



The Discovery of America by the Turks

Jorge Amado, Gregory Rabassa (Translation), José Saramago (Foreword)

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Raduan Murad and Jamil Bichara are Arab immigrants — "Turks," as the Brazilians call them — who arrive in Bahia upon the same ship in 1903. The novel describes the "Brazilianization" of the two men as they acclimate to life in the cacao region of Southern Bahia — a pioneering, Wild West landscape inhabited by gunslingers, plantation owners, and merchants.

The Discovery of America by the Turks Details

Date : Published September 6th 2012 by Penguin Classics (first published May 2nd 2012)

ISBN : 9780143106982

Author : Jorge Amado , Gregory Rabassa (Translation) , José Saramago (Foreword)

Format : Paperback 96 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Brazil, Historical, Historical Fiction, European Literature, Portuguese Literature



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From Reader Review The Discovery of America by the Turks for online ebook

Susana says

El desparpajo de Jorge Amado es legendario; ante una muy seria petición de escribir un libro conmemorativo del descubrimiento de América, bajo un contrato pagado, decide escribir "De cómo los turcos descubrieron América", muy lejano de las travesías de Cristóbal Colón y el choque de dos mundos, de dos culturas y todo lo que ya conocemos.

Un libro entretenido, muy a lo Amado, con enredos amorosos y picardías a granel. Si le quité las 5 estrellas (de mis lecturas anteriores) es por su componente machista, ciertamente asociado a un momento histórico y cultural en Brasil, probablemente más entre los inmigrantes "turcos", donde la mujer solo sirve como esposa o *puta* y siempre con esa sensación que Amado se burla de esa cultura, que lo dice un tanto *tongue in cheek*:

"Adma había alcanzado la edad del mal humor y la maldad"

"Si tiene plata, ninguna mujer es fea"

"Adma era una apuesta dura, indigesta. Enfrentarla exigía decisión, coraje y estómago de camello"

Aunque al final no puedo sacudirme la sensación que la heroína, la gran ganadora, es precisamente la mujer, que subyuga al hombre y lo "domestica" en este caso.

Tercera vez que leo este libro y siempre lo disfruto igual que la primera vez:

"Un milagro menos, un milagro más: los milagros sucedían cada dos por tres en aquellos buenos tiempos del descubrimiento de América por los turcos"

Hanan Muzaffar says

I liked how the characters are linked, and the stories are fun to read. It has the feel of sitting with old people in a village corner and hear them gossip about the life of this and that. Reads smoothly and entertains.

Jim says

This little bagatelle by Jorge Amado was to have been part of a series of original stories published for the 500th anniversary of the Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Well, nothing turned out as planned. The Quincentenary itself turned out to be something of a bust, as Columbus is seen (except by the Italians) as something of a despoiler, and, besides, didn't a Viking named Leif Erickson beat him to it by another 500 years? And to top it all off, the publisher cancelled the series, but Amado went gamely on with

his part anyhow.

A fact not known to many is that Latin America experienced the inflow of thousands of Syrians and Lebanese in the period before the First World War. Because they came with Ottoman passports, they were all referred to as Turks. When I go to Arequipa, Peru in September, I will visit several "Turkish" restaurants, as I did in Yucatan several times during the 1980s.

The Discovery of America by the Turks tells of two friends named Raduan Murad and Jamil Bichara who befriend one of their countrymen, Ibrahim Jafet, whose beautiful wife Salua left him a widower, but not before several daughters were born. The one they had picked to inherit their bazaar in Ituaguassu was, however, their spinsterish daughter Adma. This is a tale about how the shrewish Adma met her match in a young Arab waiter named Adib. Kinds of sounds like **Taming of the Shrew**, doesn't it?

In any case, it's a short fun read.

Daniela says

Un relato divertido en el contexto de la inmigración árabe (generalizada en inmigración turca) a Brasil a principios del Siglo XX. Enmarcado en la búsqueda de fortuna a través del cacao, el comercio y, por supuesto; la inmersión de estos personajes en las costumbres nada aburridas ni despreciables de la época para hombres de "bien".

Un ritmo tremendo y en definitiva entretenido. Entusiasmada por leer más de Jorge Amado

A funny story in the context of Arab immigration (widespread in Turkish immigration) to Brazil in the early twentieth century. Framed in search of fortune through cocoa, trade and, of course; the immersion of these characters in the nothing boring or negligible customs of the time for men of "good".

A tremendous and ultimately entertaining pace. Excited for read more by Jorge Amado

Marco Pontual says

A Descoberta da América Pelos Turcos

Tô querendo ler mais coisa em português, então achei esse livrinho perdido aqui em uma estante em boa hora.

O Jorge Amado escreve muito bem e a historinha até que prende. Não tenho muito mais o que dizer, o livro é muito pequenininho (128 páginas e letras enormes).

