



The Dancer and the Thief

Antonio Skármeta , Katherine Silver (Translator)

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With prisons overflowing in Chile, the president declares a general amnesty for all nonviolent criminals. Ángel Santiago, a youth determined to avenge abuse he received in jail, seeks out the notorious bank robber Nicolás Vergara Grey, whose front-page exploits won him a reputation he would rather leave behind. Their plan for an ambitious and daring robbery is complicated by the galvanizing presence of Victoria Ponce, a virtuosic dancer and high-school dropout whose father was a victim of the regime. Praised for his “ability to place a personal story in the context of a national upheaval and make it warm, funny and universal” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), Antonio Skármeta sets this exuberant love story against the backdrop of the new Chile, free from the Pinochet dictatorship but beholden to the perils of globalization. *The Dancer and the Thief*, which won Spain’s prestigious Planeta Prize, is a remarkable new novel from one of South America’s finest storytellers.

The Dancer and the Thief Details

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Author : Antonio Skármeta , Katherine Silver (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Dancer and the Thief for online ebook

Nikos79 says

The dancer and the thief is the kind of novel that almost any reader will like. It's fast paced, it has nice characters especially for anyone who enjoy Latin style, the plot is intriguing and interesting which makes the book an enjoyable reading. In general I liked the book and I read it with pleasure, it's not something special or memorable but not bad at all. Skarmeta is a nice writer and he uses nice sense of humor at times. However if I had to recommend a book by him, this would have been "The postman" which is a really good book! But anyway, for anyone interested in this one don't hesitate, try it, just promise to yourself that you won't stop in this and you will continue with the book I mentioned before.

Rusty says

Good story! Weaving politics, ballet and a spectacular robbery together, Skarmeta helps one understand Chile in the days it was recovering from political chaos. One begins to adore the young dancer/student, Victoria, and her romantic boyfriend, Angel, who loves her with all his heart. In addition, the sophisticated gentle thief who is adept at cracking safes, Vergara Gray, is so charming. This is a most delightful read!

Ann says

I liked the lyrical language and descriptive pieces, especially the short chapter where Angel is riding the horse.

A few too many sex scenes, and although young love is involved, some were tender and passionate, yet some of the other descriptions I felt were crude.

Some others have commented on the ending. The story does end abruptly, as though the author suddenly got sick of trying to tie it all together. When I first finished the book, I felt this way, but on reflecting on the conclusion, I felt it was the right way to end the book.

Lex Poot says

I noticed that some people are giving it a bad review as they thought it would be a thriller. I am surprised about that. If the book does not meet your expectations that does not mean it is a bad book. This book should be rated based on its literary merit. In this it delivers. Though the story is sometimes tongue in cheek it also gives a bleak picture of Chile after Pinochet was ousted. Due to the global crisis Chilean economy was hit hard. Many people were/are without a job trying to scrape by. From that standpoint I thought it was definitely worth my time.

Suzanne says

I have to say this book started out interesting but a few chapters in and it really started to annoy me. I finished it only because it was such an easy read and just to get it off my mind. It wasn't terrible, just not my kind of novel.

Orsodimondo says

STORIA D'AMORE E D'AMICIZIA

La dittatura è finalmente finita, Pinochet non è più presidente, la democrazia è tornata ma è fragile e vulnerabile.

Ma le cose non stanno esattamente così: gli effetti di quegli anni orribili violenti e repressivi si fanno ancora sentire vivi, la distanza tra i pochi ricchi e una massa di gente che sbarca il lunario è palese, la classe media è ancora un gruppo ristretto. A Santiago il nuovo quartiere dei grattacieli è soprannominato Sanhattan, ma accanto ci sono case malandate, palazzi decrepiti.

"El baile de la Victoria-The Dancer and the Thief" di Fernando Trueba, 2009, con il grande Ricardo Darín.

La vita è difficile anche per gli angeli. Per i tre protagonisti di questo romanzo in particolare.

Il primo si chiama proprio Ángel, e Santiago di cognome: l'amnistia l'ha tirato fuori dal carcere dove ha passato anni di angherie brutalità e sopraffazione, vuole vendicarsi e riscattarsi col colpo del secolo. Glielo ha descritto, e donato, un amico carcerato, troppo vecchio per portarlo avanti.

Ángel ha bisogno di un altro angelo per la sua impresa: ha bisogno del ladro migliore di tutti, Nicolás Vergara Grey, anche lui appena tornato in libertà. Vergara Grey è il re dello scasso, ma piuttosto che impegnarsi nel colpo del secolo che gli propone Ángel, Nicolás vorrebbe riconquistare la sua bella moglie, avida e fredda, di cui è perdutamente innamorato.

Ed è un angelo anche il terzo personaggio, Vittoria, diciassettenne ballerina, segnata dalla morte del padre di cui è colpevole il regime di Pinochet, ballerina senza futuro che si guadagna da vivere vendendo il suo corpo. Ma regalandolo ad Ángel in amplessi selvaggi clamorosi e sfrenati.

