



The She-Devil in the Mirror

Horacio Castellanos Moya , Katherine Silver (Translator)

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Laura Rivera can't believe what has happened. Her best friend has been killed in cold blood in the living room of her home, in front of her two young daughters! Nobody knows who pulled the trigger, but Laura will not rest easy until she finds out. Her dizzying, delirious, hilarious, and blood-curdling one-sided dialogue carries the reader on a rough and tumble ride through the social, political, economic, and sexual chaos of post-civil war San Salvador. A detective story of pulse-quickenning suspense, *The She-Devil in the Mirror* is also a sober reminder that justice and truth are more often than not illusive. Castellanos Moya's relentless, obsessive narrator—female, rich, paranoid, wonderfully perceptive, and, in the end, fabulously unreliable—paints with frivolous profundity a society in a state of collapse.

Castellanos Moya's *Senselessness* was acclaimed “an innovative and invigoratingly twisted piece of art” (*Village Voice*) and “a brilliantly crafted moral fable, as if Kafka had gone to Latin America for his source materials” (Russell Banks).

The She-Devil in the Mirror Details

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From Reader Review The She-Devil in the Mirror for online ebook

Rob says

Very unconventional, told by the narrator to you the reader as if to her girlfriend, which really pulled me into the story. The ending was a bit abrupt and jarring, BUT the frenetic pace and effective style make this a book I may in the future revisit. I also plan on seeking out Moya's other works.

Deniz Balç? says

Moya cin gibi bir yazar. Çatall? dili bir yandan bal, bir yandan da zehir damlat?yor. 'Y?lanlar?n Dans?'n? okuyanlar bilir, yine ayn? k?vrak dil, ayn? k?vrak manevralar... Daha çok kitab? çevrilmeli bu adam?n! Zekan?n dayan?lmaz cazibesi, okuyup kahkaha atarken asl?nda görmeyi beceremeyen insanlara ac?t?yor. Ne yapacaks?n, zeka-fark?ndal?k ikilisi tehlikeli ?eyler; insanda huzur da b?rakmaz, vicdanda, umutta... En az?ndan edebiyatta bunun avantaj? olsun.

8/10

David says

Moya's got an awful lot on the ball. Between this and last year's (translation of) *_Senselessness_* he's on an English-language roll.

This time we've got a nearly hysterical narrator talking to us, one long paragraph in each chapter. As with the previous novel, Moya manages to wring both laughs and chills from us as we read.

His novels are beautifully engaged with political and cultural life, they sparkle with particularity, yet they transcend that particularity to become something more universal.

I can't wait for *_Dances With Snakes_*, which is supposed to be released any day now...

jeremy says

the she-devil in the mirror (la diabola en el espejo) is another gem from salvadoran exile horacio castellanos moya. the second of his books to be translated into english, (after last year's riveting *senselessness*, and the first of two this year (*dances with snakes* is slated for release in early fall), *the she-devil in the mirror* is a frenetic murder mystery written with rousing effect. related entirely by a single female character (and without dialogue or paragraph breaks), the story evolves at an increasingly frantic pace that mimics the narrator's own growing paranoia and mania. the frenzied tempo of the book has quite the visceral effect, and castellanos moya's style serves to heighen the reader's anxiety. however pervaded by a sense of dread and foreboding, the book could not be said to have been written without its share of humor. while castellanos moya's works seem effortless, they are characterized by a haunting and enduring quality that is all too rare in

contemporary literature. without question, his fiction is amongst the finest being written today.

this is the second of castellanos moya's works to be translated by katherine silver, winner of a pen translation fund award and a national endowment for the arts grant.

Andrew says

I haven't decided yet whether I enjoyed this book or not. stylistically it was curious as it was the inner monologue of Laura Riviera as she conducts conversations with an unnamed third party (I suppose the clue is in the title) about her best friend Olga Maria who in the first chapter has been fatally shot by an unknown assassin.

In each chapter Laura conducts her monologue and a picture emerges of Olga's infidelities with various men against the background of a political scene in El Salvador which is increasingly unstable following civil war. I found the narrative structure at times frustrating, and at times entertaining, although ultimately the stream of consciousness inner monologue format is not one that sits comfortably with me. However it was well done as for example in one breath laura is discussing the TV soap opera before flitting to one of Olga's lovers political difficulties. Similarly in a very good scene in a restaurant the distractions of the various hunky waiters I thought was well done as it contrasts with more serious issues. At times however I struggled with the sexual contradictions, on the one hand the author subtly draws a picture of a bar owner who has been the victim of brutal sexual assaults by the police who arrest her whilst there is then an almost cartoon description of one of Laura's sexual escapades voyeuristic in its graphic nature .

