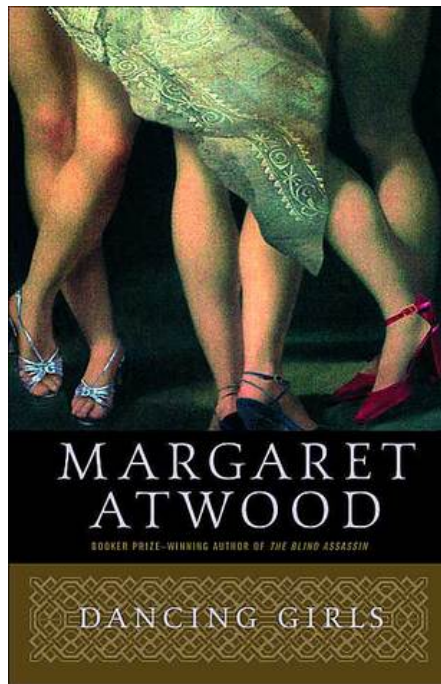




Dancing Girls and Other Stories

Margaret Atwood

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Dancing Girls and Other Stories Margaret Atwood

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Handmaid's Tale*

This splendid volume of short fiction testifies to Margaret Atwood's startlingly original voice, full of a rare intensity and exceptional intelligence. Her men and women still miscommunicate, still remain separate in different rooms, different houses, or even different worlds. With brilliant flashes of fantasy, humor, and unexpected violence, the stories reveal the complexities of human relationships and bring to life characters who touch us deeply, evoking terror and laughter, compassion and recognition--and dramatically demonstrate why Margaret Atwood is one of the most important writers in English today.

Dancing Girls and Other Stories Details

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From Reader Review Dancing Girls and Other Stories for online ebook

Rubi says

Encuentro interesantes y conmovedores cada uno de los relatos; las sentí mujeres que bailan alrededor de su realidad, pero que no la afrontan, bailan a su alrededor. Tejen su historia imaginaria en lo que suspenden su felicidad. Me quedo con: "Tengan cuidado, deseo escribir, existe un futuro"

I find each of the stories interesting and moving; I felt them women who dance around their reality, but who do not face it, they dance around it. They weave their imaginary story in which they suspend their happiness. I stay with: "Be careful, I want to write, there is a future"

Paola says

Questa raccolta di racconti mi lascia un'impressione duplice: da un lato è veramente bella, i temi, lo stile, le riflessioni infinite dei protagonisti, le ansie e le fantasie.

Dall'altro ho avuto molte difficoltà nella lettura: lo stile è circonvoluto (non trovo modo migliore di definirlo) e con un vocabolario ricchissimo, c'è un continuo discorso interiore dei personaggi che si mescola in modo spesso difficile da distinguere con la realtà. Non è possibile lasciare a metà un racconto e riprenderlo a fine giornata senza dover tornare indietro di qualche paragrafo per capire se si sta leggendo una parte di riflessione o di narrazione. Una lettura complessa e molto più lenta di quello che mi sarei aspettata dopo *The Handmaid's Tale*.

La tematica è la vita, in ogni sua sfaccettatura: amore, nascita, morte, follia, paure, solitudine.

L'ambientazione è quasi sempre grigia, sporca, sciatta, fredda. I desideri, una volta soddisfatti, sono niente, le relazioni sono tutte segnate dall'incomprensione e dall'insoddisfazione.

Racconti che lasciano l'amaro in bocca.

Diana says

Libro que contiene ocho relatos que tratan sobre la relación entre una mujer y un hombre; algunos me han gustado más que otros. Es cierto que encontré cierta repetición... De todos modos, los leí sintiéndolos y eso ya es suficiente como para valorarlo positivamente. Además, me vi habitando en los cuerpos de las diversas mujeres que aparecen en esta colección. Hallarse supone conectarse con el autor o la autora, es por ello que el libro seguirá estando en mi estantería, reclamándome de vez en cuando. «Érase una vez» y «A favor de las mujeres tontas» me resultaron de gran importancia.

Margaret Atwood es maravillosa. Sus reflexiones y su modo de plasmarlas sobre el papel me impresionan.

«Pronto esatré allí, dentro están las plantas que han aprendido solas a parecer piedras. Pienso en ellas. Crecen en silencio, ocultándose en tierra reseca, nimiedades, pequeños ceros, sin más contenido que ellos mismos; sin valor alimenticio, sedantes y redondas para el ojo, y de pronto en ninguna parte. Me pregunto cuánto se tarda, cómo lo hacen».

