



The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories

Julio Ortega (Editor)

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In **The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories**, Julio Ortega and Carlos Fuentes present the most compelling short fiction from Mexico to Chile. Surreal, poetic, naturalistic, urbane, peasant-born: All styles intersect and play, often within a single piece. There is "The Handsomest Drown Man in the World," the García Márquez fable of a village overcome by the power of human beauty; "The Aleph," Borges' classic tale of a man who discovers, in a colleague's cellar, the Universe. Here is the haunting shades of Juan Rulfo, the astonishing anxiety puzzles of Julio Cortázar, the disquieted domesticity of Clarice Lispector. Provocative, powerful, immensely engaging, **The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories** showcases the ingenuity, diversity, and continuing excellence of a vast and vivid literary tradition.

The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories Details

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Author : Julio Ortega (Editor)

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From Reader Review The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories for online ebook

Nik Korba says

There are some very enjoyable stories in here, but overall I feel it was too broad in the styles that it brought together. It was challenging for me to transition between stories.

David Mendiola says

Overall it was hard to read. Half the stories made very little sense to me. They were probably very symbolic?

The ones I liked:

The Third Bank of the River (Joao Guimaraes Rosa)
a man abandons his family and spends the rest of his life in a rowboat at a nearby lake.

Luvina (Juan Rulfo)
about harsh rural areas and the people who survive there.

Bukhara Nocturne (Sergio Pitol)
a couple guys make up a story to a girl about to travel, and it comes true.

A Brief Reappearance by Florence (Alfredo Bryce Echenique)
meeting a past girlfriend. Addresses how its hard to reconcile the image of her than with what she has become.

Van Gogh's Ear (Moacyr Scliar)
goofy and funny. Man tries to fake a Van Gogh ear to pay off his local loan shark debt.

The Benefactor (Rodolfo Hinostroza)
a man gets credited with novels he didn't write. He comes to expect the ghost writer will keep producing.
Could be symbolic for inborn gifts and general luck in life.

National Sovereignty (Rodrigo Fresan)
war from three soldiers' view. Funniest part is when two opposing soldiers meet and argue over who GETS to be taken prisoner. "I laid my rifle down first, the Geneva Convention says you HAVE to take me"

Warda Youssif says

I had to read it for a class, but after I stopped the class, I decided to keep reading it to broaden my horizons. I'm just not a big fan of the Latin American stories. I found them hard to relate to, and not at all interesting. But that's just a personal opinion.

John Varner says

I do wish there were a bit more context provided for some of these stories, but there's something to be said for just providing the work to stand on its own merits. As you might expect from this kind of anthology the stories included are all over the place in terms of both theme and style but there does seem to be a general fascination with the fantastic in the everyday that I never tire of. Not everything here is at the level of Borges or Marquez but enough of the other authors come close that I think it's fair to say that the book as a whole is highly rewarding.

Bailey Robertson says

I had to read it for a class, but after I stopped the class, I decided to keep reading it to broaden my horizons. I'm just not a big fan of the Latin American stories. I found them hard to relate to, and not at all interesting. But that's just a personal opinion.

Howard says

39 (over 365 pages of small font) Latin American short stories probably written between 1950-1990, so this means they are not necessarily 'vintage' - Vintage is of course the printer. All are by different authors so one does very much get a broad flavour/sample of styles, narrative ideas and philosophy; this is in deed why I chose to read it, when I don't normally go for short story collections.

There are some well know LA authors like Cortazar, Onetti and Borges but many less known.

Good points:

After a while the stories don't meld into a mush of sameness.

Each are of similar length so no single lengthy story acts to pad out the book.

A good sample to find new authors to read.

Some really rather good stories.

My 'pile of novels to read' increased by about 3 based on authors I liked.

Bad points

So many stories to easily forget.

No real sample of magical realism.

No stories on the struggle of native peoples.

Rather modernist feeling narratives.

Too many of the authors, I liked and wanted to read more of, had few if any novels translated into English.

I know it's obvious to say but this is a good short story collection, so is a collection of short stories not a sampler of Latin American literature.

Danica says

I really liked the Onetti short (it had something to do with Hell in its title) and enjoyed the opportunity to revisit Julio Cortazar's Blow-Up (which I completely misunderstood as a stripling of 17 -- who knew it was so much more predatory an encounter than first conceived?), but found many of the other translations wooden/clunky/insert critical word of choice here. A shame.