Não recomendo a leitura porque não é grandes coisas, as mais famosas devem ser melhores.

Fim.

Suhail Dhawan says

Okay, I'm going to be THAT guy and just have a bit of a rant about this little novella by someone described as a giant (!) by Saramago, but honestly what is this book even about. He might as well just have titled it as "She needs a good fucking" because that's all that's been going on for the lionshare of the 70-odd pages. No idea why all characters are so unilateral in their understanding of gender and sure, Amado is describing an older, different time, but to what end? There are realistic depictions of gender in several other Latin American novels set in a similar period but there's always more of a point than just the berating of women in the book. I really think I'm missing something but I have no idea what.

The one star is just for writing and narrating the character of Salua, the only really reasonable silhouette in an omnishambles of a book. /rantover

Phrodrick says

Bottom Line first: Jorge Amado's The Discovery of America by the Turks reads as an earthier and briefer variation of Cannery Row by Steinbeck, John (1993) Mass Market Paperback

Amado writes well of people living at the edges of society, pious in their own way and much given to the pleasures of the flesh. The result is not explicit or obscene but it is not a good choice for the pre-teen set and may be offensive to any number of people on religious grounds, references to drinking and the regular access to ladies of pleasures. The point of view is very male, but the women have their own appetites and areas of authority. The tone is comedic but not laugh out loud funny. Recommendation: I enjoyed The Discovery of America by Turks. I am not sure that it has traveled well in time, but the writing is engaging.

According to the Introduction, Amado had been approached to write a story just long enough to entertain a person flying from Europe to the Americas as part of the 500 year Anniversary of the European Discovery of America. The original scheme was never executed, but Amado took up and abandoned sub-plot from a larger novel and so became The Discovery of America by the Turks.

The Turks in question are the young Jamil Bichara and the older Raduan Murad. They arrive in Brazil in 1903 having started from widely different parts of what was the still known as the Turkish Empire. Hence they are known to us as Turks. The younger man is a dedicated working man with goals of becoming an independent business owner. The older is a gambling man, famous for among other things inventing a respected and successful method of cheating.

That they are both single and much given to the flesh pot of their remote villages are important plot points. This being a very short book less than 100 pages any more details edges into plot spoilers.

Theirs is a world where visits to the local brothel and social equality between these ladies and even men of some social standing is the norm. The most basic societal rule about sex is that wives are for the making of children and the brothels are for men to express their lusts.

Again without being too specific the entire attitude towards women is not likely to endear this book to many 2017 readers.

Accept that this is a comedic view into a world remote in time 1910 or thereabouts) and space, remoter parts of Brazil. Accept that these people are here for light amusement and not moral example and except that well

a few more things and you can expect to read a naughty well written novella. If it helps any, Amado has a much repeated view of how women are tamed. Unspoken is the ironic fact that similar approaches can be used to control the men of *The Discovery of America by the Turks*.

Karie says

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Eyra Matos says

Fabuloso!! Machismo turco brasileño divertidísimo.

Jamie Barringer (Ravenmount) says

Ok, I get that historical fiction is supposed to take into account the gender stereotypes and attitudes of the time the story is set in. That said, the men in this story are awful. I'm sure the men who actually settled Brazil were also awful, and it is instructive every so often to be reminded of how men used to think about and deal with women. After all, many men still harbor similar attitudes and try to apply similar standards to their relations with women now.

The story in this novella is about a Lebanese man and a Syrian man, misnamed Turks by their fellow travelers, who settle in Brazil as it was just being colonized. The point of publishing this story was in part to include colonists from these countries in the national story of Brazil, correcting a long-maintained literary blind-spot. Amado does a decent job of describing the rough, risky life of these colonists, but this is not my favorite book set in early Brazil by a long shot.

Evan says

Saramago introduces Amado as the voice and spirit of Brazil-- yet another major world author all but unknown in the US. Given that, I was delighted to find this little novella in an airport bookstore at LaGuardia-- what with delays, it just about covered the flight to Dulles. The story takes place within a community of recent Arab immigrants (mislabeled as Turks by Brazilians) creating new economic and social lives around Brasilia around the turn of the 20th century. From a sociological perspective, this is hardly a thick description-- one doesn't learn all that much about the cultural mores of these folk. The provocative title seems to promise a complex reflection on globalization and colonial histories. There's some of that-- it was originally composed as a contrarian entry for a grand literary tribute to the quincentennial of Columbus. However, the work is mostly a sweetly vulgar adaptation of *Taming of the Shrew*. Stylistically, however, Amado has more a touch of Rabelais than the Bard, and it is the bawdy fruition of unlikely romance that makes this a satisfying read. Hard to think of a writer in English who can be crass and tender this well.

