



## Almost Never

*Daniel Sada , Katherine Silver (Translator)*

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**"Of my generation I most admire Daniel Sada, whose writing project seems to me the most daring." - Roberto Bolaño**

This Rabelaisian tale of lust and longing in the drier precincts of postwar Mexico introduces one of Latin America's most admired writers to the English-speaking world.

Demetrio Sordo is an agronomist who passes his days in a dull but remunerative job at a ranch near Oaxaca. It is 1945, World War II has just ended, but those bloody events have had no impact on a country that is only on the cusp of industrializing. One day, more bored than usual, Demetrio visits a bordello in search of a libidinous solution to his malaise. There he begins an all-consuming and, all things considered, perfectly satisfying relationship with a prostitute named Mireya.

A letter from his mother interrupts Demetrio's debauched idyll: she asks him to return home to northern Mexico to accompany her to a wedding in a small town on the edge of the desert. Much to his mother's delight, he meets the beautiful and virginal Renata and quickly falls in love—a most proper kind of love.

Back in Oaxaca, Demetrio is torn, the poor cad. Naturally he tries to maintain both relationships, continuing to frolic with Mireya and beginning a chaste correspondence with Renata. But Mireya has problems of her own—boredom is not among them—and concocts a story that she hopes will help her escape from the bordello and compel Demetrio to marry her. Almost Never is a brilliant send-up of Latin American machismo that also evokes a Mexico on the verge of dramatic change.

## Almost Never Details

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## From Reader Review Almost Never for online ebook

### João Reis says

#### ¡Caray!

Ao ver a classificação deste livro no Goodreads, constato uma vez mais que nem sempre (ou raras vezes) se premeia a qualidade literária nesta plataforma. Este livro é, de facto, excelente e um dos melhores que li este ano.

Trata-se de um romance com um estilo muito próprio, com uma narrativa concentrada no banal, mas que nunca cai no exercício fútil de muita da pós-modernidade. Um livro cheio de humor, por vezes cínico (que muito me agrada) - com algumas cenas hilariantes -, e de sexo, no qual seguimos as andanças do agrônomo Demetrio, homem perdido entre o amor convencional e puritano e o recurso ao sexo pago, no México rural dos anos 40. Uma visão cínica e nada romântica do amor e do sexo. O estilo barroco e experimental e a linguagem rica podem afastar muitos leitores, mas, após o impacto das primeiras páginas, revela-se um livro de leitura torrencial, e só demorei tanto tempo a lê-lo por falta de disponibilidade.

Este romance venceu o prémio Herralde, prémio espanhol que não tem equivalente em Portugal no que concerne à qualidade literária das obras que premeia. Um livro que dificilmente será traduzido para Português de Portugal, e que decerto teria pouco sucesso no nosso país, tão relutante em aceitar humor e sexo - que Sada usa em abundância - na chamada literatura «séria».

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### Eric Uribares says

Pinche Sada siempre se me complica. Tan barroco y a la vez tan rítmico. Pero se agradece y mucho, la batalla constante por reinventarse y tener un estilo propio, casi único.

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### Portia Renee Robillard says

Reading Sada's prose is like eavesdropping on someone's train of thought. His style of writing is unique and masterfully executed. Brimming with humor, (I found myself laughing out loud on several occasions), we follow Demetrio as he bumbles his way through a series of poor choices and missteps while struggling to ally his lascivious nature with a path worthy of respectable society. Almost Never is currently Sada's only work translated into English, a real shame, as I would love to read more from him.

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### Marge says

I read this because of the rave reviews, but I had the feeling much was lost in translation. I know Sada is viewed as a major writer in Spanish, even in Spain, but since I read the novel (his only one translated into English), in English, I am not sure I got to see his use of language; in fact, I am sure I didn't. So, what else was here for me? A wild tale of the virgin, the whore, the mother, and for added spice, the aunt, in dusty, pre-road Mexico. I definitely enjoyed reading it, page by page, and lots of it was very funny, particularly the scenes of the drawn out courtship of the virgin, but I just kept thinking I must be missing a lot here. It felt like an extended hyperbolic joke, one I sort of got, but thought maybe there was a shadow story under the

joke, which I wasn't getting. Still, I'm glad I read it, even just to see something by a writer whom Roberto Bolano is quoted as having called "the most daring" of his generation. I hope more of Sada's work is translated, because this does not seem to be the novel to which Bolano was referring, especially considering his own "Savage Detectives."