Due attori indimenticabili in un film che grazie a loro è diventato indimenticabile: Massimo Troisi e Philippe Noiret in "Il postino" di Michael Radford, 1994. Troisi morì pochi giorni dopo la fine delle riprese.

Preparano il piano per il colpo del secolo, il furto dei furti. Nonostante l'aria di forte romanticismo che li circonda e impregna, Skármata innesta anche tanta ironia, al punto che qua e là ci si sente dalle parti de *I soliti ignoti*.

E, forse, c'è un quarto personaggio: la città, Santiago, la capitale piovosa e attraversata da orde di cani randagi, che ricordano la dittatura rapace e predatrice, abitata da masse di poveri cristiani che passano da cinema porno ad alberghi sordidi, luogo di prostituzione e criminalità.

E un altro forte elemento, che personaggio non è, ma tutti li connota e segna: un tripudio di sesso. Chi è appena uscito dal carcere ne ha bisogno, chi, come Ángel, lo ha subito in dietro le sbarre, vuole recuperarlo insieme alla libertà, il contatto carnale sembra l'unico modo di comunicare, ludico libero intenso vivo erotico.

Un altro romanzo di Skármata che ha generato un film “No-I giorni dell’arcobaleno” di Pablo Larraín, 2012.

Il destino di persone umili, marginali, borderline diventa rappresentativo della Storia, metafora di qualcosa più grande, del Cile di oggi, un paese che vuole trovare il futuro, passando per il passato, proprio come i suoi personaggi.

Ma i nostri tre angeli, che vivono di sogni e straziante tenerezza, oltre che diseredati, sono anche vinti, destinati a un finale senza pace.

Nanni Moretti ha girato un documentario, per ora inedito, sull’ambasciata italiana di Santiago che subito dopo il golpe dell’11 settembre 1973 diventò rifugio per centinaia di oppositori alla dittatura. L’ambasciatore era Tomaso De Vergottini, che fu coadiuvato da un giovane funzionario, Emilio Barbaran, in seguito divenuto a sua volta ambasciatore.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

This is not my type of book at all, but I loved it anyway. It's a plot driven suspense novel with a bit of a love story thrown in for good measure. The story is extra good, I think, but then I don't read enough plot driven stuff to be much of an expert on that. Some of you might find it predictable. The ending was not fabulous, but neither did it just wrap things up in a nice ribbon and send you on your way. The writing is marvelous. Works translated from original Spanish have a different rhythm to them - yes, Katy, I'll agree lyrical. All in all it was just plain old page turning fun.

Olga Milemis says

Excelente novela (en mi opinión mucho mejor que "El cartero de Neruda"). Skármata imprime una velocidad al relato cargado de ingenio y notas humorísticas que contrastan con el fondo agobiante de lo que nos está narrando. Nos atrapa desde el principio y rebosa de calidad literaria.

Personalmente, no me terminó de convencer el uso masivo de palabras de jerga chilena (le quita “universalidad” al libro).

Marvin says

Off beat for American readers. begins sharp, lumpy in the middle, ends smoothly.

Lacey says

Read this because we visited Chile. Hated it.

Cordelia says

I have mixed feelings about this book. At first I loved it, then half way through I really wasn't not enjoying it. Three quarters of the way I began to like it again, buuut I did not like the ending.

Hannah says

Couldn't get my hands on this one in Spanish, so I read it in *gasp* English. From my amateur point of view, the translation seemed good, but I think I would have enjoyed it more in Spanish. Although the translator handled the small nuances well, those are the sorts of things that I tend to appreciate most in the original language. Also, there's the very good chance that, if I read this in Spanish, I might not have realized how much sex there was in this. ^^' Yeesh. I know three of the characters just got out of prison, but is a sex scene with little left to the imagination necessary in *every other chapter*? Not to mention that most of these are not sweet, romantic little scenes, but rather pretty icky ones, which I realized even just from skimming over them.

Apart from that, maybe because of the overall more gritty and hopeless (funny that this was much more despondent in character than *Dias del Arcoiris!*) character of the novel, I just didn't like it as much as *El Cartero* and *Dias del Arcoiris*. I didn't find the characters as interesting, unique or likeable (Vergara Gray was probably my favorite, but it felt like the bottom dropped out of his character development about halfway through), the plot was somewhat wandering and aimless (suiting the characters, I suppose?) rather than suspenseful, and the parts of the book that should have been suspenseful, or at least tension- or emotion-filled, weren't. The whole thing felt under-done, partially because it seemed like Skarmeta was re-using character prototypes from *El Cartero* and just sketching out the shadows of those from *Dias del Arcoiris* (Vergara Gray for Bettini, Victoria for Patricia), none of whom were really fully realized or sympathetic. (view spoiler)

What was interesting, though, was to see how this book basically seemed like an early draft of *Dias del Arcoiris*, with even some of the same ideas carrying over between the books, like Angel and Victoria's discussion about Being, for example, being recycled into Nico and Patricia's philosophical musings about Being.