Also notable is an afterward in which Amado's wife explains how she rescued the entire manuscript from the trashbin many years earlier. Amado had written it as one chapter of a longer novel and rejected it for being way too long. Thank god for attentive literary spouses!

Charles Sheard says

This brief, light and bemusing tale invites the reader like a long breezy evening over drinks in comfortably cushioned club chairs, listened to a smooth voice recounting adventures out of the past youth. The connection to the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage, which spurred the work, is non-existent, but doesn't lessen the story at all.

Algernon says

or

**How the Arab Jamil Bichara,
Tamer of Forests,
On a Visit to the City of Itabuna,
Seeking Nourishment**

**for his Body,
Was There Offered
Fortune and Marriage;
Or Yet Again
the Nuptials of Adma**

P G Wodehouse meets William Shakespeare ("The Taming of the Shrew") meets the lush, irreverent tropics in this short novel written to mark the 500anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. This is my first read by Amado, and I was pleasantly surprised to see the social issues wrapped up in a laidback, humorous package - a festive mood that appropriately celebrates joy of life and cultural diversity instead of stirring up old controversies:

I hope readers will have some fun with the events and incidents leading to Adma's nuptials, which took place in the city of Itabuna at the beginning of cacao culture, in the early years of the century, when the Turks finally discovered America, landed in Brazil, and became Brazilians of the best kind.

First of all, the two protagonists are neither of them Turks: one is a Syrian and the other one is a Lebanese, but since the novel is set in 1903 and these two countries were stil part of the Ottoman Empire, it was easier to use one catch all name for these immigrants. In order to make the link to the Columbus festivities (and to throw a couple of barbed arrows at the official historical accounts), the author gave one of the 'Turks' a historical family name:

Raduan Murad, a fugitive from justice for vagrancy and gambling, a scholar with seductive prose, revealed to his steerage companion, the Syrian Jamil Bichara, that during sleepless nights bent over beat-up old books about Columbus's first voyage, in the roll of sailors making up the crew of one of the three caravels on that festive excursion, he's discovered the name of a certain Alonso Bichara. Bichara the Moor, signed on maybe, who knows, by a press gang, one of those many heroes forgotten when it was time for celebrations and rewards: The admiral is covered with glory and the crew is covered with shit.(in spite of all his erudition, Raduan Murad had a foul mouth).

The immigrants land in an idyllic and carefree little town in Bahia that benefits from the sky high prices the rest of the world is willing to pay for the cocoa produced in the region. This abundance is a source of a Belle Epoque characterized by surprisingly loose morals: alcohole, gambling and prostitution are apparently the main occupations of the middle class. While the more serious minded Bichara goes out to the cocoa plantations to make a living, the epicurean Murad remains in town to enjoy life:

As for saying, as some did, that he was a sworn enemy of work, holding it in a holy horror, as so frequently happens with educated people, it would be a matter of an obvious injustice and ill will. If, in fact, during his early youth the Professor - that was what many people respectfully called him - stubbornly avoided tasks that were not in line with his intellectual capacity, there was no more assiduous and punctual laborer at the poker table or in any other game of chance.

To bring the 'Turks' back together, Amado brings into the equation a wealthy widower merchant with three daughter: two nubile ones chased by all the young men in town and one harpy who makes her father's life miserable by insisting he gives up drinking and wenching every night. If only somebody would come and take Adma off his hands, he would be ready to part with half of his shop. Murad acts as the go-between, but would Jamil Bichara be ready to endure a lifetime of henpecking for a better chance at wealth?

This story doesn't need an indepth analysis of motivations and social commentary. Read it as it was intended,

as a rose-tinted fable of the integration of immigrants into a young and non-conformist nation. I really liked the prose and the humour of Jorge Amado, so I intend to check out more of his work, after I finish with Louis de Bernieres South American trilogy, another fine example of the exuberant and scandalous habits of these hot blooded people.

Chris Linehan says

Again I find myself frustrated by the lack of a half-star option on Goodreads. Goodreads, if you read the reviews on your app, I beseech you, give us a half-star option.

This is the second Amado book I've read. It was quite a surprise in how different this one was to The Violent Land. It starts out a bit confusing and jumbled but it ends quite well. It's a bawdy, raucous tale. Amado notes towards the end that God is a Brazilian. If man was created in the image of God the Brazilian then this book captures perfectly what His creation would be like. It's a very funny read and at less than 80 pages totally worth the short time it takes to read!

Dwain Williams says

An enjoyable book.

Jorge Amado takes the reader to the early periods of Bahia. He's very descriptive in his characters as he unfolds their inner thoughts and desires. I have come to understand and appreciate modern day Brasil by reading about her past as interrupted by the master writer Jorge Amado.