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### **Míkel Deltoya says**

Mi libro favorito, ever.

Un cocktail maximalista, con un personaje monótono, común, conforme, y descarado.

Lean a Sada, es uno de los más grandes autores de nuestra lengua, con un estilo único y una voz narrativa endémica.

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### **John says**

The word 'baroque' has been batted around to describe *Almost Never*, I might suggest 'picaresque' as an alternative or perhaps a complement. Any how, Sada's novel is unlike anything 20th century modernism or reductionism managed to produce. It owes more to Moliere than Joyce. But throughout, Sada broadcasts his own subtle form of genius; a razing of standards and markers of the literary novel. This book is too playful, too fond of words that break the taboo of sounding artful and sincere. Sada doesn't worry about sincerity, since this is just a story afterall, and Demetrio, our protagonist, certainly has no use for it either. Sada lets us see through all his narration just as we can see through all the pomp of the characters within.

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### **Mauricio says**

Con un estilo muy particular de escritura Daniel Sada cuenta una historia en 4 actos en la provincia mexicana de los años 40s.

La escritura me hizo reflexionar en algo que a había notado pero no considerado con calma, esto es cómo al leer un libro escrito con un estilo diferente a lo que estamos acostumbrados a leer éste es muy notorio al principio de la lectura pero uno se va acostumbrando a él de tal manera que al final es prácticamente transparente. Alguna vez pensé que había casos en que los autores dejaban de utilizar su estilo peculiar según avanzaba la lectura pero la lectura de "Casi Nunca" me comprueba que ese no es el caso sino que el lector se acostumbra al estilo.

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### **Sebastian Uribe says**

NOVELAZA. Daniel Sada era un tremendo escritor, único en su clase. Lo seguiré leyendo sin duda.

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## **Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly says**

Taking off from the epigraph of this book I had the following conversation in Emir Never's non-review here at goodreads:

"Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly: 'Of my generation I most admire Daniel Sada, whose writing project seems to me the most daring.' —Roberto Bolaño

"In a Playboy interview it went like this:

"Playboy: What Mexican writer do you deeply admire?

"Bolano: Of my generation I admire Sada, whose goals seem the most daring to me...

"Any idea what this "writing project" or "goals" was/were?

"Emir Never: I don't have any idea."

I asked the question before he (Emir Never) lent me his copy of this book, excitingly promising that I would SURELY enjoy it.

He was right. I not only enjoyed it, I ADORED the work and its author. This is a masterpiece of breathtaking metaphors that only gives the reader an occasional rest, the striptease going on not in mere sentences, or paragraphs, but in pages upon pages that seem inexhaustible.

And they all revolve around Emir Never's favorite activity--sex.

So what was Daniel Sada up to? Even after Emir Never had read the book he remained clueless. He probably thought the it was sex Sada was trying to revolutionize, as CASI NUNCA (the novel's original title) almost has sex in every page. Good thing Emir Never had me read this. Otherwise he would have forever been in limbo. Almost Never, Emir Never!

Now I loudly take note: in all other works of fiction that I have read there is a clear dichotomy between the reader and the writer (or the work's fictive narrator, as the case may be). But here Sada seemed to have succeeded in erasing this by distancing himself from his character (a novel technique); by suggesting, and not merely telling (clever, clever!); and by offering possibilities and not just a fixed plot (what would you like to happen, or to have happened?).

Demetrio in a menage-a-trois with the two whores Cirila and Begona; Demetrio and Renata during their first night as husband and wife; Demetrio in reverie, comparing his past sex (and the sex he misses) with his favorite whore Mireya with his future sex with the chaste Mireya--literary events by themselves, among the

many here, which I shall privately celebrate for as long as I have eyes that can read.

