

Romain Gary  
**La danse  
de Gengis Cohn**



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# La Danse de Gengis Cohn

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## La Danse de Gengis Cohn Romain Gary

Un récit d'un humour féroce et cynique, une méchante métaphore de l'Histoire et de ses soubresauts entre violence et quête d'absolu avec en point d'orgue la relation presque symbiotique qu'entretiennent Cohn, le fantôme juif, et Schatz, le nazi dénazifié.

L'art et la culture en prennent pour leur grade au beau milieu de ce maelström littéraire, de ce récit iconoclaste au possible.

Et pour faire bonne mesure, la psychanalyse patauge cruellement, victime de ses propres concepts : l'Humanité est bien trop névrosée pour être sauvée par quelque moyen de son invention !

Un roman d'une grande intelligence et d'une insolence réjouissante. Du Gary, tout simplement.

## La Danse de Gengis Cohn Details

Date : Published June 1st 1995 by Gallimard Education (first published 1967)

ISBN : 9782070393022

Author : Romain Gary

Format : Mass Market Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Novels, Cultural, France, War, World War II, Germany

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**From Reader Review La Danse de Gengis Cohn for online ebook**

## Marine says

I remember that i never ended it. So I am not really able to say anything about it. Just that it's the story of a jew spirit living in the body of a german who used to be a Nazi and who took part in the murder of the jew. I learned that when you write a story you are free to imagine the craziest thing and to let characters and situations go where they to go. And I found an incredible free imagination in this book by Gary. It's a dark book with a rainbow over it, with a police inquiry which looks like a joke, with laughs to put colors in the tragedy.

**[Name Redacted] says**

A dark, satirical look at post-WWII Germany in which a former-Nazi is haunted by the ghost of a Jewish comedian (the titular "Genghis Cohn") whose death he oversaw at Auschwitz.

## Ala says

[illegible]

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## Abolfazl Esmailnejad says

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## Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in December 1999.

Romain Gary's novel of the Holocaust is like no other. Instead of directly portraying the suffering of the Jews, it looks at the effect it had on those who carried out the tortures, the massacres. Depending on how you look at it, the novel has either one or two major characters, and both they and those around them are symbolic of other things. Police Commissioner Schatz of the small German town of Licht has a shameful secret in his past, shared with hundreds of other Germans of his generation: during the war, he was a sergeant in the SS, and ordered the massacre of Jews. But now he is haunted by the ghost of one of the men whose death he ordered, a comedian who had the stage name Genghis Cohn. A constant reminder of his guilt, Cohn has driven Schatz to the point of secretly keeping Jewish festivals and eating kosher food. At the moment, he is also under severe stress because a mass murderer is at large: over twenty men have been discovered in the forest of Geist around Licht, with no trousers on and expressions of ecstasy: they have been loved to death.

Gary is looking at how, towards the end of the sixties, the Holocaust began to be forgotten as new injustices took its place in the public consciousness: the civil rights movement in the US, the Vietnamese villagers massacred by American soldiers. Jews are no longer the victims they have been throughout history. They are

even being invited to accept brotherhood with those who once persecuted them (and Gary quotes the Pope and Charles de Gaulle to show that this was really happening). Cohn is suspicious of this offer, for he realises that this means sharing the guilt of the oppressors.

This is the serious side of the novel, which is also hilariously funny, with a very black style of humour. A comedian in the Warsaw ghetto can hardly have been a "feel good" act, and Cohn's ghost continues to make the reader uneasy even when laughing at his wisecracks.

## Amir Soleimani says

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**Amy says**

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**Jo says**

Romain Gary, incontestablement un de mes auteurs favoris (de langue française), m'a intrigué de nouveau: la première partie du roman est pleine d'esprit, de beau cynisme. On ne peut pas s'empêcher d'admirer avec quelle légèreté bouleversante l'auteur présente ses caractères, au sens propre du mot d'une perspective intérieure: du point de vue subconscient. Quelle idée rusé et merveilleuse pour explorer les racines et l'antilogique de l'antisémitisme.

Mais il est dommage que Gary n'ait pas su construire une narration digne du sujet. Je n'arrive surtout pas à démêler le tas d'allusions et de pistes des deux parties suivantes. Autant „Le dibbuk“ était prometteur, autant „La forêt de Geist“ m'a paru bizarre, voire écoerante. Pourquoi se concentrer sur Lily et Florian, la séduction féminine et la mort personnifiées (?), au lieu de se limiter à sonder le subconscient foutu de Schatz? Pourquoi toutes ces allégories surréalistes à propos de la soi-disante civilisation évoluée? J'aurais préféré en savoir plus sur Cohn en tant qu'individu, notamment sur son passé au cabaret yiddish. Vraiment dommage.

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## Noah says

Romain Garys Versuch, so etwas wie ein Beckett Stück als Roman zu verfassen ist ordentlich misslungen. Zu wirr, zu unreal, zu sehr von Metaphern durchsetzt ist dieses Spätwerk des von mir ansonsten sehr geschätzten Autors. Mit den großartigen Romanen "Promesse de l'Aube", "Racines du ciel" oder "Vie devant soi" oder den leichten Komödien "Ski Bum", "Lady L." hat dieses Buch leider nichts gemein.

