



The Silk Road

Kathryn Davis

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A spellbinding novel about transience and mortality, by one of the most original voices in American literature

The Silk Road begins on a mat in yoga class, deep within a labyrinth on a settlement somewhere in the icy north, under the canny guidance of Jee Moon. When someone fails to arise from corpse pose, the Astronomer, the Archivist, the Botanist, the Keeper, the Topologist, the Geographer, the Iceman, and the Cook remember the paths that brought them there—paths on which they still seem to be traveling.

The Silk Road also begins in rivalrous skirmishing for favor, in the protected Eden of childhood, and it ends in the harrowing democracy of mortality, in sickness and loss and death. Kathryn Davis's sleight of hand brings the past, present, and future forward into brilliant coexistence; in an endlessly shifting landscape, her characters make their way through ruptures, grief, and apocalypse, from existence to nonexistence, from embodiment to pure spirit.

Since the beginning of her extraordinary career, Davis has been fascinated by journeys. Her books have been shaped around road trips, walking tours, hegras, exiles: and now, in this triumphant novel, a pilgrimage. *The Silk Road* is her most explicitly allegorical novel and also her most profound vehicle; supple and mesmerizing, the journey here is not undertaken by a single protagonist but by a community of separate souls—a family, a yoga class, a generation. Its revelations are ravishing and desolating.

The Silk Road Details

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Author : Kathryn Davis

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From Reader Review The Silk Road for online ebook

Angelika says

More dreamlike than narrative and lacking cohesiveness.

Matthew Holley says

Hmm no. This kind of book is not for me. It seems experimental, with no traditional narrative, and I'm sure there's a lot of symbolic and philosophical content within it that I did not recognize nor am I interested in doing so. Whatever this book is ("a novel"? Really?) it's not the reason that I read books.

HOWEVER, I gave it 2 stars because despite the confusion and despite the frustration that I experienced reading this book, there was still something about the writing, about the language, that was attractive and lovely and kept my eyes moving over the words.

David says

This is impressively done, but it certainly is a bit discombobulating as well. I'm sure I only got a portion of it. Perhaps a bit too conceptual for me to follow, I still enjoyed reading.

Meike says

In her experimental novel, Davis creates a highly associative narrative, full of characters and events charged with ambiguous meanings - there seems to be no limit to the possibilities a reader has to connect the dots. When eight siblings, enigmatically called the Astronomer, the Archivist, the Botanist, the Keeper, the Topologist, the Geographer, the Iceman, and the Cook are doing corpse pose at the end of a yoga class below an icy landscape (no, I am not kidding you), one of them fails to arise, and the others consequently embark on a journey in order to, well, remember her? Find her? Honor the past? Make sense of it all?

This is no traditional narrative, and the set-up itself shouldn't be taken literally, I'd suggest: We are encountering archetypes who in their travels and in small vignettes of dialogue, sometimes only a few sentences long, contemplate the human condition as such. The "labyrinth", the "mother", the "teacher" - all of them are chiffres, all places are just scenarios, all events are allegories. This author does not tell a story, she employs language to play with layers of meaning, obviously drawing from yoga philosophy and "Bardo Thodol". If you like enigmatic writing, this book is for you. Unfortunately, this kind of meandering style drives me nuts!

Don't get me wrong, I like Tibetan philosophy and I love yoga, but this language experiment did not manage to captivate me because to me, it didn't feel profound - probably because the level of ambiguity was just too high for my taste. If you can see almost anything in a book, you will find nothing - at least this reader didn't. I am curious whether we'll see Davis on some of next year's prize lists for experimental fiction.

Hannah Bishop says

I like experimental and abstract, but this just didn't seem cohesive. I was constantly wondering if I should continue or stop reading, but I insisted on giving it a chance in the hopes something would click. Having finished, that did not happen. I'm sure with a lot of work you could make sense of it, but I didn't think it was worth it.

Trudie says

I read the first 40 pages of this slim book twice. While it did become somewhat more penetrable the second time around, it shall remain "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma" and not one that has made me curious enough to continue on in this state of confusion for 100 or so more pages.

Throw the poor reader a lifeline Ms Davis, sexy moss is just not enough.

Susan Ritz says

Kathryn Davis is one of those authors who takes me completely out of myself and into a parallel world where time is fluid, magic abounds and characters are mercurial. The Silk Road is a book that feels like a marvelous dream, taking the reader from a frozen land of future, to the childhood neighborhood of the past, to a walking tour through the present. Everything feels Topsy-turulent, hard to hang on to, but in a way that compelled me deeper and deeper into the dream. The characters are archetypal, unnamed, slowly distinguishing themselves as the book travels back and forth through time. Davis reveals their secrets slowly. As soon as I finished The Silk Road, I knew it was a book I will return to again when the weight of my world is too much and I want to be swept away into this magical space once more.

Luke Bjorge says

Annoying. Glad it was so short. Abstract to the point of being unreadable. Found myself zoning out like I was at a particularly boring lecture. Wouldn't recommend to anyone ever.

Jennifer Ochoa says

DNF. Got over halfway through and realized I was wasting my time. A review mentioned it putting the reader into a kind of fugue state and if you enjoy that kind of thing, you might like this book. You will have no clue what this story is about, when it is, where it is, what the plot is (is there one?). I prefer my fugue states to involve not thinking so hard. It's why I tend to avoid poetry in my free time.

Tom says

There is not much to be said about this book. Only thing I can think of, wasn't worth my time one bit. The characters were so flat it was unbelievable and let I kept going with this book based on its length but I'm glad I checked this out of the library first instead of buying it.

For some people this book might be enjoyable and the concept of the story is very interesting. Unfortunately, the execution was done poorly.

Genevieve Taylor says

Past, present, and future blend in this literary science-fiction. An allegory novel that evokes the Canterbury Tales, the book unfolds in the stories told by the occupants of a seemingly post-apocalyptic shelter. Reality and memory weave in and out as each resident recounts the journey that led them here, and their experiences of the present intertwine. The story comes together like a tapestry, woven of many different pieces. One of those books that should be read and read again, and each reading will reveal new gems of interpretation and nuance.

cardulelia carduelis says

What in the *actual. hell.* did I just read?

Alright so I've done something with this book that I would never normally do: reread it immediately upon finishing. I had to because I've never been so uncertain about plot in something that is this clearly written. The Silk Road is a very strange beast. Each sentence is incredibly rendered with needle-tip precision but put each one together and things quickly get... weird.

Here's what it's like: an off-beat alt-pop song that's been glitched the shit out of by a twitchy producer. So what is it about? Well, to start, it's sort of an atmospheric travelogue, centered around individual moments, with one of the several characters encountering something odd in an increasingly unfamiliar landscape. And many of these episodes are from their childhood so in many ways it reminded me of The Waves.

But it's not some ethereal meditation, because there's also a bonkers exodus to.. somewhere.. from something I don't want to spoil? It's entirely possible that is a surreal re-telling of something that I'm missing the cues for and yet it's so enjoyable standalone.

File this one under: the less you know the better.

I cannot wait for this to come out in 2019 (this was an ARC from Indiespensable) because I want to talk about it with everyone and I have so many questions (spoiled, below). If you read this review and you have answers to these questions, *please* let me know what you think. Because perhaps Davis just wove some writing magic on me and this is all a bunch of pretentious nonsense. But I have a feeling it might be the most brilliant thing I read this year.

And I want to read it again because I'm sure I missed things the second time around too. If that's not an endorsement, I don't know what is.

Questions:

(view spoiler)

