



Three Messages and a Warning: Contemporary Mexican Short Stories of the Fantastic

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A huge, energetic, and ambitious groundbreaking anthology from emerging and established Mexican authors which showcases all-new supernatural folktales, alien incursions, ghost stories, apocalyptic narratives, and more. Stereotypes of Mexican identities and fictions are identified and transcended. Traditional tales rub shoulders with mindbending new worlds. Welcome to the new Mexican fantastic.

Eduardo Jiménez Mayo's translations include books by Bruno Estañol, Rafael Pérez Gay, and José María Pérez Gay.

Chris N. Brown lives in Austin, Texas. He is a contributor to the blog No Fear of the Future.

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From Reader Review Three Messages and a Warning: Contemporary Mexican Short Stories of the Fantastic for online ebook

Christian says

This was a fascinating collection of stories from a number of Mexican writers, in what would probably be classed as a speculative fiction anthology. There were some stunning stories in the collection, such as the title story, as well as Fireflies, Hunting Iguanas, the story about UFOs, and the stories about wolves and lions. Unfortunately, a large number of the stories seemed to end abruptly, giving a feeling like they were incomplete. Perhaps this is a stylistic approach that I am not used to though.

Tasula says

Collection of mystical or supernatural stories from Mexican writers. Interesting in many ways- shows people are similar in emotional needs/fears, no matter where they come from; gives us glimpses of Mexican life; and has a few real gems of insight. I liked most of the stories a lot- a few I just didn't get.

A says

Any anthology of short stories is bound to be uneven. What I liked about this one is that all of the writers are unknown to me. There are parts magical realism and parts science fiction. There are parts folk tales.

The short story Photophobia, by Mauricio Montiel Figueiras, translated by Jen Hofer and The Return of Night by René Roquet, translated by Armando García were two of my favorites.

Is writing in Mexico different than writing in other countries? In many ways, it doesn't feel like it. We are living in a global world now, as someone pointed out recently.

Jessica says

I'm giving 4 stars not because the collection is full of stunners (though there are a few) but because almost every story here is enjoyable and surprising. An anthology I got from the library (yay, my library!) and one which I wouldn't mind owning.

Amanda says

This collection gathers 34 contemporary Mexican short stories featuring fantasy, scifi, and literary, clearly a wide range.

For me this collection was very hit and miss, and alas even the hits weren't that wonderful. Part of the issue is there seems to be no rhyme or reason behind the order in which the tales are presented. It feels as if 34 completely random stories were selected with the only thing they have in common being Mexican authors. I generally prefer a short story collection to have a more universal theme or play upon similar tropes, but there is none of that here. The stories range from young boys hunting iguanas to figuring out how to dispose of a body to a trophy wife on vacation in Las Vegas to a pact with the devil. It was a bit of an exhausting collection to read.

Overall this collection is an interesting peek into contemporary Mexican writing, although it does seem the editors could have done a better job in selecting what to include. Recommended to those with a marked interest in modern Mexican writing.

Check out my full review. (Link will be live April 17, 2012).

Note: I received a free copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Tyrannosaurus regina says

Like most books of short stories, the quality was variable, perhaps more highly variable than usual for me. I tended to like the stories more as I went on, though I'm not sure whether that's because the stories got stronger, or because I got more used to the nuances of the way they were being told. There was overall a kind of gentleness to the style, and the stories were often (though not universally) neither violent nor intense; they also tended to have a very specific voice and point of view. Overall I'm not sure it was a strong collection, but for me it was an interesting one.

Marie-Therese says

2.5 stars.

There's a great deal of variety in this anthology of contemporary Mexican fantastic and horror fiction but too little quality. It's difficult to tell if the poor overall result is due to amateurish, even incompetent translation or to a lack of fresh ideas and vivid prose. There are too many really short pieces here and most feel underdeveloped and not thought through. Their impact is superficial-forgotten the moment the page is turned and another brief tale appears. When an idea is exciting, the execution is often markedly feeble, hampered by clunky prose and clichéd turns of phrase (again, I wonder a bit if this is more an issue of translation than original literary failure).

The latter half of the book is somewhat stronger than the first and I do recommend the stories by Amparo Dávila, Liliana Blum, Anna Clavel, Óscar de la Borbolla, Gabriela Damián Miravete, Bernardo Fernández and René Roquet

I'll admit to being not just disappointed but really perplexed by this volume. Some of the best writers in the world today are Mexican or make their homes in Mexico. The Mexican literary scene is thriving and exciting new work is published all the time. How did this anthology miss most of it? It's a mystery to me.