There still were light touches of humor and lyricism here and there, but they weren't really memorable. I found the occasional dips into stream of consciousness interesting in that I don't remember seeing that much in the other two books I've read, and they were okay and got the message and spirit of the moments across all right, but weren't anything too special.

It's probably clear by now that this left me underwhelmed, but I'm still holding out hope that I'll like some of the remaining Skarmeta books I've yet to read.

Ana Ruiz says

Strangely enough, in all my 18 years as an avid reader (or more like 15, to be fair to my analphabet babyhood) I had never read a book as utterly Chilean as this one. You know, one where I recognized the streets, the monuments, the foods, the coloquialities, etcetera. And it was marvelous fun every time I read about a Santiago commonthing to point at the page and go "ohhh, I know that!" and then people on the bus would look at the crazy bookworm who talks to her literary partners.

So, star for that.

Also, this book isn't boring. As in, I could probably read another book by Skármata, and not be scared of narcotizing myself permanently.

Star for that.

BUT THE PROSE. First of all, enumeration is, yes, a literary device that sounds poetic once, twice, PERHAPS thrice, but no, it stinks the shit out of your book if you enumerate forever at the beginning of every chapter and count that as lyrical description.

Also, what the heck with the chapter endings? I felt I was watching a very cheap, very very cheap, Latin telenovela.

More so, what the heck with THE ending? IT SUCKED. *Spoiler alert* You can't just kill off a person and feel like a cocky master of the bittersweet! It reminded me of One Day, you know, the movie in which *spoiler alert* Anne Hathaway's character gets killed five minutes before the ending. Killing a character just because you don't want to give your readers a happy ending and then give yourself a fucking pat on the back for it is the MOST ANNOYING thing any writer/director/whatevs can do to you.

Finally, because I know Skármata, I want to discuss his obsession with Chile's military dictatorship. Maybe because I was born after it and my family was not horribly affected by it, I can't understand why the heck every Skármata book's conflict centers on it. *Just wrote something very politically incorrect and I feel ashamed but it's how I really feel so I'm no way no how erasing it.*

I seriously thought I was going to love and adore this by page 30, and it just kept falling for the following 340 ones.

Emily says

Ενδεχομ?νως τα 4 αστ?ρια να ε?ναι υπερβολικ? για το βιβλ?ο αυτ?.

Τα πα?ρνει ?μως απ? εμ?να για τη γοητε?α και τη φρεσκ?δα που εξ?πεμπαν οι 2 ν?οι ?ρωες του. Νι?τα, ?νειρα, μεγαλεπ?βολα σχ?δια, ?ρωτας ...

Μπαλαντ?ρ στην ιστορ?α ε?ναι ?νας μεσ?λικας οξυδερκ?ς αριστοκρ?της κλ?φτης και αποτυχημ?νος.

Προσπαθε? να δει λογικ?, να προσγει?σει το ζευγ?ρι αλλ? η φο?ρια των νι?των των παρασ?ρνει και των στροβιλ?ζει.

Το τ?λος μου ?κανε την καρδι? κομμ?τια...

Evi Routoula says

Ξεκιν? ως μια απλ? αστυνομικ? ιστορ?α: ?νας νεαρ?ς μικρολωποδ?της λαμβ?νει αμνηστ?α και αποφυλακ?ζεται. Μαζ? με αυτ?ν αποφυλακ?ζεται και ?νας παλα?μαχος διαρρ?κτης. Ο νεαρ?ς προσεγγ?ζει τον διαρρ?κτη προκειμ?νου να κ?νουν μαζ? την ληστε?α του αι?να. Ο κακ?ς διευθυντ?ς της φυλακ?ς στ?λνει ?μως ?ναν επαγγελματ?α δολοφ?νο να σκοτ?σει τον νεαρ? επειδ? φοβ?ται την εκδ?κησ? του για τα ?σα π?ρασε ?σο ?ταν φυλακισμ?νος. Κ?πως ?τσι ξενικ? αυτ? το μυθιστ?ρημα. Στην πορε?α ?μως ανακαλ?πτεις ?τι π?σω απ? κ?θε πρ?σωπο του ?ργου και π?σω απ? κ?θε κ?νησ? του, υπ?ρχει το βαρ? πολιτικ? παρελθ?ν της Χιλ?ς: η δολοφον?α του Αλι?ντε, η δικτατορ?α του Πινοτσ?τ και ?λα ?σα προ?λθαν απ? αυτ?ς. ?σως ε?ναι ακ?μα νωρ?ς για τους σ?γγρονους Χιλιανο?ς συγγραφε?ς να ξεχ?σουν το σχετικ? πρ?σφατο βεβαρυμ?νο πολιτικ? παρελθ?ν τους. Π?ντως το μυθιστ?ρημα διαβ?ζεται σχετικ? ευχ?ριστα, αν και κ?νει μια μικρ? κοιλι? στην μ?ση. Τελει?νει π?ντως με λυρισμ? και ποιητικ?τητα.
