alone. As perspectives shift, we start to realize just what it is about each person's psyche or past that draws them to McBurney; we also get different interpretations of the same events, which are often misinterpreted, bringing in a fuller picture of exactly what's going on in the house. And just as the school is isolated because of a war that has divided the country, the divisions within also serve to isolate its residents until they are forced to come to a consensus over what needs to be done to bring things back to the way they were before. The question is, though, how can any of these lives ever be the same again?

It's a hell of a page turner , and Cullinan is a master of ratcheting the psychological tension to the point where I couldn't put it down. Unlike a LOT of readers, I thought the alternating points-of-view approach was a great one. And also unlike a lot of readers, I didn't judge the novel on the old Clint Eastwood film made from this book, which was nerve wracking, for sure, but very different from the original story. There's so much psychological tragedy going on in the novel, and while the film version didn't spare the horror, it's of a different variety altogether than what's in the book.

Very highly recommended.

Amalia Gavea says

"How deep do the layers of deception go, I wondered one day."

I wasn't aware of this novel, until I saw an advert for Sofia Coppola's recent film version, starring Colin Farrell. I didn't know there was a 1971 version either (and I wouldn't watch a Clint Eastwood film if my life depended on it). So, being a Colin fangirl, I thought "well, I'll read the book and then I'll watch the film and find all kinds of fault with it, because I am an unashamed purist. And the only thing I'll admire is Colin's brown eyes." The problem is that after reading the book, I have no special desire to watch the story being unfold as it proved to be a rather problematic, irritating read, in my opinion. It's unfortunate since the start was very promising.

Southern Gothic and Americana have a distinctive aura that I've always found fascinating. The claustrophobic feeling born of the Southern sun, the strict morality (in appearance only), the lush and mysterious residences, the haunting plantations, the bloody history of the region, the turmoil and conflict are characteristics of the genre and present in *The Beguiled*. A young man, a wounded soldier of the Union army, is found near the premises of the school run by Martha. A school for young girls who have remained in the region despite the ongoing war. It goes without saying that the presence of the young man there brings all sorts of conflicts and repressed feelings to surface and a game of secrets, sexuality and authority begins.

The setting of the story helps in creating an atmosphere that can be experienced by the reader. The hot air and the stiffness of the characters made me feel the claustrophobia of the place. It was so exciting, let me tell you. The action takes place in a few of the closed rooms of the estate and is told through the eyes of Martha, her sister, her servant and the adolescent students. It is interesting that McBurney isn't given a POV. It adds to the mystery of his character and provides a better perspective to the influence he exerts on the women of the house. Much of the action takes place during the night and I could "see" the candle lit corridors and the women with their white nightgowns tiptoeing, moving like ghosts, trying to make sense of the changes inside and around them.

Cullinan's descriptions are excellent. They managed to keep my interest, even when the action of the book didn't. The language is raw and sensual where needed. The problems came from the dialogue and, majorly, from the characters. Each POV read the same, as if we had the same person speaking throughout the course of the action. In my opinion, Martha, Mettie, Edwina and the others wouldn't sound exactly the same. They wouldn't describe their feelings and thoughts in the same way. And this is what happens, with the slight exception of Mattie who uses a few colloquialisms here and there, just because. As it was, I felt the characters lacked originality, there was no personality in the vast majority of them.

This brings me to the issue of characterization. I've never had a problem with unlikable characters, I've said it before. I love them, I think they make every novel more interesting and challenging. BUT with the supposition that they are well-written. In this case, they aren't only unlikable, they're just plain stupid, devoid of any focal point. I'm aware of the hypocrisy of the past, naturally, and the young age of the girls, but this isn't an alibi for badly crafted heroines. I work with adolescents and I can verify to you that there is an incredible amount of "character" in them (in a positive or negative way, it doesn't matter), many times more than in any adult. This issue ended up making the narration too repetitive, especially during the 2nd half of the novel. There are endless lines of exhaustive, cringe-worthy dialogue on whether Johnny should leave or stay, chapter after chapter. In my opinion, the book would have been better if 70-80 pages had been cut and the

dialogue dealt with.

Martha and Emily were the only interesting characters. Edwina had a few moments but she was too wishy-washy for my liking. Harriett was useless, with the interest of a worn-out doormat, Amelia had some potential that was lost in the process, Alice was a Nickelodeon teenager in the worst sense of the word and McBurney was such an awful person, badly and unconvincingly written. Nevertheless, he deserved every bit of misery that came his way. The author presented every female character, apart from Martha and Emily, as sex-crazed harpies, as sexually starving fools who swoon over a handsome stranger who knows how to sweet-talk them into everything. This was irritating, at first. Then, it became troubling and bothersome. Naturally, the book is quite dated in this matter and probably influenced by misogynistic notions of the past decades. I don't know what Cullinan was trying to show. Perhaps that we lose our minds and good senses when we're sexually attracted to someone? Well, this may happen in real life but it doesn't help in creating interesting literature. I'm glad that this view is buried in literary history. I find it difficult to imagine that a contemporary writer would do that and call the attempt "serious" unless we're talking about a cheap romance. Reading McBurney's ridiculous attempts to beguile the women, feeding them his stories and watching them fall like flies to his call was beyond frustrating.

So, 3 stars for the haunting atmosphere and Martha's strength, although my heart wanted to hand 2. It was an interesting experience, I must admit. A Southern Gothic novel whose setting was excellent but the characters and the way the story became more than predictable broke the deal for me. Try it and see for yourselves. If nothing else, you'll come across some of the most stupid people in recent literature. To quote Sherlock "It makes for too much stupid in the room...."

