



## The Queen of the South

*Arturo Pérez-Reverte , Andrew Hurley (translator)*

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**The Queen of the South** Arturo Pérez-Reverte , Andrew Hurley (translator)

Guero Davila is a pilot engaged in drug-smuggling for the local cartels. Teresa Mendoza is his girlfriend, a typical narco's morra-- quiet, doting, submissive. But then Guero's caught playing both sides, and in Sinaloa, that means death. Teresa finds herself alone, terrified, friendless and running to save her life, carrying nothing but a gym bag containing a pistol and a notebook that she has been forbidden to read. Forced to leave Mexico, she flees to the Spanish city of Melilla, where she meets Santiago Fisterra, a Galician involved in trafficking hashish across the Strait of Gibraltar. When Santiago's partner is captured, it is Teresa who steps in to take his place. Now Teresa has plunged into the dark and ugly world that once claimed Guero's life-- and she's about to get in deeper...

## The Queen of the South Details

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Author : Arturo Pérez-Reverte , Andrew Hurley (translator)

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## From Reader Review The Queen of the South for online ebook

### Ana says

Pablo Escobar who? There's a new boss in town and her name is Teresa Mendoza. Shut up and take my money.

I admit it. ~~I'm attracted to James Valdez and all his bad boy glory.~~

Cartels and cray-cray characters.

Let's see if this is as good as the tv show.

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### Maya B says

This was a good, solid read. It reminded me of the Godfather series that I read years ago and loved. I recommend to any readers that like Mario Puzo. I did have an issue with the way the author changed up the point of view. I would have liked if the whole story was told by Teresa Mendoza (1st person) the entire time I was reading but the author switched it up. He had the reporter (3rd person) talking as well and I had to at times go back to re-read certain parts so I could keep up with who is talking.

I look forward to watching the spanish movie version, as well as the U.S. tv show

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### Catherine says

This story is told in two styles; from an omniscient perspective following the main character, and from the first-person point of view of a journalist researching her story. At first I was quite bored by the latter story. Later on, however, I began to feel like Perez-Reverte was trying to coax me into a state of mind whereby I would begin to use Teresa Mendoza's story as a truer reality. Throughout the book Teresa discovers that through books she can live more fully, and understand her life more by applying stories as filters to her own life. I began to feel that Perez-Reverte was trying to create a mindset so that I would apply Teresa's story as a filter to my own life in order to gain greater understanding from it. Maybe this is too deep, but that's what I've been getting from it. I'll go into greater depth later, but suffice it say I found a lot of truth about humanity in this story. I very much enjoyed it, and will read more by this author.

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## Jose Monarrez says

Uno más para el 2016 reading challenge

Este es un libro que había dejado de lado durante muchos años. Famoso en Sinaloa, México, por tratar el tema del narcotráfico, tema odiado y reverenciado a la mismo tiempo en un país en el cual las contradicciones en nuestras acciones, es el pan nuestro de cada día. Y yo que aún viviendo en una sociedad en la que el narco se vive y siente... No me hacía muy feliz leer un libro que pensé desde siempre que no era más que un elogio a ese estilo de vida.

Lo primero que se debe de saber es que la historia del libro está basada en hechos reales... Si existe un personaje así, pero como toda novela, el autor se toma sus libertades literarias, por lo que no se debe de creer que todo lo que dice, pasó de esa forma. Otra cosa a notarse es que aún cuando si es verdad mucho de lo que dice en el libro, tampoco no es cierto que todo el día estemos metidos en el narco los sinaloenses, razón por la que molesta el libro, ya que dan a entender que todos aquí somos narcos en mayor o menos medida... Lo cual es completamente falso.

El libro cuenta con muchas palabras o frases groseras, pero al ser un reflejo de lo que somos los sinaloenses, hasta diría yo que se quedó corto, ya que eso sí, somos muy "folklóricos" para hablar, por decir lo menos. Es una bocanada fresca el ver personajes de libros que no hablen y "piensen" como intelectuales... Estos personajes son humanos y hablan como el vecino, además son sinaloenses jajaja que puede salir mal.

Por último y eso es algo que no me gusto, es que no deja de dar a entender que ese estilo de vida, el del narco es algo bueno, en un momento hasta hacen referencia que son los "revolucionarios modernos" y por lo tanto merecen lo bueno y malo que les pasa... Lo cual no es más que una gran mentira, por lo que en vez de ayudar, creo que el mensaje es malo en el libro.