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## jeremy says

perhaps like roberto bolaño before him, daniel sada may well be on his way to achieving posthumous fame amongst english-language readers of literary fiction in translation. *almost never (casi nunca)*, the first of the late mexican writer's books to be translated into english, was awarded the prestigious herralde prize in 2008. sada's work has attracted both critical and popular acclaim, culminating in his receiving mexico's national prize for arts and sciences mere hours before he passed away last november. while apparently not even his best work (or even all that indicative of his supposedly immense literary talents), *almost never* is a rollicking, entertaining, and unrestrained novel.

sex-obsessed, sex-possessed, sex-frenzied, hyper-sexed demetrio sorto, *almost never*'s young agronomist protagonist, is a salacious, libidinous character forever in pursuit of the old "in. out." set throughout mexico over a number of years in the late 1940s, sada's rousing novel is replete with lively, colorful characters. demetrio falls in love with two women: mireya, a sassy, sensual prostitute, and renata, a more proper, reserved young woman from a traditional family. despite his unyielding prurience, demetrio must decide for himself which of these women he can most likely build a future with. *almost never* may well feature one of the longest courtships to be found in modern fiction.

sada's novel takes aim at mexican machismo, yet does so with voluptuous humor and ample playfulness. *almost never* offers an entertaining enough tale, but it is sada's singular style that is the star of this story. staccato phrasings, frisky language, abundant alliteration, witty asides, and an often jocular narration meld to form a most unique technique. sada employs colons as liberally as the great saramago did commas, and the effect relays a charming eagerness or alacrity on the part of the narrator.

with another nine novels to his name, including the apparently-stunning masterpiece *because it seems to be a lie, the truth is never known (porque parece mentira la verdad nunca se sabe)*, as well as several collections of short stories and poems, it is likely that english-speaking readers will have many sada translations to look forward to. with but a single work already rendered from the spanish (and described as his most accessible, at that), it is hard to form a true conception of this heralded mexican author. given the consistent acclaim from the likes of bolaño, carlos fuentes, and many others, however, as well as the prowess on display throughout *almost never*, it is of little wonder that daniel sada was regarded as one of the most important spanish-language writers of his generation.

*separation. choice. the rest of the day mother and son exchanged nary a word. demetrio took a stroll around parras. he needed to feel alone in order to think things backward and forward. the bad part of that tree-lined town was the paucity of restaurants and cafés, and not a single spot that was even remotely depraved; rather, the tacit aspect of the tranquility: more sacred relief than you could shake a stick at: three small plazas with cute benches and well-scrubbed kiosks. streets made for the most primary of pleasures. sights and sounds like extra decorations that made (and make) the seeing and the feeling seem haggard. nevertheless, to stroll without faith, take a seat in some spot, and slowly slowly convince himself that this was not for him, that such a small-minded world would ultimately fill him with supreme disgust; it would be like consciously shrinking himself in order to quickly attain the philosophical outlook of an old geezer; it was to remain uncontaminated, at least not infected, by the unknown, or to cling to a few fixed ideas that had to be neutralized with neutral ingredients, never anything perturbing;*

*it was the nonemancipation and the nonaudacity and, most of all, the senility of it all, of his soul, for example. perhaps a fettered spirit. a young spirit whose flight had reached no higher than a hummingbird's: to wit: to peck only at the known, at what was most obvious, and from there thoughts that zigzag toward the margins, to find therein more excitement: a desire that must not be, how could it be, and till when. demetrio experienced more excitement on his train ride to sacramento. he couldn't, however, escape the rigid circle he had drawn for himself, unintentionally, in which, somehow or other, he now found himself trapped. trapped. never!*

\*translated from the spanish by katherine silver (castellanos moya, aira, martín adán)

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### **Chad Post says**

I really like this book--apparently, a lot more than most of the other GR reviewers (so far). Rather than write a normal review of this here--especially since I'm planning on writing a long review for Three Percent--I think I'll just try and describe this book using Last.fm-esque tags. (Sidenote: My favorite Last.fm tags for individual songs are "everybody high-fiving everybody" and "rabbits ejaculating sunshine.") So here goes:

\* lots of sex with whores \* orgasmic finale \* frustrating courtship rules \* maybe sexily inappropriate aunt \* thieving all the money \* agronomy is boring \* in and out and in and out \* narrator for the ages \* the kissing was OK, the licking was filthy \* sex that sparkles \* 328-pages of foreplay

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### **Guillermo Jiménez says**

Cada vez que leo algo de Daniel Sada recuerdo que leí en varias partes (o entrevistas) que él escribía una página por día, o página y media, por la mañana, y que por la tarde revisaba lo escrito y listo: ya estaba una página de lo que estuviera trabajando.

Al leer cualquier texto de Sada uno puede ser testigo de la labor artesanal que este hombre puso en escribir cada una de esas cuartillas.

