



## A Reading Diary: A Passionate Reader's Reflections on a Year of Books

*Alberto Manguel*

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# A Reading Diary: A Passionate Reader's Reflections on a Year of Books

*Alberto Manguel*

## **A Reading Diary: A Passionate Reader's Reflections on a Year of Books** Alberto Manguel

While traveling in Calgary, Alberto Manguel was struck by how the novel he was reading (Goethe's "Elective Affinities") seemed to reflect the social chaos of the world in which he was living. An article in the daily paper would suddenly be illuminated by a passage in the novel; a long reflection would be prompted by a single word. He decided to keep a record of these moments, rereading a book each month, and forming "A Reading Diary": a volume of notes, reflections, impressions of travel, of friends, of events public and private, all elicited by his reading. From "Don Quixote" (August) to "The Island of Dr. Moreau" (February) to "Kim" (April), Manguel leads us on an enthralling adventure in literature and life, and demonstrates how, for the passionate reader, one is utterly inextricable from the other.

## **A Reading Diary: A Passionate Reader's Reflections on a Year of Books Details**

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# From Reader Review A Reading Diary: A Passionate Reader's Reflections on a Year of Books for online ebook

**Munira says**

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10.12.2016

**Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says**

I could literally tag this book with every single tag I have for my books. Books-about-books? Yes, of course. Manguel's format is to take a book a month and write down quotes and his thoughts and other people's thoughts on the same subjects as the book. Then he takes off from there and shares anything and everything that seemingly comes into his mind, and, trust me, his is a brilliant and thoughtful mind. So I could easily tag this book for Happiness and Philosophy and Justice and just about every single tag I've listed; it's a book that takes on the world. I felt exhausted at times while reading this book, as I wanted to think carefully about everything he said and to do so would have taken me a year or two. Sigh. A wonderful book for all of us who are passionate about reading.

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## **Huda Yahya says**

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## Carla says

“Um Diário de Leituras” de Alberto Manguel é o relato de um ano de releituras (e viagens) empreendidas pelo autor, condimentado com pormenores singelos e deliciosos extraídos da sua vida quotidiana: a instalação da sua Biblioteca num antigo celeiro recuperado, ecos de conversas com os amigos, preocupações de jardinagem, relatos da vida de aldeia, observações sobre o estado do mundo.

Nas suas viagens pelo mundo, no circunscrito-imenso universo que é a sua bem-amada Biblioteca ou no seu escritório, Alberto Manguel relê as seguintes obras:

1. “A Invenção de Morel” de Adolfo Bioy Casares
2. “A Ilha do Dr. Moreau” de H. G. Wells
3. “Kim” de Rudyard Kipling
4. “Memórias de Além-Túmulo” de François-René Chateaubriand
5. “O Signo dos Quatro” de Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
6. “Afinidades Electivas” de Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
7. “O Vento nos Salgueiros” de Kenneth Grahame
8. “Dom Quixote” de Miguel de Cervantes
9. “O Deserto dos Tártaros” de Dino Buzzati
10. “O Livro de Cabeceira” de Sei Shonagon
11. “Surfacing” de Margaret Atwood
12. “Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas” de Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis

E cada obra relida, empurra Manguel para outro livro, para outro autor e nós leitores acabamos por ser também arrastados por essa plácida corrente que nos inunda do impossível desejo de tudo abarcar. As referências confiadas ao leitor são como sementes cuidadosamente preparadas para florescer. Haja leitores, haja curiosidade, haja iniciativa e note-se: este não é um livro de sugestões de leitura, é um livro sobre a necessidade do ser-humano voltar a "lugares" onde foi feliz.

(Um livro que despertou em mim a vontade de reler “Afinidades Electivas” de Goethe e o “Dom Quixote” de Cervantes, e de ler, pela primeira vez, todos os outros.)

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## Moath Hamam says

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## Keith says

Reading Alberto Manguel is always a reader's holiday. The incredibly wide universe of his reading and the cultured and erudite explanations of those readings give readers a shared feeling of the joy books bring as well, at least in my case, knowledge of writers and books unknown and unread. One reads him with a pen in hand, at the very least to make note of new titles he discusses.

This book is an exploration of a theory that when immersed in a good book the reader begins to see manifestations of one's reading in every aspect of everyday life. Anyone who has either written a thesis or been close to someone writing one may have experienced the determined manner in which the thesis writer sees the work reflected in the world around them. Often, annoyingly, in everything.

Manguel here reads one of his favorite books each month from the year. Each chapter describes thoughts on the book and also anecdotes and discussion on everyday topics. In the end it is an often mesmerizing and ultimately enjoyable glimpse inside a reader's diary.