Libro fácil de leer y recomendable si quieres conocer más sobre el cruel y difícil estilo de vida del narco en México y el mundo. Me gusto, pero no me gusta la imagen que da de los mexicanos y los sinaloenses en especial al mundo.

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## ???????? says

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## Allison says

This book is a book for history-lovers. Anyone who wants the who/how/where/when/why will love the detail and precision with which every event in this book is told. Unless you truly grew up in the culture about which it is written, and know about drug runs and border crossings and vacuum-packing marijuana in bricks to stow away in speedboats, I would wager that Perez-Reverte could convince any reader that he has done his homework. And if you did grow up in that culture, perhaps that would merely strengthen this book's case, because perhaps you would merely provide validation.

The problem is that writing a good novel isn't just about convincing a reader that you've done your homework. It isn't just including every minute detail to show that you know exactly how an operation is performed. *The Queen of the South* doesn't "show off," exactly, like some books do, but it does include more detail than I, a "what's next!? what's next!?" kind of reader, deem necessary.

For me, all of the details get in the way. Sure, they made the book "authentic," made the characters seem extremely knowledgeable, and helped Teresa grow as her knowledge grew, but as a reader who wanted to remain gripped in suspense, those long passages of who-did-what-where-how took me out of the "rush" of the novel. I often felt as though I were reading a history textbook, when I wanted to be watching an action movie inside my head.

*The Queen of the South* has definite appeal for a certain kind of reader: a patient, painstaking, detail-oriented reader who isn't looking to necessarily be "swept away" and doesn't mind interruptions in the flow of the story. This ability to tolerate interruptions is important because, aside from the frequently interruptive overly-detailed explanations, Perez-Reverte uses a very interruptive structure to tell his story: a seemingly dual point of view, coming firstly from an omniscient third-person narrator following Teresa Mendoza chronologically and secondly from an anonymous first-person journalist situated in "current time." The novel would have flowed much more seamlessly without the "present-day" interruptions of the journalist, who seemed as unnecessary as he was intrusive.

All of this being said, Teresa's story was a gripping one, and one worth being told. Perez-Reverte has a talent for creating mood in a scene while using very little in the way of "literary flourish," and also for maintaining consistently believable, dynamic characters. Teresa's various relationships with men and with her cellmate Patty all strike genuine and complex, even as Teresa herself reflects on them little and tries to block them from her mind.

It will be interesting to see what other work Perez-Reverte will produce after this novel.

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## Werner says

Update, May 28, 2016: I gave this one a second try, after a lapse of some seven years, only because a review of it was needed for another site where the movie and *telenovela* adaptations are going to be reviewed later this year. My first reading had gotten through Chapter 3; I'd quit reading because I didn't like it, but figured that if it got no worse it would be bearable to finish, so fully intended to do so this time. By the time I got into Chapter 7, however, for me the cumulative "Ewww!" factor was too high to continue. I promised a review to the site administrator at the other site, and I'll skim the rest of the text enough to write one (with an explanation of what I did); but it's going back to the started-not-finished shelf again, this time to stay there permanently. [My original comments start below.]

A friend of mine (who's not on Goodreads), who's reading this book, recommended it to me as one I might like. Whether or not I actually would, I don't know --I admire strong heroines, but not villainesses, and it sounds like Perez-Riverte's title character here would be more apt to be the latter. But I told him I'd give it a try sometime later on, so I'll give her the benefit of the doubt in the meantime!

Aug. 24, 2009

Well, I gave this book an honest try; but I'm not going to finish it, and will be putting it back on BookMooch where I got it. It has all the usual characteristics of the contemporary noir school (which effectively reminded me of why I don't like that school in the first place :-): a general tone of moral cynicism, an unremitting emphasis on the sordid and the grungy, exploitative sexual content, and an off-putting plethora of bad language, including the f-word --which is probably highly unrealistic in the mouths of Spanish-speaking characters! While I didn't wish Teresa any ill, and felt sorry for her in much of what she went through, her drug use and her choice of a second drug-running boyfriend, after the first one was killed (the label "learning-disabled" comes to mind --though, granted, we're all slow studies at times, and we all make mistakes) made her hard for me to relate to, as did a certain distancing effect just from the author's self-consciously "literary" style. Perez-Reverte's books have gotten a lot of favorable notice in library circles, so I'm glad to have had the opportunity to investigate his work; but I wouldn't see myself reading any more of it. (Modified March 14, 2012.)