Many thanks to Penguin and NetGalley for the ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Liesl says

Upon seeing a trailer for the upcoming Sofia Coppola remake, I was quick to pick up the creepy and disturbing 1971 film adaptation of this book, which piqued my interest in the source material. Tracking down a copy was a challenge, but my local library's interlibrary loan came to the rescue and got an old, battered edition into my hot little hands. Unfortunately, after all of that buildup and trouble, I was left unsatisfied after finishing. There is an intriguing tale centered on lies and isolation within these pages, but one has to wade through the meandering, dull plot riddled with repetition and unnecessary detail to get to it. It was interesting to receive the story from so many perspectives, which served to enhance the characters from the movie, but I didn't need to know quite so much about each individual's backstory, especially when the information added very little or went nowhere. Perhaps I would have enjoyed the book more if I had been able to read it first, but overall I found the film content to be tighter and more focused, making it more worth my time.

erigibbi says

Nel Collegio per signorine di Miss Martha Farnsworth sono rimaste solamente cinque allieve.

Siamo nella Virginia insanguinata dalla guerra civile, tra l'eco di un cannone e un colpo di fucile la vita della scuola diretta dall'austera Miss Martha scorre lenta e sempre uguale: lezioni di cucito, musica e francese, le incombenze domestiche, i pasti e le preghiere.

In questo mondo tutto al femminile irrompe il caporale John McBurney, disertore dell'esercito nordista gravemente ferito.

Assediate dalla guerra e dalla noia, le donne della scuola accolgono il soldato nemico e se ne prendono cura. Un po' alla volta, inevitabilmente, intrecciano con lui una danza sottile fatta di sfida, di potere e seduzione.

Diffidenti, audaci, tenere, gelose, spaventate e possessive, le ragazze di Miss Farnsworth svelano una dopo l'altra la propria vera natura. Un gioco dall'esito imprevedibile e che si rivelerà fatale per qualcuno.

Attratta dal trailer del film di Sofia Coppola basato appunto su questo romanzo di Thomas Cullinan ho deciso di leggere prima il libro e poi guardare il film. La delusione è stata grande.

Il libro si caratterizza per i capitoli narrati da ognuna delle ragazze e insegnanti del Collegio. In pochissime pagine capiremo che quasi nessuna ragazza ci potrà piacere: quello che balza subito all'occhio è la cattiveria insita in quasi tutte loro. Nessuna si sopporta, nessuna apprezza l'altra, nessuna prova amore o empatia nei confronti delle compagne. Questo mi ha reso estremamente difficile, anzi direi impossibile, affezionarmi a qualcuna di loro.

Non ci si può affezionare nemmeno con Miss Martha, direttrice del Collegio, e con Miss Harriett, sorella di Miss Martha. La prima, bigotta e al tempo stesso pervertita; la seconda, ubriacona e debole.

Cosa dire del caporale? Un enorme punto interrogativo così come l'intero libro.

Di lui sappiamo poco e nulla, e di quel poco che sappiamo non possiamo fidarci perché fidarsi di McBurney è impossibile. Non ho capito il suo comportamento, non me lo sono spiegata e Thomas Cullinan di certo non mi ha facilitato il compito visto che non ha rivelato niente sul caporale.

Perché si è comportato in quel modo?

Cosa lo ha realmente spinto al Collegio di Miss Martha?

Perché mentire?

Perché imbrogliare?

Non si sa. Non riceveremo mai una risposta, neppure un indizio, niente di niente.

Come se non bastasse il libro è veramente noioso: 400 pagine di nulla se non comportamenti immaturi da parte di ragazzine che non sanno nemmeno pulirsi e che non hanno un briciolo di educazione per sé, per i pari e per gli adulti. Le ultime 100 pagine sono state le più interessanti ma la mia curiosità è scemata presto, nel momento in cui ho capito che l'autore non avrebbe spiegato nulla.

L'inganno di Thomas Cullinan mi ha profondamente delusa. Mi ha annoiato dalla prima all'ultima pagina. L'ho portato a termine con la vana speranza che ci fosse almeno un capitolo conclusivo che potesse spiegare il perché dell'intera vicenda ma purtroppo non ho avuto nemmeno questa soddisfazione.

Un libro che non vi consiglio.

Roman Clodia says

I found him in the woods

Ok, this is a crazy-mad piece of fiction which takes the Southern Gothic genre and ramps it up so far that it teeters on the brink of bonkers black comedy - yet I enjoyed it hugely.

Set against the American Civil War, a group of girls and women are holed up in a schoolhouse while the fighting goes on around them. The introduction of a wounded soldier into this hothouse atmosphere releases high emotions of sexuality, jealousy, passion and lies... and not a little violence. Only this 'cat amongst the pigeons' tale soon starts to veer away and we're rapidly beginning to wonder whether it's actually a case of a pigeon amongst cats...

The story is told via the voices of the women who pass the narrative baton to and fro, and they're not so much characters as functions of the story. It's hard, sometimes, to keep them separate in the mind precisely because they're just names and actions, and there are places where I had to just go with the flow. Cullinan writes a restrained, elegant prose which is gloriously, wildly at odds with the things that happen and it's this refusal to allow the overblown events to be duplicated in an overheated writing style which makes this work.

A surprising and surprisingly enjoyable read - but definitely mad!

Thanks to Penguin for an ARC via NetGalley.

Jessica T. says

You know how you read *A Rose for Emily* and your mind was blown? Well, *The Beguiled* tries so hard to capture that magic but fails... It's slow.. it's boring.. and when you're finally at the point where something does happen YOU DON'T FUCKING CARE anymore.
