



Catherine Certitude

Books Reviewed:

[Catherine Certitude](#) [1]

Issue:

[211](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

This is a nostalgic and reflective tale of a young girl's relationship with her father and their life in Paris in the 1950s. There is great play made at the start about how different the world is when Catherine takes off her glasses and this is a tale in which, despite her surname, nothing is quite as it seems. Some of this uncertainty of her world she gradually partially understands, like her ballet teacher's assumption of a Russian name and accent. Other matters remain indistinct, like the precise nature of her father's import-export business and why it is often conducted at the dead of night; or who the blonde lady is at the edge of one of the photographs of her father and his partner taken outside their place of business. Although the central character is a child, the story is recounted by an adult who is remembering the highlights of a childhood that centred on her love for her father and the eccentricities of the adults around her. It is a lens that focuses on brilliant details and in which everything else is blurred. By the 2014 Nobel Laureate, this elegant story's apparently simple and transparent nostalgia belies its sophistication of observation, technique and mood, a combination perfectly realised in Sempé's deftly characterised illustrations. It's a fine translation and a fine production from Andersen, but, described in *The Guardian* as Modiano's only children's book, it strikes me that adult readers would get a great deal more out of the story and its manner of telling than children.

Source URL (retrieved on Oct '21): <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/211/childrens-books/reviews/catherine-certitude>

Links:

[1] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/catherine-certitude>

[2] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/211>

[3] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clive-barnes>