

MY READATHON 2020: BOOK 2
THIRTEEN CENTS—K. SELLO DUIKER

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Thirteen cents, written in post-apartheid South Africa by Duiker at twenty-six year, has grabbed wide readership both within and outside South Africa. The book is starkly naked on matters of sex, sexuality, struggles on streets and violent crimes in post-apartheid South Africa. Do not lift a page of this book, if you sulk at dirty and raunchy over-narrations or if your religious beliefs are easily peeved at graphic recitals of unconventional intimacies. The story themed around marginalized, abused, and exploitation of the youths in fledgling democracies, and struggling third-world economies, throws spotlight on the downtrodden and those living on the edges of our deeply moneyed, stereotyped, propertied and hugely sexualized society.

Shaun Viljoen comments that the central character—“Azure’s position as a twelve year old who turns thirteen in the novel situates him on the threshold of the world of adults and subjects him to the rites of passage that induct him into the particular forms of adulthood”.

For his age, Duiker, admitted to have been shaped by Ayi Kwei Armah’s ‘*Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*’, was simply a genius to have deftly explored adult themes of sex, exploitation and the burdens society heaves on the marginalized and other sundry lives and expressions. Tragically, he took his own life at the age of thirty, about a month after the passing of his friend and fellow writer Phaswane Mpe.

Favorite quote:

“Money is complicated. It’s like people. It keeps changing. Sometimes it’s your friend, sometimes it’s your enemy. Don’t trust money too much. It always lets you down in the end.” [page 114]