Ultimately I enjoyed this as an interesting example of central American writing as I continue my around the world literary tour and the description of a mind disintegrating was well done but I was glad to finish the read and put it aside. Having looked at reviews the author is lauded as a great of the region and I suspect that this is a book that tells more about the country than is absorbed on first read and I suspect that is why I've struggled to rate the book beyond 3 stars .

Matt Briggs says

"Character gives us qualities, but it is in actions — what we do — that we are happy or the reverse... All human happiness and misery take the form of action." — Aristotle

This seems like such a philosophically accurate and material way of seeing both drama but life to me, and yet, lately I've been thinking about this line and wondering if it is fundamentally a male way of perceiving drama/life? I resisted the idea that there was a male/female division in this kind of perception since it seemed sexist to me. I was raised to believe men and women were not only equal, but identical except for the obvious physical differences. When I read Aristotle's Poetics, this line struck me as through of a bedrock reality as my facial hair. And yet I continue to encounter a different way perceiving drama/life that is counter to this maxim by Aristotle. In this counter maximum it is the emotional (and linguistic) frame around action -- what we do -- that give us our qualities. All human happiness and misery, in this counter view, take the form of how action is framed. In this view, action is just a pretext. I'm thinking of Lydia Millet's novel "My Happy Life" or Horacio Castellanos Moya's "The She-Devil in the Mirror." At first blush, I read these as examples of "unreliable narrators" when in fact I think they speak to this counter maxim.

Rusalka says

Murder mystery with a twist. Usually my thing. Set in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, Laura's best friend Olga Maria is shot dead in her living room in front of her two daughters. All very upsetting and such, and Laura is trying to find out who has done it. And along the way she finds out more and more about her best friend who she didn't know as well as she thought.

The interesting thing about this book is that it intertwines the history and politics of El Salvador with the book. The animosity towards the socialists was rather surprising, mind you not so much once you realise how well off the families are, especially Laura's. Nor when you realise that maybe the socialists were or could be as corrupt as the capitalists. I have to admit I know very little about the socialists in El Salvador, and it would be very naive to assume all socialists regimes in South and Central America were/are the same. So, interesting.

What made me have an INCREDIBLY hard time engaging with this book is that it is told from the perspective that you are one of Laura's closest friends and the entire book is her speaking at you. I know the book was 175ish pages but that was too long. There is no way I would spend more than 2 mins talking to this woman. I have been known to jump in front of moving traffic to get away from people like her (deadly serious here). I went out of my way of 4 years of all girls high school to avoid people like her, for them to be forced upon you in your reading life is frustrating as hell. She's such a horrible, gossipy woman who just talks inane crap and jumps from one subject to the other, nattering away about some things that just don't matter. Not to mention she doesn't let you get a damn word in edgewise!!!

... You know, I think that's what bothered me the most. I am a chatty, talkative person. I am reasonably forceful, especially with my close friends, in getting my point heard. To be rendered silent was ... just ... so goddamn uncomfortable! I just felt like I was spending the experience going "Bu.... Excuse...Just...uh... yeah bu... /sigh."

The last couple of pages though were great. And if you need to praise someone for writing prattling women, this guy has it down pat.

For more reviews visit <http://rusalkii.blogspot.com.au/>

John Hovig says

A deceptively clever postmodern "murder mystery".

Laura Rivera is superficial and spoiled. A self-absorbed chatterbox whose high-school graduation gift was a BMW -- her school quite conspicuously having been the American school, of course -- and who's never had a day of responsibility in her life.

Her very good friend Olga Maria is murdered just before the novel begins. On page one Laura is attending the wake, and in subsequent chapters, attends the funeral, the requiem service, and other related events following the murder, all the while chattering your ear off.

But what lovely, lilting, priceless chatter it is. Unlike Thomas Bernhard, whose unbroken streams of

consciousness can sometimes weigh us down like leaden eyeglasses, requiring (quite worthwhile!) effort both to understand and to emotionally invest, Moya's text is airy, breezy, effortlessly propelling the narrative.