Hay una sonoridad en el lenguaje, un encuentro con los recovecos del español al que pocas veces estamos expuestos, una infatigable búsqueda de que la obra no sea solo anécdota, pero en la que su formalismo literario no esté carente de significado, de profundidad, de hallazgos y descubrimientos de los límites hasta los que es capaz de llegar la literatura. E incluso, rebasarlos.

Esta novela sucede en los años cuarenta en México. Va de un rancho de Oaxaca a otros ranchos en Coahuila, y Sada se encarga de divertirnos comparando algo como Parras, Coahuila con una ciudad de Europa, y es que, el humor sadiano es riquísimo, son guiños y guiños y acotaciones muy inteligentes y graciosas.

Algo que me gusta de Sada es su pasión por narrar, por narrar, además, con soltura y entrega, dedicándole todo lo que cree conveniente a la trama, pero hilando las raíces de la historia hacia caminos muy bien construidos, en todo momento los personajes responden a la naturaleza que les ha confiado su autor, y quien valiéndose de un narrador picaresco, pareciera que se asombra al mismo tiempo que el lector, de las broncas de cada uno, de los giros inesperados (o previstos) que puede seguir la historia.

No es fácil leer a Sada, no es fácil porque le exige al lector tiempo, atención, y a veces, un buen diccionario a la mano, no es fácil, pero es la mar de disfrutable, y una de las prosas en español más fecunda que haya dado la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

Descanse en paz, Daniel Sada, quien vivirá por siempre en las páginas de su obra. Obra que leeremos y releeremos con placer desmedido.

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### **Caroline says**

If you ever wondered what a contemporary male version of a Jane Austen novel about getting a young woman married would be like, with the attendant interference of mothers and aunts, misunderstandings, letters, financial ups and downs, maneuverings, etc , this might be it. But, with sex. Lots of sex. And recognition of the consequences of a cowardly act along the way. Set in rural Mexico in the 1940s, the book looks at solitude, moral distortion, authenticity, class issues, women's roles in Mexican society, and more.

The experimental style uses a very disjointed sequence of words and phrases much of the time. Very interesting and effective in small doses, but quite tiring to read for extended periods.

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### **Cosimo says**

“Le idee di Demetrio percorrevano un'orbita, si ricordò delle sue ex come se stesse presenziando a una parata di miniature; ragazze in miniatura; le baciò sulla bocca, tutte, nessuna esclusa, nient'altro; incantesimo in tonalità seppia, ma forse, non conviene attingere dal passato; amori perduti che non giunsero mai alla nudità, e a pronunciare questa parola si ricordò di Mireya, la carnalità come una febbre sfrenata; il sesso fino alle stelle, così rarefatto da non poterlo più immaginare; un'immagine scossa da raffiche di vento”.

Daniel Sada ha scritto un romanzo passionale e picaresco sulle grottesche disavventure amorose di un tragicomico e poetico antieroe. L'agronomo messicano costruisce la propria vita come un ranch nel mezzo del deserto: una natura da opporre con favore alla desolazione, tramite una continua e religiosa devozione al comandamento della carne e dello spirito, senza contraddizioni. Lo stile è surreale e realista insieme, musicale e corporeo, spregiudicato e coraggioso nell'uso del linguaggio espressivo. Una lotta farsesca e irriverente, estenuante nel suo essere labirintica, conduce il protagonista nel luogo dove tutte le cose sono al loro posto, dove dominano e prosperano amore e denaro. Al di là del rimorso e del senso di colpa, i più autentici desideri vengono svelati e si indagano le verità più intense, frequentando spesso il tradimento e quasi mai mantenendo le promesse. Sembra volerci accompagnare al piacere, il sapiente narratore; nel frattempo non dimentica di lasciarci percorrere ogni possibile sentiero alternativo, ogni traccia di quella scrittura assente, che costituisce l'architettura essenziale del racconto.

“La donna che forse aspettava un figlio da lui e che si smarri nella confusione di una notte x; era la stessa donna che appariva nei suoi sogni e si prendeva gioco di lui, dicendogli: Povero imbecille, non sai cosa ti sei perso, l'amore in tutte le sue varianti: sesso ma soprattutto comprensione e tenerezza infinita. Cosa vuoi di più, coglione”.

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## **Rebecca McNutt says**

*Almost Never* is very impressive and captures Mexico on the cusp of modernity, a time both uncertain and exciting.

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