Ana Mardoll says

Dancing Girls / 0-553-37791-4

This collection of Atwood short stories includes:

- The War in the Bathroom
- When It Happens
- The Man from Mars
- A Travel Piece
- Polarities
- The Resplendent Quetzal
- Under Glass
- Training
- The Grave of the Famous Poet
- Lives of Poets
- Dancing Girls
- Hair Jewelry
- Giving Birth
- Rape Fantasies
- Betty
- The Sin Eater

These stories are classic Atwood material: the stories explore pain in modern relationships, and the ennui that sets into modern life and leaves people feeling deeply sad, yet unable to explain their sadness. In the face of material security, socially acceptable relationships and jobs, and owning lavish goods and homes, why do we still feel so sad? Other stories carefully examine mental deterioration, whether mental illness ("The War in the Bathroom") as the main character slowly seems to spiral into dementia, or severe strain brought on by unusual circumstances ("A Travel Piece"). Atwood posits that, in the face of complete breakdown, a part of us still hangs onto our familiar routines, even when hanging on seems absurd. Whether this absurd cling to the familiar helps to maintain our sanity or whether it merely hastens the descent into madness is never made clear.

~ Ana Mardoll

Arlie says

Atwood has written a collection of stories that are almost overwhelming in their depressing portrayal of the impossibility of intimacy in relationships. Each of the narrators is isolated and overly analytical. Yet, like all her stories, they offer a look at human motivation and draw the reader in.

Jana says

Normally, I'm a big fan of Margaret Atwood's work, but there were a lot of elements in Dancing Girls which

didn't appeal to me. There's a general tone of immaturity and of experimentation, and only a few of the stories actually read like they were written by the famous and noteworthy *Margaret Atwood*. The rest felt like they could have been written by anyone in the 1970s who liked to play around with perspective and tone.

The pieces I liked were "When it Happens," "Polarities," "The Resplendent Quetzal," and "Training." These all carry what I think of as Atwood's hallmarks: empathy for her characters, an understanding of the tough choices we humans are sometimes forced to make during our lives, and the difficulties men and women have in their communications and interactions with one another. "When it Happens" was my favorite—there's a timelessness to this story of an older woman preparing herself for what she considers to be the eventuality of war. While written in the 1970s, during the dual stresses of the Cold War and the Vietnam War, it could just as easily be set then, today, or twenty years from now.

I wasn't terribly interested in, or was bored by, the ten other stories in the collection. Some of them felt incomplete, as though I were reading a rough draft rather than the finished product. Some of them provided so little information about the narrator, setting, or circumstances that I couldn't piece together what was happening. In others, the narration style was so odd that I didn't know if the person was mentally ill, as in "Under Glass," or possessed by some kind of spirit, as in "The War in the Bathroom." Since no context is given outside the first-person perspective of those two stories in particular, I honestly found it difficult to care about anything which happened to the characters.

It's only because I liked four of the stories so much that I gave this collection two stars. If I had to guess, I would say that Atwood was simultaneously finding her voice as a writer and indulging in some of the avant-garde exercises of the 1970s, when many writers were testing the limits and boundaries of fiction. Readers who enjoy that will probably enjoy *Dancing Girls* much more than I did. Personally, I think Atwood really came into her own in the 1980s and 1990s, and I prefer her work from that time period much more.

verbava says

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Victoria Mars says

Confieso que no soy muy amiga de los libros de cuentos. Incluso de autores que considero mis favoritos, nunca termino conforme del todo con la lectura. Por lo mismo, no me atrevería a decir que **Chicas bailarinas** me gustó cabalmente.

Atwood tiene la gracia de darle un tono y ritmo distinto a cada uno de sus cuentos y sus historias nunca terminan como imaginas (pienso en *Historia de un viaje* y *Cuando sucede*). Mi cuento favorito es *Joyería*

capilar y estuve a punto de darle 4 estrellas solo por él, pero con muchos otros no pude conectar nada como me paso con *Dar a luz*, por ejemplo.

¿Es recomendable? Por supuesto. Leer a Atwood nunca será una pérdida de tiempo. ¿Si se transformará en tu libro favorito de todos los tiempos? Ahí tengo mis dudas.

