



SEE YOU AT BREAKFAST?

Guillermo Fadanelli

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Guillermo Fadanelli is one of Mexico's leading authors, and appears in English for the first time in this remarkably assured translation of *See You at Breakfast?* by the young Australian translator Alice Whitmore.

Set in modern-day Mexico City, the novella follows the lives of four characters: Cristina, a practical-minded prostitute managing work, police harassment and the demands of the men who fall in love with her; Ulises, a solitary office worker obsessed by a promotion he will never receive; his friend Adolfo, a part-trained veterinarian who dispenses medical advice though he can't distinguish between a dog and a coyote; and the neighbour with whom he is infatuated, the beautiful and sheltered Olivia, the daughter of Jehovah's Witnesses, whose violent assault brings them together as a group.

Guillermo Fadanelli is an award-winning author based in Mexico City. His work is highly-regarded both in Mexico itself and by the Spanish-speaking literary community. Lauded as one of the key proponents of Mexican 'dirty realism', Fadanelli's writing is often compared with the low rent tragedies of Raymond Carver and Charles Bukowski. He is the recipient of the National Literature Prize, the Impac-Conarte-ITESM Prize and the 2012 Grijalbo Prize for the Novel, and was shortlisted for the prestigious Rómulo Gallegos Prize.

Alice Whitmore is a Melbourne-based poet and translator working in Spanish and English.

For all enquiries, please contact Alice Grundy

P: 02 9772 6504 / 0401 845 442

aliceg@giramondopublishing.com

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Alice Whitmore, Translator's Note

The first of Guillermo Fadanelli's novels to be brought into English, *See You at Breakfast?* traces the intersecting paths of four characters whose tragically ordinary lives unfold and intertwine against the cruel urban backdrop of Mexico City. Originally published in 1999 as *¿Te veré en el desayuno?*, the novel was adapted for cinema by Rodrigo Pizá and re-issued by Editorial Almadía in 2009.

A cynical recipient of innumerable awards and accolades, Guillermo Fadanelli is himself something of a paradox, a writer averse to both the beaten path and the idealisation of dissent, a deliberately marginal author who is nevertheless lauded by the cultural elite of Latin America. Fittingly, a latent unease permeates his work. The unsettling feel of *See You at Breakfast?* is heightened for non-Mexican readers, who may already be discomfited by its foreign characters and settings. But there is also a universally disconcerting element to the novel. We find this in the sudden shock of perversion or violence, in the closeness of tragedy, in the contorted reflection of someone we recognise, or in the injection of abrupt twists into an otherwise serene plot. Like the monstrous city in which it is set, *See You at Breakfast?* at once beguiles and estranges, always testing and transgressing the limits of propriety.

The novel's unlikely mix of characters, each of whom lends a unique voice to the story, is typical of Fadanelli's polyphonic approach to fiction. Remarkably, it captures the chaos and absurdity of Latin America's largest metropolis without lapsing into the tropes of stereotypical or moralising discourse. Mingling internal dialogue with detached narration (tinged, inevitably, with the wry misanthropy and dark humour that has come to distinguish his writing), Fadanelli constructs an entertaining and complex story that combines the mundane and the depraved in unexpected ways. He paints a painfully familiar portrait of the modern urban dystopia – of its invisible disillusionments, of the daily tragedies and anonymities of its inhabitants. As the novel's epigraph forewarns: 'This is the story of four people whose lives were never worth writing about.'

Despite the violence and poverty enveloping them, each of the novel's protagonists strive to construct some small bubble of happiness; even if it comes too late, even if it is too fragile to last or is disfigured beyond recognition. With great acuity, *See You at Breakfast?* cuts to the brutal core of the Mexican condition, confirming Guillermo Fadanelli as one of Latin America's leading contemporary authors.

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