World Literature Today says

"So bravo, Small Beer Press and editors Mayo and Brown, for bringing us *Three Messages and a Warning*, a landmark collection of the Mexican fantastic." - Michael A. Morrison, The University of Oklahoma

This book was reviewed in the May/June 2012 issue of *World Literature Today*. You can read the full review by visiting our website: <http://worldliteraturetoday.com/2012/...>

Andy says

A decent if unspectacular collection of Mexican fantasy/sci-fi short stories. They are in the vein of myths and legends, ghost stories, oddities and freak occurrences, and other tales to tell at night by a crackling fire. All of them are very short. Many are enjoyable, although none really stood out to me either, which is unusual for a volume of this many entrants, and there are a handful of bad ones as well. The ones I did like were entertaining but not deep and brain-lodging in the way that really great writing is.

Good: "Future Nereid," by Gabriela Damián Miravete (tr. Michael J. Deluca), "1965," by Edmée Pardo (tr. Lesly Betancourt-González).

Laura says

While I normally love short stories, I found this collection to be dull and unremarkable. The stories covered a wide range of standard fantasy/sci-fi fare such as ghosts, aliens, apocalyptic/dystopian societies, and even mermaids. But they were hampered by predictable twists (he was dead all along!), clunky prose (perhaps due to translation), and quite a lot of gimmicky second person point of view. There were a few stories that caught my interest, but most were quickly read and quickly forgotten.

Isabel (kittiwake) says

I received a free copy of this book in return for a review, via the LibraryThing Early Reviewers program.

And so, perhaps urged on by the official indifference, the lions left their refuges to cynically strut their manes down our streets.

Without hunger, they are as tame as a little cat. But they eat all day, which is why it was impossible to know at which moment they would bite off the arm of a balloon salesman or swallow a kid.

This book contains thirty-three short stories (some very short indeed) and one poem. They are a mixture of

fantasy, horror, ghost stories, magical realism and folk tales plus a fair few non-genre stories, and whatever the editors may claim in the introduction, I would only count three or four stories, "The Hour of the Fireflies", "1965", "Pink Lemonade" and maybe "Photophobia", as being science fiction.

A couple of the stories were quite predictable, but there is a lot of variety and most were very atmospheric, and I enjoyed most of them. Those I liked least were the stories about obsession, including "The President without Organs", a strange tale of freedom of information and national fixation with the president's body, and "The Transformist" and "The Drop".

My favourites were "Photophobia", "Lions", "Wittgenstein's Umbrella" and "Pink Lemonade".

Ed Erwin says

I'm glad I read it, but I found very few of the short stories here very interesting. "Stories of the fantastic" in this case mostly means some form of light fantasy or magical realism. Only one story ("Pink Lemonade") was solidly in a Sci-Fi genre.

Took me forever to finish because I prefer reading long-form fiction than short stories, so I would just dip into this from time to time.

Liz Murray says

I'd love to read some of these stories in the original Spanish. Not that I felt the translations were clunky but I feel that with 'lo fantastico' the ambiguities present in the Spanish language are used to advantage. "Lo fantastico" is one of my favourite genres. You often never know until the end how things are and what was really going on. Not science fiction nor fantasy nor a mix of the two. Cortazar is maybe the best known of the writers who often use this genre and China Mieville's work is also reminiscent of lo fantastico. There were a lot of stories in here I loved, some I liked but none that I didn't enjoy. I'll definitely look out for many of these authors down the line. I'm grateful this anthology was put out.

Martinique says

This was a fabulous book. Both my son and I read this and we both found several stories that appealed to us and others that were good but not necessarily our "cup of tea". I loved the magical realism that runs through all of these stories. A wonderful read that really highlights the old style of fairytales and folk tales. Highly recommend this book.

Tuck says

all in all a solid collection, though amateurish, of sci fi or sci fiy anyway short stories from mostly very young or not-even-published-yet mexican authors. has a nice author bio section that lists what they are up to.

breaks lots of stereotypes in that there is hardly a whiff of peyote, plateaus at night, going back to visit grandma and seeing stray dogs in the street etc of some kinds of mexican fiction tropes. the book itself much of the intro and first stories (pages are blank) and while funny hahahaha, i feel the intro was maybe the best part. come on small beer press with the QC. but small beer has some great titles and they are pretty damn inyourface to do mexican sci fi. hah.