Frases para el recuerdo:

De niña, siempre se identificaba con la novia engañada o la hermana fea; siempre que el cuento empezaba “Érase una vez una doncella tan bonita como bondadosa”, tenía la certeza de que no se trataba de ella.

Su madre aprovechó para decir que el problema con las personas de otra cultura era que nunca sabía si estaban locos o no, porque sus pautas de comportamiento eran muy distintas.

No lo imaginaba en el ejército, ni en ningún bando; no encajaba con él, y , hasta donde sabía no tenía ideología alguna. Debía de ser algo anodino, al margen, como ella; tal vez se había hecho intérprete.

El interior desprendía ese olor dulce y tristón de las tiendas en las que se vende de todo, mezcla del aroma de los cucuruchos de helado, las galletas Oreo, los caramelos duros y las barritas de regaliz que se exponían en el mostrador, y eso otro olor, almizcleño y penetrante, a sudor y a rancio.

En cuanto a Fred, ha dejado de intrigarme. Os Freds de este mundo se delatan por lo que hacen y por lo que eligen. Son las Bettys las que resultan misteriosas.

El desorden solo le interesaba en las mujeres, pero no podía vivir en él.

La pobre Louise había intentado forjarse a sí misma a partir de las personas que conocía. Únicamente de él no había tomado nada: al pensar en su gélido interior, un puro embrión malogrado, comprendió que no tenía nada que ella pudiera tomar.

Yo soy el círculo. Tengo los polos en mí interior. Lo que debo hacer es seguir intacta, depende de mí.

Comprendió que solo quería a la Louise desesperanzada y loca, la indefensa y privada de toda aspiración. Con una Louise cuerda y capaz de juzgarlo, nunca podría entenderse.

Sus propios esfuerzos por seguir siendo humano, el trabajo inútil, el amor estéril, ¿qué ocurría cuando todo se agotaba?, ¿qué le sucedería a él?

Aunque tener una calabaza o un tomate, sería en los tiempos que corren, más agradable y útil que tener un bebé. El mundo no necesita mis genes. Pero esto es una excusa.

Barajo mi juego de impertinencias y saco una: haces el amor como un cowboy violando a una oveja. Llevo tiempo queriendo decírselo, pero acaso la paz sea más importante.

Deseo explicarle lo que nadie le ha enseñado, cómo se comportan dos personas que se quieren, que evitan hacerse daño, pero no estoy segura de saber.

Nos amamos, eso es cierto signifique lo que signifique, pero no nos amamos bien: para algunos es talento, para otros adicción.

Resucito a través de la ropa. Tanto es así que me resulta imposible recordar lo que hice, lo que me sucedió, a menos que recuerde lo que llevaba puesto. Siempre que deshecho un suéter o un vestido, deshecho parte de mi vida.

Creía que si llevaba prendas muy holgadas formarían una especie de tienda a mí alrededor y sería menos visible. Pero era al revés.

Estoy perdidamente enamorada y voy a la estación de tren para escapar.

En aquella época de mi vida, el amor no correspondido era la única clase de amor que yo parecía capaz de sentir. Esto me causaba un gran dolor. Pero, con mi actual perspectiva, comprendo que tenía sus ventajas. Proporcionaba todos los sobresaltos emocionales de la otra clase de amor, sin implicar ninguno de sus riesgos.

Pero el amor no correspondido no exigía el desnudo.

Es más fácil amar a un demonio que a un hombre, aunque sea menos heroico.

¿Por qué resultan tan irresistibles para las jóvenes la melancolía y cierto sentido de futilidad?

Las mujeres siempre se sienten impulsadas a apaciguar a los hombres que tratan de ligárselas, al rechazarlos.

Nunca he entendido por qué la gente considera la juventud una época de libertad y alegría. Probablemente se debe a que ha olvidado la propia.

Con el puño del abrigo hasta los nudillos, no tenía aspecto de ser titular de una tarjeta de crédito.

Ya no tengo aventuras, porque odio los recuerdos que no pueden desecharse.

Incluso quienes jamás irían a los lugares que ella describía, quienes no podrían permitírselo, no querían oír hablar de peligros, ni siquiera de incomodidades; era como si desearan creer que quedaba un lugar en el mundo donde todo iba bien, donde no ocurría nada desagradable.

Es la calma ininterrumpida, tanto interna como externa, lo que la irrita. A todo el mundo le ocurren cosas, ¿por qué no a mí?, piensa. Por otra parte, está convencida de que sí ocurren cosas a su alrededor, pero que se las ocultan.

