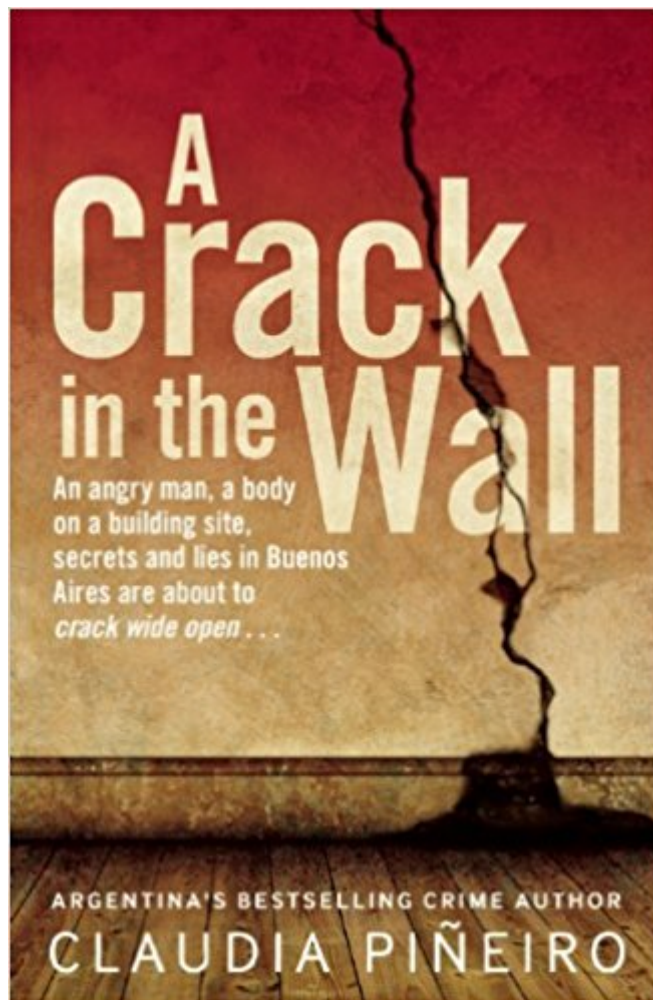




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A Crack In The Wall



Synopsis

Praise for Claudio Piñero: "An agile novel, a ruthless dissection of a fast decaying society." – José Saramago, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature "Thursday Night Widows is a gripping story. The dystopia portrayed is an indictment not solely of an assassin but of Argentina's class structure and the willful blindness of its petty bourgeoisie." – The Times Literary Supplement Pablo Simón's life is a mess. His career as an architect is at a deadend; reduced to designing soulless office buildings desecrating the heart of Buenos Aires. His marriage seems to be one endless argument with his wife over the theatrics of their rebellious teenage daughter. To complicate matters, Pablo has long been attracted to sexy office secretary Marta Horvat, who is probably having an affair with his boss. Everything changes with the unexpected appearance of Leonor, a beautiful young woman who brings to light a crime that happened years before, a crime that everyone in the office wants forgotten, at all costs. Claudia Piñero once again demonstrates her capacity to reveal the things hidden behind the facades of our existence; human relationships based on habit and cowardice, rather than love; on excessive ambition and personal gain, rather than morality. Claudia Piñero, formerly a journalist and playwright, is the author of literary crime novels that are all bestsellers in Latin America and have been translated into many languages. *A Crack in the Wall* follows on the success of *All Yours* and *Thursday Night Widows*, both previously published by Bitter Lemon Press.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. An old secret comes back to haunt 45-year-old Buenos Aires architect Pablo Simão in Argentinian author Piñeiro's best crime novel yet. One day, an attractive woman of about 25, Leonor, stops by Simão's office and asks him and his two coworkers, Borla and Marta, if they know Nelson Jara. Simão, Borla, and Marta are aware that Jara is dead, buried under the concrete floor of the parking lot, exactly where they left him that night, three years ago, but the three deny knowing him or his whereabouts. Later, Leonor runs into Simão at a cafe, where she asks him for help with a photography assignment. The development of the relationship between the architect and Leonor plays out against the backstory of how Jara wound up under the parking lot. Piñeiro (*All Yours*) keeps the reader hooked right up to the wicked, if logical, ending. (Aug.)

Piñeiro's moody, immersive thriller explores personal integrity with an ironic twist, calling to mind Patricia Highsmith's Ripley series. Pablo Simão, a Willy Lomanesque Buenos Aires architect, is burdened with a fouled marriage, dead-end job, and the futility of clinging to his architecture dreams. Young, beautiful Leonor enters Pablo's Buenos Aires office seeking Nelson Jara, a man at the center of a dark act that binds Pablo and his coworkers together. Of course, they send Leonor away with lies, but Pablo later encounters her in the neighborhood, and they develop a chemistry-laden friendship that fuels his obsessive reliving of the Jara incident. Soon Pablo has convinced Leonor to explain her mysterious connection to Jara and her move into the neighborhood. Simultaneously, through Pablo's recollections, Piñeiro reveals why Jara is such an obsession, and none of these revelations is what you'd expect. Usually, readers dread the narrator's doom as the threat of past misdeeds being discovered grows, but Pablo's beautifully painful story somehow cries out for a disaster to divert its trajectory. --Christine Tran

Pineiro's style is wonderful. He exposes layers upon layers of mystery till the most surprising conclusion A very good read.