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## Chrissa Vasileiou says

Πάντα θα ευχαριστ? την καλ? μου τ?χη και τη μαμ? μου, που δι?λεξε να μου χαρ?σει αυτ? το βιβλ?ο για την Πρωτοχρονι? του 2010. ?ταν η αφορμ? για να γνωρ?σω ?ναν συγγραφ?α, ο οπο?ος ?μελλε να γ?νει ?νας απ? τους top 5 αγαπημ?νους μου ever.

Η ιστορ?α της Τερ?ζα Μεντ?θα ε?ναι ιδια?τερη. Ε?ναι η ιστορ?α μιας γυνα?κας που ξεκ?νησε απ? τις φτωχογειτονι?ς της Σιναλ?α και κατ?ληξε να γ?νει η βασ?λισσα του εμπορ?ου ναρκωτικ?ν σε 3 ηπε?ρους. Η πολυκ?μαντη ζω? της σημαδε?τηκε απ? απ?λειες και ν?κες, χρ?ματα και α?μα, δ?κρυα και πε?σμα. Δεν ε?ναι αγαπουλ?στικο βιβλ?ο, ε?ναι σκληρ? σε πολλ? σημε?α του - ?χι ?μως β?ναυσο, αυτ? δε θα το ?λεγα. Ε?ναι η εν δυν?μει ιστορ?α ?λων των γυναικ?ν που οι ?ντρες τους ασχολο?νται με τα καρτ?λ των ναρκωτικ?ν, ε?ναι μια μ?χη για επιβ?ωση σε ?ναν ανδροκρατο?μενο κ?σμο. Ε?ναι μια ιστορ?α ωμ? ρεαλιστικ?, που αφυπν?ζει και προκαλε? τ?σο προβληματισμ?, ?σο και θαυμασμ? για την ηρω?δα.. Ε?ναι τ?σο αληθοφαν?ς γραμμ?νη, που για αρκετ? καιρ? μετ? την αν?γνωσ? του επ?μενα να πιστε?ω πως πρ?κειται για μυθιστορηματικ? βιογραφ?α εν?ς αληθιν? προσ?που και ε?χα φ?ει τον κ?σμο για να ανακαλ?ψω ποια ε?ναι αυτ? η Τερ?ζα Μεντ?θα του βιβλ?ου!

## Ninoska Goris says

Español – English

Hace muchos años cuando dieron la novela, una vez a la semana veía algunos capítulos con mi madre. Me gustaba, pero no tanto como para verla regularmente. Siempre he estado orgullosa de no ver novelas, entiendo que en la mayoría de los casos embrutecen a las mujeres, aunque en los últimos años eso ha cambiado un poco con las nuevas temáticas que casi nunca son de la típica mujer pobre que se enamora del hijo de la casa donde trabaja.

Ahora bien, el libro es otra cosa. Esto tiene de todo y nunca deja de ser entretenido. No me aburrí un solo segundo.

Teresa Mendoza Chávez es la novia del narco Raimundo "El Güero" Dávila Parra, piloto, transportista de drogas cuando lo matan y esta tiene que huir de Sinaloa, México para que no la maten también. Son las reglas del narco: nunca se dejan sobrevivientes.

"Sonó el teléfono y supo que la iban a matar".

Llega a España y allí trata de vivir una vida normal, aunque solitaria hasta que conoce a Santiago López Fistera, narco y transportista de drogas también, pero por agua, con quien ella entra a trabajar en ese mundo como su asistente en los viajes en lancha.

Todo va viento en popa hasta que un día les dan caza y Teresa es atrapada. Es enviada a la prisión El Puerto de Santa María por tráfico de drogas y allí conoce a Patricia "Pati" O'Farrell y toda su vida cambia para siempre.

El libro está narrado por la propia Teresa y además por un escritor que está escribiendo un libro de la historia de La reina del Sur. Esto nos da la posibilidad de conocer a todos los muchos personajes que forman parte de esta trama que dura doce años.

No lo dejen de leer.

