



Granta 113: The Best of Young Spanish Language Novelists

Granta: The Magazine of New Writing, John Freeman (Editor)

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Granta 113, published simultaneously in **Spain as Los Mejores Narradores Jovenes en Espanol**, showcases the work of 22 promising new writers. It is eagerly anticipated, as Granta's previous Best Young Novelist issues have been startlingly accurate, calling out the work of writers from Salman Rushdie to Jonathan Franzen and Zadie Smith.

Here, for the first time in translation, we predict the literary stars of the future.

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From Reader Review Granta 113: The Best of Young Spanish Language Novelists for online ebook

Wendy says

Too few women, too many Argentines, but honestly, I can't complain too much. (And I've only read two of the stories so far. One was fantastic, one was fantastically mediocre.) Thanks to Granta for making this effort, though how sad not to see Mexico represented.

Louise says

AS one might expect from a selection of stories by different writers, there is an uneven literary output. What I enjoyed was the unexpected pleasure of finding the noir going strong in Spanish writers, and the fantastical as well.

Adrian Buck says

Difficult too accept that the anthology on Pakistan (population 200m) would be better than the one on Spanish speakers (population 440m). Let's blame the translators.

Jay says

Twenty-two Spanish-language authors, all 35 years or younger, identified for their creative promise and gathered in a single volume published in 2010 (Granta, vol. 113). Eight are Argentinian; 6, Spanish; 2, Peruvian; 2 Chilean; and one each from Bolivia, Uruguay, Mexico and Colombia. Nine of the stories were either excerpts from already published works or from works in progress. The rest were new short stories.

The stories, whether extracted or new, were as varied as their authors. Certainly as a group they confirm the strong and engaging novelistic talents of a new generation of men and women writing in Spanish. They are for the most part new voices not necessarily in chorus with well-established writers such as Bolaño, García Marquez, Vargas Llosa and Goytisolo. Given Granta's track record with identifying new talent, I expect to hear more about several of the new writers sometime in the future.

I spent more time with these stories than I had initially intended. I ended up re-reading many of them two, even three times, particularly ones that seemed more experimental. Several of the stories grew on me in the re-reading. For example, Andrés Barba's "The Coming Flood" (a woman turns to prostitution in order to have surgery grafting a horn to her forehead) left me confused the first time around. And with Lucía Puenzo's "Cohiba" (a young woman recounts her experiences in Cuba during a week-long workshop presented by García Marquez and that ends in death) I needed a third reading to unpack its several layers of themes.

But other stories drew me in the first time around. Santiago Roncagliolo's "Stars and Stripes" (two young

acquaintances travel different roads to similar ends), Andres Neuman's "After Helena" (tensions and animosities in an academic community) and Federico Falco's "In Utah There Are Mountains Too" (a young girl stalks a Mormon missionary) were three of the more engaging. They were cleverly plotted with well-defined and engaging characters. And among the extracted authors, I enjoyed Matias Nespolo's "The Bonfire and the Chessboard" and Andres Felipe Solano's "The Cuervo Brothers". I would certainly be interested in reading more of the works from which the paragraphs came. Pola Oloixarac's "Conditions for the Revolution" (a mother and a daughter's conflicting responses to social conflict) was my least favorite piece, perhaps a bit too experimental for my tastes.

The translations all seemed extraordinarily accomplished. What I missed was reading the stories in the original Spanish. Even skilled translations miss important aspects of the stylistic uniqueness.

Chris says

A good collection of new young Spanish language authors. The works by Pola Oloixarac, Alberto Olmos, and Matias Nespolo were especially good. "A Few Words On The Life Cycle of Frogs" by Patricio Pron, the final work in the collection is a required read for anyone attempting to write.

jeremy says

the latest *granta*, featuring an array of "the best young spanish language novelists," is, for the most part, a strong collection of burgeoning talent. each of the twenty-two writers was born in or after 1975, and have at least one novel or short story collection already published. nearly half of the included writings are excerpts from novels in progress, or yet-to-be translated works, while the majority are short stories proper (some published herein for the first time). culled from three hundred submissions, these short pieces usher in a new generation of spanish language writers. lacking anything even remotely resembling the magical realism that previously brought fame to so many latin american authors, these works instead offer more contemporary, cosmopolitan styles and themes. although a few of the stories seem hollow and underdeveloped, all of the writers ably demonstrate great literary promise.