Der von den Nazis ermordete jüdische Komödiant Moische "Dschingis" Cohn spukt als Dibbuk im Kopf des für seinen Tod verantwortlichen ehemaligen SS-Offiziers Schatz, der nunmehr als Polizeikommissar im Deutschland der 60er Jahre eine mysteriöse Mordserie aufklären soll. Die Mordserie wird begangen durch Florian, eine Metapher für den Tod, der alle jede ermordet, die mit Lilly, einer Metapher für die Menschheit, schlafen und diese - nie zufriedene - nicht zum Orgasmus bringen können, von Jesus Christus bis zu Hitler... Zwischendurch stellt sich die Frage, wie der Nazi den Dibbuk loswerden kann oder ob nicht beide nur im Kopf des Autors herumspuken, der versucht, beide loszuwerden.

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## verbava says

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## Benny Morduchowitz says

The first 90 or so pages were riotously funny, but most of the rest of the novel was a slog of abstractions. There were a few interesting theories on art, identity, literature, and mortality to be gleamed, but it was such a drastic tonal break from the rest of the book that wasn't well executed that it detracted from the entire read. The ending was well-done metafiction, but it didn't make up for so much of the rest of the text.

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## David Leemon says

Fascinating book about a Jewish ghost in post-war Germany.

**Robert Wechsler says**

A very pleasant surprise. What starts out almost as a one-liner — a Jewish dybbuk takes possession of the German officer who had him and his family shot — turns into a dark, surreal tour de force. It's a difficult novel to describe, an experience rather than a story. Its themes even are difficult to describe: modern culture, war, Judaism and Israel and their relation to Germany, the power of myths... any list doesn't really describe the novel itself.

By the way, it's Genghis Cohn, and it was translated into English by the author with Camilla Sykes, or so the book says. Gary wrote in English, as well.

**nogaboga says**

In spite of my love for the books of Romain Gary, I had to put this one down after a few chapters. I just needed something different right now. The idea is good - a dead Jewish comedian is haunting his German Auschwitz killer into middle age. I just didn't find myself excited about it.

## Castles says

When talking about Romain Gary's sense of humor, this is definitely one of his wildest peaks. But it also deals with tragedy and disaster in a very original way, when Gary confronts his Jewish roots.

### Katzie says

An absolutely crazy reading.. I loved it..

## Ali says

[illegible]

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## Shahar says

Romain Gary looks on Germany and Europe 20 years after the Holocaust and discovers a world beginning to forget (I wonder what he would have written today about Europe depended on Germany). A World wants to come back to normal routine . A World where Eichmann was captured and senior Nazis were tried but many that murdered( not hundreds or thousands - "only" a few or dozens) slipped through the net. One such is Schatz .served at Auschwitz and later commanded the firing squad that murdered Jews, including mothers and children and one comedian named Genghis Cohen.

I cannot discuss the book without discussing content and although it's not the kind of book that can have a spoiler – I put a spoiler warning as I reveal some of the plot .

Schatz is now a police commander in a German town near the woods where Genghis was executed.

Whether the spirit of Genghis came out of the death hole to haunt the murderer or if Schatz took with him the memory of the Jewish brat showing the firing squad his bare ass and shouting "Kiss who Tohes" before being shot – it does not matter they are now trapped together. Just as you cannot say Jew without thinking of the Nazi and vice versa - a murderer and victim memory integrated together.

The book is written as a play. No stage instructions or something like that but it seems that has three and a half acts, in each of which the settings remains fix and characters story spread out from there. But the sense of a play comes from characters exaggerated theatricality, over use of symbolism and metaphors. The characters simply scream the text.

The first part of the book (about 70 pages) is excellent. The kind where you read a few lines and stop to reflect and in this case also bursting into laughter. The story is told from spirit view of Genghis Cohen. With Yiddish humor he describes the relationship between him and the Nazi. (saying Kaddish on the anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto, preparing Gphilta Fish, the death holes ...) and shows that humor can sometimes go deeper into sadness and without a bit of contempt for the memory . The teller grieves that Jewish communities are wronged to be remembered with bleak memory forever and the humor and joy of life that was part of them is forgotten.

Ostensibly, the story line is a murder investigation of it incharge Schatz - bare-assed men are found in the woods with expressions of bliss on their faces and very much dead. When Schatz declares it a the crime of the century , Genghis can no longer be silent and makes the Schatz dance his dance.

Here the story train goes off the tracks and becomes a sort of allegorical fantasy style loaded with metaphors - Midsummer Night's Dream meets Levin meets Lady and the Peddler ( a story by Agnon ) meets Sharon Stone.

( I meant to discuss Lily – but not thinks it's irrelevant – ill just say I cannot figure what she stands for : death ,lilith, war, white man ,Europe ....)

And this is greatest sin for me in a book - the storytelling comes first to all – there can and should be more layers. Even those that I haven't got the tools to reach . it's all good to have metaphors and symbolic representations as long as they are the spice not the main ingredient.

The end of the book explains a bit why the story was a haze and I guess if Memory is what you want to talk about you got to use a bit hallucination but for me after page 70 ( when the Baron enters ) the book lost its taste.

I finished the book about a month ago and is still going with me so I do think there is something to it and would recommend others to take up the challenge and try it - it is quite possible that the problem is in the reader.

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**Smotri\_pod\_nogi** says

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