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Many years ago when the series was on tv, once a week I saw some chapters with my mother. I liked it, but not enough to see it regularly. I've always been proud of not seeing soap operas, I think that in most cases they brutalize women, although in recent years that has changed a bit with the new themes that are almost never the typical poor woman who falls in love with the son of the house where she works.

Now, the book is something else. This has everything and it never stops being entertaining. I did not get bored for a second.

Teresa Mendoza Chávez is the girlfriend of the narco-trafficker Raimundo "El Güero" Dávila Parra, pilot, drug carrier when they kill him and she has to flee from Sinaloa, Mexico so they do not kill her too. These are the rules of the narco: they are never left survivors.

"The phone rang and she knew they were going to kill her."

She arrives in Spain and tries to live a normal life, although lonely until she meets Santiago López Fisterra, drug trafficker and drug dealer too, but for water, with whom she goes to work in that narco world as his assistant in the trips by boat.

Everything goes smoothly until one day they are chased and Teresa is caught. She is sent to El Puerto de Santa María prison for drug trafficking and there she meets Patricia "Pati" O'Farrell and her whole life changes forever.

The book is narrated by Teresa herself and also by a writer who is writing a book on the history of The Queen of the South. This gives us the opportunity to meet all the many characters that are part of this plot that lasts twelve years.

Try to read it. It's amazing.

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### **Pau says**

Gran libro. Gran trabajo de investigación de Reverte. Gran final. Grandes reflexiones. Grandes diálogos. En fin, otra genialidad a la que nos tiene acostumbrados este autor. Hacía tiempo que no disfrutaba tanto de un libro, de sus personajes, su ambientación y su lenguaje. De la trama en sí, aún siendo un tema del que a priori no tenía ni idea. Recomendado para todo aquel que disfrute con novelas de acción con un trasfondo de ideas. Gracias Reverte. Chale.

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### **João Carlos says**

"**La Reina Del Sur**" - série televisiva - versão mexicana

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydrON...>

O escritor espanhol **Arturo Pérez-Reverte** (n. 1951) constrói um espectacular thriller sobre uma personagem feminina – Teresa Mendoza - a “Mexicana”, uma mulher nascida em Culiacán, Sinaloa, enamorada de Guero Dávila, um piloto de aviação, o virtuoso do *Cessna*, o rei da pista pequena, um homem relacionado com o cartel da droga de Juárez.

Com a morte de Guero Dávila, Teresa Mendoza, tem que abandonar a sua cidade natal em busca de segurança e paz, refugindo-se na cidade espanhola de Melilla.

Numa terra desconhecida Teresa Mendoza tenta refazer a sua vida e o amor acontece, desta vez com o galego misterioso Santiago López Fisterra.

**Arturo Pérez-Reverte** “o mestre do *thriller* intelectual” escreve uma obra inesquecível, sobre o negócio internacional de transporte e venda de droga; assim como, um retrato original e ousado de uma mulher analfabeta, solitária, misteriosa e obstinada, mas que domina o raciocínio numérico e possui uma intuição brilhante, capaz de se adaptar às mais variadas circunstâncias, evidenciando o triunfo pessoal - num mundo dominado por homens - através da coragem e de uma vontade indómita e inquebrável.

”**A Rainha do Sul**” tem uma dupla narrativa: uma parte é narrada na primeira pessoa numa crónica jornalística elaborada a partir de entrevistas – por um jornalista de que não sabemos o nome - e outra parte é contada na terceira pessoa, num thriller emocionante, repleto de referências literárias (**Jean Rulfo** através de ”**Pedro Páramo**” é uma delas) e musicais; e com muita tequila; num registo pormenorizado que vai do México ao sul de Espanha, do estreito de Gibraltar a Marrocos; numa obra literária detalhada e minuciosa na

pesquisa, que nos cativa da primeira à última página.

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### Lyubov says

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### Madeline says

I guess I'm glad I read this, if only to satisfy a long-burning curiosity about *The Queen of the South* that's been in the back of my head ever since my mom hid the book from me at age fifteen so I couldn't read the dirty parts. (for the record, Mom, I probably would have been able to handle it)

That said, it could have been a lot cooler than it is. And considering the book is about a woman who goes on the run after being targeted by Mexican hitmen and eventually becomes the most powerful drug lord in the Mediterranean, that's saying a lot. The story itself was really cool, and had a lot of potential - Teresa Mendoza starts out as just some low-level drug runner's girlfriend, but when he gets killed by his employers and they come after her (resulting in the single best opening line of any book, ever: "The telephone rang, and she knew she was going to die") she runs to Spain, gets involved with another smuggler, goes to prison, comes out, and then begins selling and shipping cocaine all over the place. Sex, drugs, and shooting ensues. It's good in a trashy, guilty-pleasure, living-vicariously-through-books kind of way.

