



The Dance of the Seagull

Andrea Camilleri , Stephen Sartarelli (Translation)

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As seen on TV: now a major BBC4 television series. Inspector Montalbano is awake at dawn, sitting on his porch, when his attention is caught by a seagull which falls from the sky, performing a strange dance, before lying down to die. Montalbano is perplexed by what he has witnessed and the scene hangs over him like an omen. About to depart for a holiday with his girlfriend Livia, Montalbano makes a quick trip to the police station to tie up loose ends. But when his dear colleague Fazio is discovered missing – and it transpires that the policeman has been involved in his own secret investigations – Montalbano instead launches a desperate search for his lost friend, as time begins to run out . . . Navigating a shadowy maze of smuggling, blackmail and the darkest murder, and moving from the docks of Vigata to its deep, dry wells where the mafia hide their terrible crimes, Inspector Montalbano must have his wits about him to unravel this tangled mystery.

The Dance of the Seagull Details

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From Reader Review The Dance of the Seagull for online ebook

Marilyn says

I love these Inspector Montalbano mysteries and realized that this, his 15th in the series, was very familiar because it took four years from the copyright date for the book to be translated for the US and, meanwhile, the television program which ended in 2011 had this novel on its final DVD in Italian with subtitles. The television programs are so true to the novels that I presume that Camilleri wrote the scripts. Since the TV series has run its course, and since Camilleri is 89, I'm delighted to see that there are about 5 or 6 novels still to be translated.

That said, I'm disappointed that the later novels have moved further away from the relationship between Montalbano and his love interest, Livia, which added an amusing depth to the novels since Livia understood the idiosyncratic inspector better than anyone else. I love all the supporting cast and must admit that the DVD's of the television productions firmly placed a physical presence in my mind that enhanced the novels. That is not always the situation with dramatic presentations of the fiction I read.

I am so grateful that my local public library carries so much international fiction. These novels and DVD's are always on the waiting list and are extremely popular with American readers. Montalbano has always been a solo performer, but it seems that Camilleri is aging his hero and taking him through some strange mental antics in the process. I also missed the most enjoyable descriptions of Italian cuisine in this episode. Sometimes it seems like the novels have lost their edge. But, Montalbano is still the unique individual who outsmarts the rest of the Sicilian police.

Dale says

Two rules:

1. Mystery authors should take their own work seriously. I don't mean they should avoid humor, but they should not mock their own creation.
2. If you're going to do the post-modernist self-referential thing, go all-in or forget about it.

Sadly, nobody told Camilleri about these two rules, and nobody needed to until this book. He makes reference to the TV series about inspector Montalbano (an excellent series, by the way), making a joke about Montalbano not wanting to go to a certain town because he might run into the actor who is playing him. This was just distracting. Later, Camilleri steps out of the omniscient observer role to make reference to himself, Camilleri, and his relationship to Montalbano. Distracting, again.

The translation this time was really not up to Stephen Sartarelli's usual high standards. It seemed rough in places (especially near the beginning), and never exhibited the brilliance of his earlier translations.

The story itself was fairly compelling - not every murder mystery features a cross-dressing gangster. And there was plenty of suspense when, early in the story, Montalbano figures out that his friend and assistant Fazio has been kidnapped and possibly murdered.

But overall this novel was a disappointment, at least by comparison to every other of the novels in this series.

Helen says

All the usual elements of the Montalbano books - Livia arrives for an arranged few days off with Salvo, and not only does it not happen but he completely forgets all about her. She removes herself from the scene - for once without too many harsh words. There is the food, the mystery, and the strange habit of lying to everyone including his own colleagues. There is also a strange post-modernist element - Camilleri has done this once before in a previous story in which Montalbano was reading a book by Camilleri. In this one he wants to avoid the area where they are filming "that television series" with the actor who may or may not look like him - and the end of the story is another odd comment, "Little surprise that Montalbano couldn't tell Camilleri how the story would end". He also conveniently works out what actually happened by having a sort of vision. All of these things jar a bit and threaten the willing suspension of disbelief. The image of the dancing, dying seagull at the beginning is memorable, a rather horrible portent of what has happened to the murder victim. Entertaining, but not sure about the self-conscious self-mockery, if that's what it is.

Margaret says

Commissario Montalbano is a very dedicated if not always scrupulous policeman but he manages to turn the tables on the most influential and seemingly untouchable criminals in a very satisfactory way. I don't love the character as much as the French Inspector Bruno Courreges (by Martin Walker) but still an entertaining quick, escapist read although I think the corruption in Italy might be very real.

Gerti says

Auch ein guter Kriminalroman aus der Feder von Andrea Camilleri.
Montalbano und seine Crew bekommen es dieses Mal mit der Mafia zu tun was böse enden könnte, dank Montalbanos Pfffigkeit jedoch noch mal gut aus geht.

Maria Beltrami says

Montalbano sta diventando vecchio, e come accade ai vecchi diventa impressionabile. Lo colpisce un gabbiano morente sulla spiaggia, così come lo riduce a uno straccio lo spettacolo crudelissimo di una morte per mafia. Nonostante ciò, non perdè nè il suo acume nè il suo understatement, e risolve elegantemente un'indagine che coinvolge i soliti intoccabili, rendendoli così toccabilissimi e mettendoli in berlina.