Todo el mundo cree que los escritores saben más acerca de la mente humana, pero es un error. Saben menos. Por eso escriben. Para tratar de descubrir lo que todos los demás dan por sentado.

Había empezado a tener la sensación de que nada la esperaba fuera de los límites de la cama. No se trataba de vacío, sino de nada, un cero con patas en el libro de aritmética.

La sangre, el fluido elemental, el jugo de la vida, subproducto del nacimiento, preludio de la muerte.

Ann se compadeció de su soledad, pero no quería implicarse. Ya tenía bastantes problemas para afrontar la suya.

La inteligencia era un activo, sostenía Joseph. Solo teníamos que fijarnos en lo que les pasaba a las tontas.

Los niños no tienen piedad; ha de inculcárseles.

Caleigh says

I prefer Atwood's novels to her short stories but I've had this book for eons and figured it was time to read it. And sure enough, I was nonplussed by most of the stories, hated a few, and enjoyed fewer still.

The overall mood was definitely depressing, the attitude cynical, and if the pieces reflect Atwood's (then) opinions of relationships, she considered all men to be cheating deadbeats and women to be on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Several stories reminded me of dreams - disjointed, with people and places suddenly shifting so that you wonder if she's still talking about the same time period or character. And several stories seemed to be cut off a couple of sentences before the end. I'd turn the page but then...

Many of the stories dealt with young women and their first jobs, first apartments, first lovers and first babies, which is to be expected given that this was one of her earliest books, comprised of stories originally printed in various magazines and periodicals at the start of her career. One can assume she was struggling to find her way as a young author in the midst of '70s feminism, with not much hope yet for a happy and balanced relationship.

I can't say I loved this collection but it was interesting to get a glimpse of Margaret Atwood in her formative years as an author.

Sara says

Writing effective short stories is probably more difficult than writing effective novels. You have very little space; you have to create viable, breathing characters in paragraphs instead of chapters; you have to weigh every word and know that it is essential or it must go; and you must convey something important, an idea, a thought, that lasts or has impact. Margaret Atwood does that like it is a science.

I'm not generally a fan of short stories. They seem too often to leave me feeling as if there is more to the story if only the author had had the time and pages to flesh it out. Atwood seldom left me with that feeling in this collection, although I admit to loving some of the stories and feeling a little confused about others.

The ones I loved:

Betty Almost a coming of age tale, with the adolescent narrator who doesn't quite understand the world of the grown-ups that she observes. Betty is part of "Betty and Fred" the couple who live next door at the cottages where her family is spending the summer, and the girl and her sister are a bit taken with Fred, but it is Betty who makes them welcomed and treats them well. Fred seems so ideal to their young minds. About half way through the tale, our narrator observes, *"I began to think that I might not want to be married to Fred after all. He unrolled from Betty's mouth like a long ribbon of soggy newspaper printed from end to*

end with nothing but the weather." That simile said all.

Under Glass I wanted to scream at this narrator who is involved in a relationship with a man who has just committed an infidelity and shrugs it off in a "boys will be boys" style. *I wanted to tell him what no one's ever taught him, how two people who love each other behave, how they avoid damaging each other, but I'm not sure I know.*" and *"He won't come near me, touch me, doesn't he that's all he needs to do? He'll wait for me to cool off, as he puts it. But if I go away like this I won't be back."* She wishes she didn't love him, but my question would be, why does she?

The Grave of the Famous Poet A tale of alienation and breakup that felt perfectly heartbreaking to me. The setting is right for romance, but the narrator knows the romance is over. *"I pull him into me, wanting him to be with me, but for the first time I feel it's just flesh, a body, a beautiful machine, an animated corpse, he isn't in it any more, I want him so much and he isn't here."* If you have ever experienced the end of love, you will recognize its shadow, whispering your name.

The Sin Eater Joseph is an unorthodox shrink, who we meet through his "client" (because he doesn't call them patients or believe they are sick). *"This world is all we have, says Joseph. It's all you have to work with. It is not too much for you. You will not be rescued."*

I could turn that last one into a mantra and share it with everyone who is young and struggling, middle-aged and feeling unsure of the path they have taken, old and feeling their time run out. You will not be rescued, but then Joseph and Atwood would probably tell you that if you pay close attention you will discover you can rescue yourself.

John says

How Does Atwood do it? With every story I am hooked within a page. I am drawn to the characters and want to know more and more. I immediately feel connected.