Manguel's observations, often quotes from the book at hand or another, are deeply familiar to readers everywhere. As in this gloss from Machado de Assis:

"The worst defect of this book is you, reader," says Machado de Assis accusingly, halfway through *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (which I pulled off the shelf on another sleepless night). 'You are in a hurry to grow old and the book progresses all too slowly; you like your stories straightforward and packed with action, told in a measured and easy-flowing style, and this book and my style are like two drunkards, swaying from left to right, starting and stopping, complaining, shouting, laughing out loud, threatening heaven above, slipping and falling. . . .'"

I appreciate how Machado points out exactly the ever present temptation to shy away from difficult books to the tried and true and the straight and narrow.

In speaking of one of his lifelong favorites Manguel poignantly sums up the eternal gap between our reading and that of others:

"I'm always surprised to discover how few of my friends have read it. We assume that what delights us must delight others; in fact, we all realize in the end that our private circle of fellow readers, those who share our intimate loves, is very small"

And finally, on the last page Manguel gives voice to the a essential truth about most of the books we treasure:

"Up to a certain point, this is true of every book we love. We think we approach it from a distance, watch it part its protecting covers, observe the unfolding of its tale from a safe seat in the audience, and we forget how much the survival of the characters, the very life of the story, depends on our presence as readers—on our curiosity, on our desire to recall a detail or to be surprised by an absence—as if our own capacity for love had created, from a tangle of words, the person of the beloved."

"as if our own capacity for love had created, from a tangle of words, the person of the beloved." Beautifully said.

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## Magdelanye says

Reading is a comfortable, solitary, slow and sensuous task.  
from the preface, p xi

Reading a book about reading, and specifically one whose table of contents consists of a list of books, it would be reasonable to assume an interest or at least a curiosity, on the part of a reader, in the actual titles.

Although this did not turn out to be the case, when I first confronted the titles in AM's short list, I thought: boring. Most of these books are familiar , and I had read 4 or 6 of them, so long ago that I was not entirely certain. Did I really read Kim, or was it just an abridged selection for school? Did I ever finish Elective Affinities after losing it 20 pages before the end? Why couldn't I remember the end? For that matter, did I ever finish Don Quixote, which at 14 I found lugubrious, or Wind in the Willows, which I read before learning how to actually read?

During my childhood, these were the go-to books that I would return to when I had read all my library books, but I had a tendency to begin a book at the beginning each time I picked it up. So here were some old friends but also, with his childhood spent in South America, AM adds to my list considerably. He is right to criticize North American literacy. I had never heard of Adolfo Bioy Casares, Dino Buzzatti or Joachim Maria Machado de Assis. My interest sparked, I joined in with AM over the course of a year between May 2002 and 2003 as he revisited favorite books of his youth and later years. I was surprised to find Margaret Atwoods early novel Surfacing among his later choices, and his take enriches my appreciation of the book, which I thought was sloppy, my least favorite Atwood, before she gained her mastery of words.

AM makes good use of his structure to spin off his own observations, ruminations and recollections, tying in the news of the day and semi-personal anecdote with what he is reading or has read . Impelled by his curious nature, these centre on literary anecdote, architecture, theology, poetry, history and biography with a depth of erudition and confidence that is matter of fact as it is eclectic apocryphal.

The books I take to my bed at night and the books I sort out in the library during the day are different books.  
p29

Each of these books capriciously influences my reading of the one next to it. Is all reading associative reading? p134

We assume that what delights us must delight others. In fact, we all realize in the end that our private circle of fellow readers , those who share our intimate loves, is very small. p245

By extending his private circle of reading, by giving weight to his associations, AM offers us the delight of his company, irregardless of his reading choices.

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## **Maryah Mohammed says**

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## **James says**

Alberto Manguel is the type of person I imagine drinking too much coffee with and staying up until the wee hours passionately discussing books. This book is largely a series of notes and observations as he rereads some of his favorites during 2002-2003. The books often connect to the moment - his discussions of remembering 9/11 a year after the fact and the commencement of the war in Iraq are riveting.

The dangers of a book like this, of course, is that it increases my to-read list.

The books he reads are:

June - The Invention of Morel by Adolfo Bioy Casares  
July - The Island of Dr. Moreau by H.G. Wells  
August - Kim by Rudyard Kipling  
September - Memoirs from Beyond the Grave by Francois-Rene de Chateaubriand  
October - The Sign of Four by Arthur Conan Doyle  
November - Elective Affinities by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe  
December - The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame  
January - Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes  
February - The Tartar Steppe by Dino Buzzati  
March - The Pillow Book by Sei Shonagon  
April - Surfacing by Margaret Atwood  
May - The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas by Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis

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## **Nahed.E says**

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