

THE BODECIA BOOK CLUB REVIEW

The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo By Stieg Larsson

The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo is the first of Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy. It is a violent dark thriller that focuses on a complex financial fraud and a powerful family's sinister secret. It starts slowly, with details of how a Swedish company is ripping off government funding to set up a fake business in Russia. The novel picks up speed when it gets into the complexities of the wealthy Vanger family's past. Forty years earlier, Harriet Vanger disappeared off the family's private island. Nobody saw her leave, there was no sign of her disappearance and no corpse. Her uncle, however, is convinced that a family member murdered her.

A journalist, Blomqvist, in disgrace after losing a libel case arising from his reporting of the financial scandal, takes on the investigation of the woman's disappearance. Almost immediately, he sees a link with a number of other murders taking place around the same time. Then he hooks up with the methodical tattooed girl - a very insular punk hacker Lisbeth Salander, who has her life very organised and has control of things she does. They form a bond as everyone they meet is against them and things go wrong for Lisbeth when things are put outside her control. In the end, the novel becomes, among many other things, something of a tender love story, which leaves Lisbeth's very fragile demeanor not immune to getting hurt.

Larsson's trilogy was published to great acclaim between 2005 and 2007, after his death. The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo, which original title was "Men Who Hate Women" won the prestigious Glass Key for the best Nordic crime novel of 2005. The Girl Who Played With Fire (2006) won a Swedish Academy for Detective Novels award. The third book The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets Nest, original title "Castle in the Sky That Was Blasted Apart" came out in 2007. When Larsson started writing the Millennium series, he laid an outline of a total of ten books. Before his death in November 2004, he had finished the first three books and was well underway with the fourth. In an email written to a friend a month before his death, Stieg says that he has finished about half of the fourth book. Stieg says that he has written the beginning and the end, but that the middle part is not finished yet. Many readers have asked if Eva Gabrielsson, Stieg's life companion, could finish the fourth book, as she was deeply involved in the writing while Stieg was still alive. Eva herself is very positive, however, Swedish jurisdiction obstructs such a solution. Which I am sure will disappoint a lot of readers who have finished reading the trilogy feeling that there are a lot of unanswered questions and things left unfinished. Let's hope that the fourth book, draft title "God's Revenge" is finally able to get published.

This is a striking novel, full of passion, an evocative sense of place and subtle insights into vile, corrupt minds.

"18% of the women in Sweden have at one time been threatened by a man."

"46% of women in Sweden have been subjected to violence by a man."

"13% of the women in Sweden have been subjected to aggravated sexual assault outside of a sexual relationship."

"92% of women in Sweden who have been subjected to sexual assault have not reported the most recent violent incident to the police."

Each of these statistics are placed at the start of sections within the book, it is with these statistics that the reader is exposed to Stieg's purpose, exposing the continuum and depth of historical male violence, abuse and oppression, both physical and psychological, of women. We all found the book very hard to get into, there are quite a few lead characters that are called by difference names, I think this may have something to do with the translation of the book. Once you have read 100 pages the book starts getting easier and you will not be able to put it down! It's sad that a potentially great crime-writing career was ended almost before it began, but at least readers can enjoy this and look forward to the succeeding two novels in the trilogy.

We gave The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo **8 ½ / 10** (Now top of our reading list!)

The book we are now reading is **Change in Altitude by Anita Shreve**

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