Nancy Oakes says

And we're back in Sicily again with The Dance of the Seagull, #15 in Andrea Camilleri's excellent series of novels featuring Inspector Salvo Montalbano. Unlike most crime fiction novels I read, in this series of books, plot has come to take a back seat to character, a big exception in my case. Now at age 57, Montalbano's self-doubt resurfaces, to be followed by a chaser of melancholy. Luckily, at least in the short run, it's nothing that

can't be handled by a plate of Adelina's marvelous caponata.

One of Livia's increasingly rare visits is interrupted when Montalbano is made aware that Fazio is missing, apparently going out alone on an investigation the Inspector knew nothing about. On a tip, he searches in an area filled with dry wells (where once the land was green and arable until a cancelled highway project made a desert of it once more), and while there's no sign of the missing policeman, two bodies are found. After Fazio reappears and is hospitalized, Montalbano has his hands full protecting his friend, trying to figure out the identities of the bodies, and acting on information given to him by Fazio, trying to get some answers.

As always, even in the middle of serious crime solving, there are some very funny moments in this book. For example, in trying to evade having to report to the Commissioner, Montalbano comes up with a whale of an excuse (a fake procedure that made me wince while reading about it) and then has to hole up in a room at Enzo's because the Commissioner is eating in the next; Camilleri gives us a little meta moment as Montalbano tries to talk Livia into a different mini-vacation destination so as to avoid running into Luca Zingaretti who plays him on TV, and recurring scenes with a nurse whom Montalbano refers to as "the Sing-Sing prison guard." But the series has been trending lately to focus much more on the Inspector himself and his doubts about his career -- and that path continues in this novel as well, sparked by the death of a seagull and Montalbano's growing awareness that he's become tired of all of the violence. If you read these novels only for plot, you're missing out on one of the best-developed group of characters ever created by a crime-fiction novelist, and offering Montalbano an ongoing chance to voice his worries and anxieties makes him more genuine. Unlike many crime novelists, Camilleri doesn't cripple his character by having him express himself in this way, leaving plenty of room for the humor that is so prevalent in this series. And unlike a few other crime novelists, the author is also able to give his readers his opinions on ongoing problems in his country without being preachy or in your face about it.

While it may not have been my favorite book of the series so far, it's still a winner. Do not let this be your first experience with Montalbano and the other members of his squad. Even if you could care less about the ongoing changes in Montalbano over the years, these are books you want to be in on at their start.

Margaret says

As usual, I enjoyed the book. Gave it the usual 5 stars, although I'm not sure I like the author referring to the TV series, with Montalbano actually saying that the actor Luca Zingaretti doesn't resemble him. For committed fans of the books and the TV series, they are one and the same person. Allow us to maintain the fantasy!

Ivonne Rovira says

Checking out the excellent mystery website, Stop You're Killing Me!, always proves frustrating when it comes to Andrea Camilleri. There are always three, four, five novels featuring the Sicilian police chief inspector Salvo Montalbano that have not yet been translated into English! Despite that backlog, whenever you finish a Montalbano novel, you know you have a year to wait. Sigh!

The latest eagerly awaited installment begins with Salvo preparing to set off on vacation with his long-suffering girlfriend Livia when Salvo realizes that his right-hand man, Sergeant Giuseppe Fazio, has vanished. This suspenseful novel in which the men of Montalbano's police department at Vigàta in Sicily investigate the fate of the faithful Fazio will thrill both longtime Montalbano fans and readers who are new

to the clever and devious Salvo. But read at your own peril! It will be a long, long year until La caccia al tesoro, the next book in the series, comes out in English.

(view spoiler)

James says

For fans of the series like myself this is a top read. I felt this was one of the best in the series with the fug of politics swirling around an even more grouchy Montalbano than usual, as he tries to solve the disappearance of one of his policeman, and several corpses. All the popular memes misanthrope of a coroner, the worlds worst assistant, the eternal disappointment of Livia are back like an old family wrapped in a funnier package than usual. A source of deep enjoyment that glitters with a morbid wit rare in such series.

Its also fun to contrast with the epitome of aging world weary policemen Wallander. While there is some soul searching it invariably ends with a plate of freshly cooked fish. A lesson in aging for us all.

Sharon says

Although I know this series is very popular, I found the book to be disorganized and the characters to be rather flat. I do not plan to read another book in this series.

Ben Olsen says

I have devoured every Montalbano book to date but this is definitely one of the weakest. Camilleri seemed to want to change a style which has already succeeded in taking us to the fifteenth instalment. I felt strangely cheated and confused at the mention of the Montalbano TV series at the beginning of the story and the suspension of disbelief was ruined again towards the end of the book when the writer mentions himself in a bizarre dialogue which seemed to suggest even he didn't know where the plot was going. Completely unnecessary and unwanted. I'm not sure if it's down to the translator but the Sicilian dialect dialogue, especially Catarella, seemed to be written in a different style to that used previously as well. All that aside, there is just about enough of the usual food, humour, women and Sicilian style to mask the typically slim plot. Just. I will keep reading Montalbano as long as Camilleri keeps writing but I hope he doesn't try to fix something which isn't broken.

Bayneeta says

Overly complicated and confusing plot; but a fast read, and I do love all of the recurring characters. Salvo is 57 and worried about aging, Fazio disappears, Catarella continues to massacre names, Salvo tells Mimi he's become an honorary Catarellian, and once again Livia gets short shrift. Surely she could have her pick of attentive men in Genoa.

Heidi Burkhart says

I love reading the Inspector Montalbano series! This one was quite good.

Gary says

Good story with literary overtones and more serious characters than usual.
