Sánchez
Author:
Esther García LLovet
Reader:
Tim Gutteridge

Sánchez (Sánchez)

Plot: Two former lovers steal a greyhound from an acquaintance and try to sell it.

Characters: The narrator, Nikki, and her ex-boyfriend, the eponymous Sánchez. A supporting role is played by the enigmatic Bertrán.

Setting: the outskirts of Madrid, a featureless landscape bisected by the M30, the radial motorway that encircles the Spanish capital, with occasional forays into the dormitory towns beyond or the city centre.

Style: The prose is spare, with economical descriptions of places and events punctuated by laconic dialogue.

These may not sound like particularly promising ingredients, but Esther García Llovet's Sánchez is far greater than the sum of its parts: it's a short book but not an insubstantial one. But it is not just the synergy between the components of plot, character, setting and style that make Sánchez such a satisfying read. It is, also, the quality of those components and, in particular, the skilful way that García Llovet makes use of silence and omission, so that what is left unsaid is at least as important as what is clearly stated.

And the style. There's nothing flashy about it, no verbal pyrotechnics, no ostentatiously innovative use of language. Just carefully chosen words, a sense of voice and rhythm, quietly drawing attention to what lies beyond the text itself…

Sánchez strikes me as an ideal candidate for translation. The author has a really distinctive voice, and the text is well written at every level – style, characterisation, plot, structure. The result is a short novel that I can imagine English-language readers really enjoying, because it is refreshingly different (the style and the setting, in particular) while also providing plenty of points of contact: the characters, the plot and the portrayal of a quiet struggle for survival in the post-crash world.

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