More like 3.5 stars because I really did like the book and the writing (especially the ending, which are tough in crime fiction) - and it did remind me of Patricia Highsmith, which is a good thing. It just felt a little dated to me for some reason. I am definitely going to read more books from this writer (I already bought *Thursday Night Widows*), and I do recommend this book, I just hope the next book (maybe it was the translation) feels a little fresher and more contemporary. I don't want this to sound like a bad review. It's not supposed to be. I really did like it. It's smart, thought-provoking, and well crafted. And, if you like Patricia Highsmith, then definitely check out this book and this writer.

In this deliciously wicked new novel, her best one yet, Argentinian author Claudia Pineiro, focuses once again on the evil that lurks within the hearts of men, even those who seem innocent or numbed by their own circumstances. Honestly does not seem to enter the equation here, as Pineiro once again mines a theme which also appears in her two previous novels in translation. As dark (even cynical) as the theme seems to be, the author works it with a light hand, employing surprisingly little violence (which usually takes place "offstage") and creating characters who often bumble their way through the complex mazes of their lives and into situations over which they believe they have little control. Life in Buenos Aires may appear dark here, but Pineiro's characters take their circumstances for granted and do what they believe they must do to succeed. In the process, they become understandable - and all too human in their weaknesses. Pablo Simo, the forty-five-year-old architect and main character, has been married to Laura for eleven thousand seven hundred and thirty days. Though he does not believe he is in love with her any longer, neither has he strayed much farther than the realms of imagination. Though the architectural firm where he works has been extremely successful and Pablo Simo has been there for almost twenty years, he is not a partner, for reasons that he never even bothers to question. He spends his spare time at his desk making hundreds of designs for an imagined eleven-story apartment tower which he hopes that one day he will be able to build on his own. When attractive, 28-year-old Leonor comes to the office looking for Nelson Jara, someone with whom she says she has business, the firm's two partners pretend that they have no idea who Jara is, and Pablo just keeps his mouth shut. By page twelve, however, the reader learns that Nelson Jara is dead - "buried a few feet beneath the concrete floor...exactly where they [all] left him that night, three years ago." Jara had approached the firm when a huge crack developed in the wall of his apartment, located beside the firm's biggest building project. He has threatened to report the architects for not working to code, though he is willing to come to some "accommodation" with them for a fee. Pablo is assigned to put Jara off for a week, but when it ends, so does Jara. Author Pineiro provides one surprise after another in the aftermath of the murder, many of them the result of coincidences which, while unlikely, make the story much more fun to read and imagine. Irony piles on top of irony as Pablo's predictable life becomes more and more crazy. In addition to his residual guilt about his role in the murder, he is dealing with a teenage daughter who is out of control, a wife who may have a lover, and a strong desire to find out what love really is. The action is fast and furious, Pablo is suitably dense as a protagonist, and few readers will predict the grand outcomes of this clever and very amusing novel. Beautifully paced, despite an architectural side trip to photograph Buenos Aires's most interesting buildings, this

exciting novel goes on to show that the biggest crack of all ultimately appears in the "wall" of Pablo's own stultifying life.

This is a darkly funny, twisted, cynical story. The crack in the wall is both literal and metaphorical, applying to the protagonist's life. Luckily, the metaphor isn't heavy-handed. I've read three other books by this author, and highly recommend "Betty Boo" as my favorite. The characters are more sympathetic, and the humor isn't quite so dark.

I'm still scratching my head a little after finishing Claudia Pineiro's novel, *A Crack in the Wall*. The protagonist, Pablo Simón, is a middle-aged architect with a secret relating to a character named Nelson Jara. When a woman named Leonor Corell two decades junior to Pablo visits his office asking about Jara, years of pent up dissatisfaction release. Pineiro explores human weaknesses in this novel, and through the weak Pablo she allows readers to see aspects of human nature that are widespread. I found the prose to be quirky to read, but that could be a matter of translation. Readers looking for something unusual might find enjoyment from reading this novel. Rating: Three-star (It's ok)

A Crack in the Wall Claudia Piñeiro, translated by Miranda France Bitter Lemon, Aug 1 2013, \$14.95 ISBN 9781908524089 In 2007 in Buenos Aires, twenty-something Leonor Corell visits the office of Borla and Associates, an architectural firm. She asks Borla, fortyish Pablo Simón and Marta Horvat if any of them know where Nelson Jara is. Though they rehearsed their response if the question came up and Borla says no, Pablo fails immediately to respond as his world shifted with that inquiry. However, he recovers as he and Marta deny knowing a Jara. Three years earlier, Simón, Borla and Horvat buried Jara under the concrete of the parking lot. At a café, Corell sees Simón and asks him to help her with a photography assignment. Though he should say no, he agrees to assist her while wondering if his motive is guilt or a need for dangerous freshness with his marriage falling apart, his daughter in rebellion, and his work boring while his dream of designing a special tower is dead. The latest Claudia Piñeiro Argentinian thriller (see Thursday night *Widows* and *All Yours*) is a fabulous tale that rotates between the Jara burial and the relationship between Pablo and Leonor. Gripping from the moment the young woman asks her question, readers will relish this taut twisting psychological suspense as Simón faces *A Crack in the Wall* as big as an iceberg. Harriet Klausner

This story kept building in plots and character details throughout. It was not a real page-turner, but it was certainly interesting with some mild suspense arriving toward the finale. It was a solid 3.5 stars and I may even decide to try the author again.

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