My problem is the format of the book - it's partially narrated by a reporter doing a story on Teresa once she's become the so-called Queen of the South, and he butts into the story every few chapters so we can watch him interviewing people Teresa interacted with during her career. They hint at what is about to happen next in the story, and then it happens. As far as I could tell, the reporter served absolutely no purpose as a second narrator and all of his chapters should have just been cut out completely. Also Perez-Reverte is really, really terrible at writing from a female mindset, but this review is already long enough so I won't bother getting into that rant.

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### Kim Kaso says

This is a fascinating and beautifully written book about so many things. On the surface, it is the tale of the unlikely rise of a young girl through the world of the drug trade, her survival and success. But, as in any book by Pérez-Reverte, it is meticulously researched and crafted, and gives the reader layer upon layer. Teresa Mendoza is a superb character, and the book uses everything from *The Count of Monte Cristo* to the

narco corridos to illustrate both her examined and unexamined life.

I came to this book because of the excellent series on the USA Network, but after some initial similarities, the 2 stories went off in different directions. The one on tv decided to stay in the US & Mexico, while the original story moved to Spain and Morocco, which I thoroughly enjoyed...it added a fish out of water element and a homesickness to Teresa's character.

This book is a lovely example of how a great story can be told with the unlikeliest of elements, this book transcends genre. It is engaging & fascinating, & I found myself following each twist and turn of Teresa's rise, caring deeply for her complex character. Very highly recommended.

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## **will says**

I'm on holiday - hurrah! This means it is time to turn my attention to the (very important) task of learning Spanish. I made two "New Year's Resolutions". One was to learn some Spanish before the year was out, the other was to keep a running list of the books I have read on this here blog. So, time to work on one of my resolutions.

Instead of learning Spanish I have been reading! The Queen of the South by Arturo Perez-Reverte is the latest book that I have finished. The best way to describe it is "a page turner". On the opening page the heroine, Teresa Mendoza, receives a call on a phone, a phone that she has been told that: "If it rings start running. And don't stop running. Ever." The book covers the next twelve years of her life as she flees Mexico, ends up in Africa, spends time in jail, moves to Spain and then finally returns home.

It is really difficult to explain how much I liked this book. It's strange, I am sat here at the computer, reading as I type and I realise that I am being slightly "flat" in my description - which isn't fair to the book because it is a fast-paced, thrilling ride. Teresa starts the book as a girlfriend of a drug runner and ends up building a huge drug-running empire. The book is written in a very clever way, the author acts as an investigative journalist, writing the "biography" of "The Queen of the South" (as Mendoza becomes known). However, the book is written in such a way that at the end I googled Teresa Mendoza because I really, really thought she was a real person. The book includes many situations, many people that have happened or existed. And by the end of the book I had become so involved with the main character that I wanted her to be real. I wanted her to find the peace that she deserved. And yes, I realise that wanting a major drug runner to escape and live in peace is not the way I normally feel but the author makes you become invested in the characters. Hell, by the end of the book I had fallen in love with most of the drug runners and dealers and actually hated the authorities and their "witch hunts".

The other wonderful thing about this book was it gave me an insight into how Mexicans think and behave. Obviously I live with one (a Mexican that is) and have a small handle on her behaviour patterns but it was fascinating to discover that instead of Maria being a totally unique individual, she is also a product of her country. There was a lot of familiarity, for me, in the book. Place names, Spanish/Mexican expressions, a general understanding of "that's the way they think" and a total recognition of "that's the way they dress and wear their hair".

I loved this book. Because of the world I now occupy, drugs (running and dealing) are part of my life background - not because I am involved but because I come across it most every day, it exists in my life - and the history of drug cartels is something that I have become interested in. The fact that my nickname at

Maria's office is that of a famous drug dealer might have something to do with my fascination. The fact that three times a week I cross the border knowing that as I do, there is a good chance that right next to me is someone smuggling drugs interests me.