Megan says

I'm not sure exactly when I began reading this book, but I know it was at least ten years ago.

To the book's credit, I could never quite give up on it. It is full of gems.

And yet, clearly, it was a struggle to finish. As other reviewers note, I suspect many of the stories are poorly translated (though without having read the original, it is hard to say for sure). This is a compilation that could have used a brief introduction to each story. Some stories were in desperate need of historical/geographical context. Others would have benefited from literary context: sometimes I left a story wondering why it was selected - I couldn't find the literary merit, and yet, I'm sure that the editors chose it for a reason.

Over the ten+ years, I would read a smattering of stories and then forget which ones I'd read. With a few exceptions (The Aleph, Blow-Up, and The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World), I'd have zero recollection of the stories I'd already read when I came back to them a year or more later. The three exceptions are stories from authors I've read extensively since high school (Borges, Cortazar, and Garcia Marquez), stories I'd read in both English and Spanish before encountering them here. As for the remaining stories, even if I remembered liking the story, I would re-read it and it would seem entirely new. I would like it again, but I would promptly forget it again. Right now, I only recall well the stories I read in the last few days.

Maybe that speaks to the originality and diversity of the collection, but it also belies mediocrity. The short stories I like best tend to stick with me for a long time, almost haunting me even if - especially if - they become disconnected from their origin in my mind. I wonder, where did that story come from? And when I encounter it anew, I immediately recognize it: that wasn't a dream, it was a story, this story! No such experience here.

Sylvie says

I borrowed this book from the public library because it contains one story by Moacyr Scliar.

I had never heard of Scliar until I came upon his name while doing research on the book "Life of Pi" by Yann Martel.

I read "Life of Pi" a long time ago. When I read it I was in some kind of mood, I don't remember what kind, but it wasn't good. I read "Life of Pi" quickly, just wanting to get it over with. How could I have done that?

It's such a great book.

"Life of Pi" has been made into a movie and I'm going to read the book once again before I watch the movie. I'm going to really read it, and prior to doing so I did some research into the plot and that's when I bumped into Scliar's name. I learned that Yann Martel's inspiration for "Life of Pi" came to him after reading Scliar's story (or novella), "Max and the Cats." I decided to "meet" Scliar by reading the novella that inspired Martel, as well as other works that he's written.

Unfortunately, my library doesn't have a copy of "Max and the Cats"; all they have is "The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories" which contains, as I mentioned, one story by Scliar. I can't even recall the name of it, but I didn't like it. I haven't given up on Scliar (no way am I doing that based on just one story I didn't care for). I've asked my library to get me a copy of "Max and the Cats" by interlibrary loan, and they'll do it.

Scliar has written other things and I've added some of them to my "to read" list here on Goodreads.

I read a few other stories in this collection of Latin American stories, but not a one "grabbed" me. I abandoned the book after reading a few of them.

If anyone reads this review, and you've read, and liked, Scliar, please let me know what works you recommend.

Tuck says

39 stories, so all over the place style and author wise. as expected no? has many famous names, borges 'the aleph' ; onetti 'hell most feared' , and many many i did not know, but would be fun to read more of these fascinating and little known (in usa in 2016?) storyists, like ampuero 'taxi driver, minus robert de niro" and fresan "national sovereignty"

has author bios and copyrights list. pre-21st century.

Adam Florin says

Probability states that anthologies will probably get three stars even. Very nice snack-sized intro to the literature of a continent: the over-self-conscious mind games of the Argentines, the fantastical landscapes and dream realms of the Mexicans, the overall preoccupation with aging, wise men and death. And oh man what García Márquez can do in five pages.

(n.b. I only read about half the stories.)

Erika Verhagen says

Would give it 3.5/5 if that were an option -

- I've been picking up and putting this book down since May, although I originally abandoned it after a couple stories in early 2015. While there was some sort of great comfort seeing it on my bedside for these

last few months, it is with great relief I say that I have finished. In any case, an actual review -

- the back cover describes it as an "expansive" anthology, which is true but also a very clever means of justifying the anthology's failure to provide any particular curatorial stance beyond geography. That being said, I do appreciate the struggle of putting together a book of Latin American short fiction so as not to underrepresent the scope of what is contained in that. This is an "expansive" anthology, for better or for worse.

And, I was absolutely beyond pleased to read Maria Luisa Puga's 'Naturally' open with the line "Woody Allen has done so much to harm society".