of the collection's twenty-two tales, the works that stand out as the finest are:

- * rodrigo hasbún (bolivia): "the place of losses"
- * javier montes (spain): "the hotel life"
- * andrés neuman (argentina): "after helena"
- * andrés resia colino (uruguay): "scenes from a comfortable life"
- * federico falco (argentina): "in utah there are mountains too"
- * antonio ortuño (mexico): "small mouth, thin lips"

* matías néspolo (argentina): "the bonfire and the chessboard"

* patricio pron (argentina): "a few words on the life cycle of frogs"

Alex Labant says

A handful of these stories rocked my psyche, and some almost compelled me to contact the editors and ask who paid how much to be published. Overall, an interesting collection; if I were more inspired, I would list my favorite stories on here, but instead they're written down on a post-it note stuck to the inside cover.

Chad Post says

Pretty solid collection. Some of my favorites: Santiago Roncagliolo, Andres Barba, Pola Oloixarac, Javier Montes, Andres Ressa Colina, Antonio Ortuno, Alejandro Zambra, and Patricio Pron. (Especially the Pron and Ortuno.) Definitely worth checking out . . .

BTW, we're running a "22 Days of Awesome" series on Three Percent, which featuring each of these authors one-by-one. You can check out all the entries here: <http://www.rochester.edu/College/tran...>

Anda says

i thought i would love this. oh well. books like this one remind me why i need to start using the library again. no investment...

Catherine says

I found most of these hard to get on with: many of the stories were too stylised, or political, or sex-ful for my taste (and I can put up with a lot, usually). I was sad that I wasn't drawn to picking it up more frequently since it is, after all, one of those full of fiction editions for which I yearn. The stories I thought were best were bitter-sweet: *Eva and Diego*, by Alberto Olmas (charting the beginning and end of a marriage) and *Stars and Stripes* by Santiago Roncagliolo (be careful what you wish for, someone else may get your dream).

Sarah says

An ambitious project, spanning much of Spanish-speaking South America and Spain itself, but ultimately the majority of the stories are mediocre and forgettable. Themes of childhood and adolescence dominate, and there is a strange sense of similarity across most of the stories. Many feel fragmentary and unsatisfyingly inconclusive - perhaps because the editors chose to include extracts from novels as well as short stories. Of all of them, I think I would only save the first and last, by Lucia Puenzo and Patricio Pron respectively: both are meta-studies, reflecting on the nature of writing and learning to be a writer, but are also weaved through

with strong narratives in their own right. Overall, not Granta at its best.

Veronica says

I was very underwhelmed. I was hoping to find some new Spanish writers that appealed to me enough that I would battle through their work in Spanish. But none of these really tempted me to make that effort. A lot of the stories were tediously modern, alienated, and absurd. The only ones I liked were Javier Montes' *The Hotel Life* and Federico Falco's *In Utah There Are Mountains Too*. The others left me cold for the most part.

And some of the translation was surprisingly bad -- clumsy, ugly phrasing. I don't expect a professional translator to use "ignore" in English to mean "be unaware of", or to refer to "burning cigarettes" when they clearly meant "smoking cigarettes". You were always aware that the work was translated -- except for the Falco story, limpidly translated into natural, flowing English by Alfred Mac Adam.

Lawrence says

This was another good issue of Granta. Although I cannot say that I liked every story in this collection, I appreciated Granta's initiative to introduce the English-speaking world to some of the potential stars of Spanish-language lit. I hate not having better foreign language ability, but in this small way Granta makes up for my inadequacies. And, this issue confirms that Spanish-language lit has come a long way from the magical realism of Garcia Marquez (not that there's anything wrong with magical realism).

Patrick says

I don't know if it's just that the short story isn't really my thing, but very few of these stories grabbed me at all. I can't say I finished this thinking "I wonder what his/her full length novel will be like?" Which is surely the point?

Tuck says

these stories are for the most part ALL DAMN GOOD. some are new short stories, some are chapters for new novels. most all are in the modern style, not magical. one sort-of-theme running through most are the global war on terror and what that really means. santiago roncagliolo is excellent, patricio pron too, andres neuman, carlos yushimito, elvira navarro, hell, they are all good pretty much.