This review probably doesn't do the book justice. I really enjoyed it, would recommend it.

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## Ernesto says

*"De pronto comprendió que, durante aquél larguísimo viaje de ida y vuelta, sólo había adquirido tres certezas sobre la vida y los seres humanos: que matan, recuerdan y mueren"*

La Historia de *Camelia la Tejana*, la protagonista de aquel corrido norteño, se cristaliza en una novela apasionante de principio a fin, con el nombre de Teresa Mendoza, una morra de Sinaloa que debe escapar después de que su novio, un narcotraficante, es asesinado por un ajuste de cuentas. A partir de ahí, la vertiginosa historia de esta mujer te deja sin respirar. Especialmente, en mi caso, las últimas setenta páginas que, como en los mejores libros, no pude soltar ni para respirar.

De entre todas las cosas que me han gustado tanto de este libro, rescato dos que deben ser decisivas para que cualquiera que lea estas líneas salga corriendo a buscar el libro:

1. Creo que no puede haber satisfacción más grande para un escritor de ficción, que el que sus lectores se pregunten a lo largo de toda la historia, una y otra vez, si es o no verdad lo que está leyendo. Yo tuve que contener mis impulsos para aventarme a Google e investigar qué tanto de lo que leía era cierto.
2. Un libro que al final te deja con la (falsa) sensación de ser un experto en el tema de lo que leíste, es sin duda un libro muy bien escrito.

No diré más, tan solo que las últimas setenta página no las puedes dejar de lado, casi que ni para respirar.

Es indispensable para cualquier biblioteca.

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## Kelly says

There are three books to be found within this book, three major storylines to follow. One is mostly well done, one is middling, but has issues, one is rather ridiculous, occasionally mildly offensive, and out of place.

The first, which I found mostly well done, is Perez-Reverte's homage to the high adventure stories of the 19th century, specifically his modern update of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The Count is remade into a Mexican woman of the 21st century, who is tied to the Mexican drug cartels through her drug running pilot boyfriend. She is set on the run for a crime she did not commit, and runs off to Spain, and we watch the relative naïf follow the torturous path of Dantes, a path that is perhaps even more painful than his. It is a clever idea to cast the Count as a woman- it adds to the tale many obstacles and possibilities of obstacles that Edmund Dantes never had to face, and it complicates the progression of our main character to the triumphant protagonist that we all know is coming from the layout of the plot. I found the adventure story aspect of the novel all excellently done- there are several high speed boat chases that have the pages turning at a velocity

to match the engines of the boats, there are unexpected shoot outs, there are moments with only one way out, gambles that hold the fate the characters in the palm of their hand to heart pounding effect. Perez-Reverte has always been able to swashbuckle his way into my affections, and this piece was no exception. However. And this is a rather annoying however- I do wish that he hadn't felt the need to constantly shove in our faces the fact that this was a version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He had characters refer to each other as their counterparts in the book. Really? You couldn't trust us to figure that one out, Arturo? Come on, man. I promise you, we're smart enough for that. The book becomes a major motif, and a jumping off point for the characters to make fun of each other for how much they are into it and how delusional that is. It was just a little too self-involved for me. It reads more like fan-fiction sometimes. It's lovely to see how giddy he is about Dumas' tale, and its life changing powers, but I wish he would just let us see it for ourselves rather than constantly insisting upon the truth of it and insisting that his characters enact his own fascination with it. It feels artificial, and sometimes a bit insulting. We get it. I promise.