These short stories are from a younger Atwood than ones I have read. She seems more connected to the horribleness of being young, and single, and confused in love and relationships. They were delightful through and through. Full of many familiar themes I have found in her writings.

The Man From Mars – Interesting how the the kicker at the end about Vietnam dates the story. Atwood includes her familiar comments about women's treatment of other women; the protagonist is more comfortable among men. Very enjoyable.

Betty – I like how the story is told through a kid's perspective, and how that perspective changes through time.

Polarities – Ugg too close to real life experiences – Encountering a friend during a mental breakdown.

Under Glass – I read it twice. Maybe my fav. I loved the overtones of the characters being dogs. Or was it undertones of dogs being liking humans?

The Grave of the Famous Poet – Did not grab me. Interesting that no names are used throughout.

Hair Jewellery – No maybe this one is my favorite! I also read it twice. The longings for someone who does not love you back. Why do they haunt us? Why can we never really give these people up?

When It Happens – A familiar inclusion of characters who were shaped by World War 2. How living through those times molded people for the rest of their lives.

A Travel Piece – This story stands out to me in that it does not feel like the rest. Though it again has references to people who have been in the war.

The Resplendent Quetzal – Wonderful. I am again amazed at how connected I feel to both of the main characters in 13 short pages.

Training – Uncommon to have a male protagonist, but common to have a camp setting. Not my favorite, but one that made me think.

The Lives of Poets – Surprisingly bland.

Dancing Girls – A story about culture clash, another frequent theme of Atwood's. Reading her stories has opened my eyes to how multicultural Toronto and Montreal are.

The Sin Eater – Love the concept. Great capture of the awkwardness of funeral where things get said that probably shouldn't.

Giving Birth – An oddly structured story. I wonder why it did not drift back up to the level it started at. But I liked it. It had an appropriate raw intensity. Writing is like giving birth.

Sivananthi T says

This marvellous collection of short stories brings together the stories of men and women, but of course it is the women who Atwood finds more fascinating, and interesting - our motivations, our drives, our desires, mostly unspoken but made manifest by actions.

Allison says

The only thing that saves this from the one-star category is the fact that I can imagine my creative writing professors at Rochester assigning these sorts of short stories, because they are right in line with all of the ones I read for class. I would read and become a bit excited near the end of the first third of the story, hoping with a bit of anticipation that now, after this confusion and meandering, everything will add up and lead to something beautiful or horrendous or at least *meaningful*. But after finishing the second third of the story, I finally realize that no, the first third was exactly what was going to happen throughout, and I would be destined to finish the story without finding any purpose to it at all, but I would finish it anyway, because I had already invested time and energy in the first two-thirds, and darn it, if there was some surprise at the end that made everything make sense, I didn't want to be such a lazy reader that I would miss it.

But I rarely missed anything. And so, after trying four or five stories in *Dancing Girls*, I returned it to the library. I'll look for a novel the next time I decide to delve into Atwood.

Lex Columbine says

Las historias donde las protagonistas son mujeres son las mejores por el género de su autora evidentemente, comparando con las que tienen a un hombre como protagonista no logran destacar de la misma manera ni tienen una reflexión tan profunda o íntima. Me gustó su narración de la cotidiana, las historias son en su mayoría tristes, no por esa cotidianidad si no por esa introspección de lo que podría ser y no fue o de lo que es ahora y no va poder ser otra cosa, personajes que se ven atrapadas y no se dieron cuenta de cómo lentamente se vieron arrastradas a esas situaciones. Esta antología tiene una carga feminista, a través de sus protagonistas que reflexionan sobre sus relaciones, sobre sus carreras y sobre cómo ven a otras mujeres. Su prosa es lenta, descriptiva y rica en palabras que me hicieron consultar unas cuantas veces el diccionario, también poética y se nota la influencia de Shakespeare. Me recordó un poco a su contemporánea Alice Munro, tiene una marca la literatura canadiense que le da una carga especial a la naturaleza, supongo que por sus altas temperaturas.

Las mejores para mí, en este orden:

Betty, la tumba del famoso poeta, translúcida, vidas de poetas, chicas bailarinas, historia de un viaje

Giulia (juliareadingdiary) says

Favourite stories:

- Hair Jewellery
 - The Man from Mars
 - Under Glass
 - Rape Fantasies
 - A Travel Piece
 - The Resplendent Quetzal
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