And what an unreliable narrator she is. Narcissistic, self-centered, divorced in her late 20s or early 30s, with nothing kind to say about her ex, very clearly in her own little world. But the story comes through her chatter nonetheless.

And what a story it is. Love affairs, politics, drugs, military abuses, capitalism versus communism versus religion versus everyone versus everything. There is corruption along every angle. Laura's anti-communist, anti-clerical father has had his lands confiscated in the past, giving this story's background an critical personal angle, but somehow the family appear to have remained wealthy.

Little by little, Laura reveals the details of her murdered friend's life, documenting one uncomfortable revelation after another. Chief Detective Handal is simultaneously her hope and her nemesis. She wants him to solve the case, but she is quite hostile to him from the very beginning -- surprisingly hostile, I'd say -- and continually insists he is an idiot who refuses to see the truth. Which, of course, she sees quite clearly.

At some point you realize that you've stopped focusing on the nattering narration, and started focusing on the murder mystery unfolding before you. You excitedly start assembling the facts, you eagerly start wondering who could have done what. You bewilderingly take note of scandal after scandal, in-fight after in-fight, while everything billows upward and blows up.

And then the narrative ends.

And then you ask yourself: What just happened??

And then you re-read the last chapter.

And then you get it.

This book should be required reading for all students of creative writing, and all fans of great literature. It's a small jewel of a book, fun to read, but deceptively profound.

Stephanie says

This novel is a steady one-sided conversation by a high society woman of El Salvador whose best friend was murdered execution-style, and now she's trying to put together the pieces to figure out what happened. Holy exhaustion, Batman! While at times humorous, the non-stop gossip, paranoia, and overall cray crayness, gets to the point of driving you a bit batty (which, in fairness, builds the character to what she is). I will admit there were several times over the course of reading that I really needed her to shut up or take a valium.....but at the same time, I couldn't stop reading. The recipient of the monologue is never revealed, however, between the title and a few pretty revealing notes, it's fairly obvious who she's been talking to the entire time. Overall, not a bad read, but I totally need to take a nap after finishing.

Book Riot Read Harder Challenge 2017 Task 4 - Read a book set in Central or South America, written by a Central or South American author.

Andra Watkins says

I waited a day to rate this book to see how the finish lingered. With chapters that are a single paragraph and pulse-pulse-pulse writing, this is not a book for a casual reader. But, it is a wonder of creativity and stream of consciousness prose. By the end, I knew all the characters by heart, just from Laura's hysterical, judgmental descriptions. I'd love to see a sequel where her voiceless friend tells us what was really going on while Laura wove her tale.

Kobe Bryant says

The way this is written was just exhausting to read

Kelly Lynn Thomas says

I found this book really engrossing. It's written as if the main character is in constant conversation with you (she's kind of vapid and gossipy but she knows everyone else's dirt so you want to hear what she has to say). The chapters are long and there are no paragraph breaks, which might make it difficult for some people to get into, but makes it very easy to get lost in.

It's a great look into El Salvador and its political and societal unrest. If you're not too familiar with the country, I'd suggest reading Joan Didion's *Salvador*... a book I read years ago, but that really helped me understand this one better. Plus, Joan Didion is awesome.

I've had the pleasure of meeting Horacio (he lives in my neighborhood), and he's a really nice, down to earth guy who came to Pittsburgh to escape persecution in El Salvador through City of Asylum/Pittsburgh. So as an added bonus, by supporting Horacio you're supporting free speech (and great literature)!

Karen says

Thoroughly enjoyed this book. Wonderful narrative

Pickle Farmer says

Hilarious and disturbing. Wish I could write like this. A breathless paranoid monologue in which the scariest thing is that everything that the narrator is paranoid about could just as easily be real.

Stephen Durrant says

Moya is a writer of great skill who creates in this novel an unforgettable narrator, a woman whose best friend has been cruelly murdered. As the narrator discusses her friend's sexual and political entanglements, she begins to slip into madness and paranoia. These emotions are spawned to a great extent by the general climate of political fear that one encounters also in Moya's more famous novel "Senselessness." For a reader like me who does not understand what must be oblique references to Latin American politics, the narrator is interesting for another reason, and that is the way she consistently backtracks and undermines so many of her original claims. Indeed, one begins to suspect she has more knowledge of the murder than she admits, for surely little that she says can really be trusted. "The She-Devil in the Mirror" is a fast and fascinating read.