The second story contained within the book (and I should probably say that there are spoilers from here on out) is the story of the transformation of a woman. Teresa begins the book a girl totally dependent upon the whims of others- especially her "narco," boyfriend, Guero. She sits at home and waits for him, takes care of him, puts him first in every way. She doesn't know much about his business, and she doesn't ask. When she is forced to go on the run after Guero is killed by his bosses for committing several indiscretions, she has to slowly learn how to become independent. Perez-Reverte is truly fascinated by the thought of a truly independent woman, you can tell. I've said time and again that he has a dark lady obsession- this book is entirely about that, in fact (though at least we get to see the world from her perspective, and see why she is mysterious), but I think this is really what the obsession is. He worships the very idea of it, though he doesn't seem to quite believe that it can be true, or that women can completely separate from what he clearly believes are their natural womanly urges, which turned out to be a problem. While she was learning to rely on herself, use her natural gifts (she's gifted with a head for numbers, for instance) and her intelligence and rely on and trust no one, Perez-Reverte feels the need to frame it in terms of gender. By the end of the novel, she has assumed the role of her narco boyfriend in her relationship with everyone she knows, and coldly addresses her business partner (who is in love with her) as a "nagging wife," who believes "her husband works too much and neglects her." He also has problems writing believably inside the head of a woman, sometimes laughably so. He frequently has Teresa feel things, "in her womb," when he wants to emphasize that it is a real feeling. No, for reals. 'Cause apparently that's what all we women are, one big vibrating womb. However, that all said, I did like the attempt at rendering a woman who truly does not need anyone, and even when betrayed by people she trusts, does not descend into a weeping mess, but handles the situation. She gets herself out of the last, tense corners of the novel without one single man left to help her in any way. I really, really appreciated that. So, if the development was uneven and somewhat unbelievable, I at least was with him on his goal, and the last 100 pages of her development.

The third thing going on here, that was absolutely ridiculous, is Perez-Reverte's various personal opinions and feelings being put on display. I found it rather embarrassing, pedantic, and offensive, by turns. First of all, let's just note that there's a lot of weird attitudes towards ethnicity in this book. Yes, part of it is that he's writing about a world where people aren't exactly PC, but some of it comes from the omniscient narrator point of view (part of the story is told by a journalist trying to write a book about Teresa, part is told from her point of view). There's a really weird, somewhat twisted relationship with Mexico in the book. Perez-Reverte seems to be arguing for the fact that Spaniards shouldn't find their culture "superior" to Mexico in any way because Spain has just as many problems (which I didn't even know was a comparison that happened but okay). And yet, at the same time, he seems to be weirdly fetishizing, in a conflicted 19th century colonialist way, the Mexican ethnicity. At many points during the book characters tell Teresa that she looks best with her hair pulled back tightly and parted down the middle, "in the style of a Mexican peasant." Everyone who sees her is five times more attracted to her when she presents herself in as "Mayan" or "Indian" a way as possible (those are the descriptors used). And yet, she ends up being dressed up makeover style in a modern, more discreet European way. Everyone, including Teresa, looks down on the "garish" way that Mexican drug cartel people dress and live... and yet. The other Mexican character who is held up as an example refuses to

let go of his "garish" ways, and listens to his "corridos" (songs about drug cartels) loudly and often. They are quoted frequently throughout the novel, seemingly as examples of poetry. It's this weird mixture of idealization and looking down his nose that I can't quite figure out. It just popped up uncomfortably often and I didn't quite get why that was there.

Anyway, this has likely gone on for long enough, but the point is- its a lovely adventure novel, and a good "coming of age," tale in its way, but not without a good deal of complication. This is my least favorite of his books, though it is still not bad or anything. Just not representative of what he is capable of. Perez-Reverte tends to do better with historical settings, or characters who look back towards the past. This looks back... but still in a modern setting. And his way of looking at the world, well, it's just sometimes a little jarringly old fashioned for the modern world.

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## Daren says

There are a lot of reviews available here which outline the plot, so I won't attempt to do so here, other than to say: cocaine smuggling, logistics, deals and double crossings, Moroccan hashish, fast boats, cargo ships, dirty politics, shootouts, Mexican drug cartels, the Colombians, indiscretions and revenge. Teresa Mendoza is our lead character. She starts off as a simple narco's *morra*, quiet and unassuming. Her boyfriend is murdered, and she is on the run.

It is a high speed read, almost a guilty pleasure read for me, and it was enjoyable - for the most part. There was the narration style, which was fairly annoying - half narrated by a reporter who interviews various people throughout the book. His sections set up the following sections where the action is explained from Teresa's point of view.

The story rolls out in various stages, and gathers momentum until the very end, where a conclusion is met. There are other things going on - a parallel to *the Count of Monte Christo*, which admittedly I have not read and therefore could not track, there is the Mexican cartels unwritten rules, there is the international smuggling, the deals the doublecrossing.

I haven't read other books by Arturo Pérez-Reverte, and I may pick up another if the opportunity arises, as I did enjoy this as a fictional romp, with some basis for reality, in the drug underworld.

4 stars.

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