Artes subversivas para cultivar jardines
Author:
Moure, Teresa
Reader:
Lindsey Ford

Artes subversivas para cultivar jardines (originally published in Galician as A Intervencion, and translated by the author herself) is the story of five disparate characters who come together to create an unusual work of art. The novel is narrated by each of the five in turn, in a skilful display of narrative variety.

The overarching story is that of the Balsiero family. Leandro Balsiero once cultivated a great and beautiful garden, which was the envy and fascination of all his neighbours. Years later, his daughter and grandson, along with three others, decide to recreate this garden as an art project. They move to a rented house in eastern Galicia to plant the garden, during which time relationships deepen and develop between the five. With the help of the neighbours whose trust they've gained, they transplant this garden to an abandoned mine on a mountainside. Their task completed, though with less media attention than hoped, the five are left wondering what's next…

Moure has a great skill for creating characters, carefully imbuing each narrative with its own distinctive voice. The way in which the story is told is compelling, with details gradually being unveiled over time in a Rashomon-esuqe fashion. From the main characters, to the supporting cast of gossipy neighbours and distant relatives, these are unreliable narrators at their most unreliable. The use of multiple voices also allows for a number of tonal differences throughout the novel to shine through. The story of Leandro Balsiero the elder, as told by Leandro the younger and his interviews with neighbours, is filled with a gently comic tone, at times even magical realist…

… For a novel that is so easy to read, with such engaging and often charming characters, it contains a deceptive number of deeper themes…

… Moure's writing style is clear, compelling, and very easy to read. She moves deftly between the characters' voices, and the comic and darker elements of the novel. Moure's is a voice that deserves to be heard in the English-speaking world, and this delightful and thought-provoking novel may be the perfect entry point.

From the reader´s report by .