
El sueño de la razón

El sueño de la razón (The Dream of Reason)

It begins with bizarre animal murders – dead turkeys and a drowned puppy – then a young woman is killed and posed ritually at the foot of one of the bridges across the river Manzanares. Inspector Ruiz is on a suspension, awaiting a disciplinary hearing for insubordination, however she does not let such a tiny detail get in her way and as Ruiz begins her clandestine investigations, it soon becomes clear that the young woman's murder and the animal killings are connected. The victim, Sara Muñoz (Saramú) works at the university, studying Goya, and all the murder scenes are reconstructions of some of the artist's most disturbing pieces.

Ruiz's clandestine investigation lead her into the world of the marginalized underclasses, the okupa communities (squatters), and into the bowels of the city through its system of underground tunnels. The person at the centre of events seems to be an elusive character named Yago (an anagram of Goya), a mendicant, former forensic scientist, art lover, and psychopath living on the edge of society.

This is the fourth of Gonzáles Harbour's books to feature María Ruiz, however, any reservations the reader might have if they have not read the previous novels are dispelled in the first few pages. Ruiz is immediately attractive and instantly three dimensional coming across as empathetic, insightful, and driven. We get snippets of her back-story throughout the novel, and these add further depth to the character as the plot progresses without being intrusive or making the reader feel they've missed out if they haven't read the other books in this series.

Part of the book's interest is down to the huge role taken by Goya and his work. The artist is far more than just a plot device – a frame for the killer's psychopathy – he is a protagonist in the novel. Goya's own obsession with humanity's darker side and the disillusionment reflected in his later work, are somewhat mirrored by Ruiz's darker thoughts and frustration as a police officer having experienced the worst of people in the course of her work.

The author has an engaging writing style. Her prose is very elegant, and this makes for a very pleasurable, easy read. Gonzáles Harbour is a skilful storyteller, she keeps the tension of the story through all 400 pages, and she manages the threads of all the plot lines exquisitely, tying things together or introducing a new strand at just the right moment.

From the reader's report by [Hebe Powell](#) [1]

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