



Ventriloquism

Catherynne M. Valente

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In this, her first story collection, six years of multi-award winning Catherynne M. Valente's acclaimed short fiction comes together in a single volume. From Mars to ancient India, from the interstellar deeps to post-war Leningrad, from selkies and gingerbread houses to zombies, noir detectives, and video games that never were, these stories leap from genre to genre, voice to voice, outer reaches to inner hearts. Here you will find strange secret histories, back-alley deals between steampunk and pirate stories, between fairy tales and moon colonies, Antarctic cartographers and interplanetary documentary filmmakers. Here an author throws her voice—and a family of strange dolls speaks, as if by magic.

Ventriloquism Details

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Author : Catherynne M. Valente

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From Reader Review Ventriloquism for online ebook

April Steenburgh says

"But I am telling this story, and the honor of refracting the angle of the reader's vision is mine and mine alone." -Secret History of Mirrors, from Ventriloquism by Catherynne M. Valente. It is Valente's unique perspective that makes this book stand out. Each story sings with startling individuality and makes the reader take notice and really read.

Ventriloquism is an eerie and beautiful read, an effortless melding of the familiar and the strange into something that is alluring and horrifying and impossible to put down. It is an exultation of words and images- weaving stories with sensation and emotion, raising goosebumps and heart rates.

It would be impossible to pick out favorites, but the strongest pieces were the ones that crept up on the reader, revealing something familiar from the core of something strange and catching the reader breathless and surprised. Valente has a way of taking rather worn out fairy tales and images and coaxing from them something so new that the original is made stronger as a result. There are beautiful and horrifying relatives to Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White... Valente touches upon some of the most beautiful and quiet mythologies and breathes life into them.

If you find yourself reveling in the way a story sounds, tastes, and feels as you read, this is most definitely the book for you. The words aren't just written to form the stories, they are the integral pieces of the puzzle and every one of them is carefully chosen and important.

Danielle says

WANT <3

Sarah says

I love Cat's work, and I love short stories, so this was a slam-dunk for me. As an Omikuji subscriber and someone who actively reads Cat's stories when they're published, there were a few stories here that I had read before, but they were all well-loved friends. I have a hard time picking a favorite - I still love "Golubash" so much, and "The Radiant Car Thy Sparrows Drew" is gorgeous. And this is physically such a beautiful book.

Kopratic says

The first collection. The first time different moments of blood, sweat, and tears were able to sit down and take tea together. No, your eyes are not deceiving you. Those are infant versions of stories you know and love. See Severin Unck before she was Severin. Catch a total stranger fall headfirst in lust just to map her way to Palimpsest. See Prester John wander through this strange world. An Eden with no apples. Though if

we're honest with ourselves, apples and Eden aren't really mentioned together. Still, they are the forbidden fruit of fairytales. It always comes back to the apples.

Raleigh says

The best way that I can describe Catherynne Valente's writing is *silky*. Her prose is like poetry, and you can feel her hand in each and every sentence. She is a master of language, truly.

One morning, fine as milk, when I lived in Vienna and reclined on turquoise cushions with the Empress licking my fingers for one taste of my sweets, I went walking through the city shops, my golden cane cracking on the cobbles, peering into their frosted windows and listening to the silver bells strung from the doors.

"A Delicate Architecture."

Mainly they prayed. Hard, on their knees, with their mouths bent to the moon, so that she could hear them, way down in her heart of ice. *Oh, please*, they said. *Give us children with lips as red as blood, and hair as black as the sky, and hearts as pure as snow.*

"Oh, the Snow-Bound Earth, the Radiant Moon!"

Her sentences are some of the most beautifully crafted that I have ever read, and yet I found myself never being able to get close to them.

For me, the very things that makes her prose so beautiful -- the lofty language, the metaphors -- are what also create a distance between the reader and the story. Her characters talk the way she writes, and I couldn't help but feel incredibly disconnected from them. They refused to let me become fully immersed, no matter how I tried, and that's a truly upsetting thing because the worlds that Valente creates are the kind whose richness you want to swim in.

Chloë Yates says

Worlds of wonder, words like spun sugar. This book is one I will read and re-read forever.

Isabelle Santiago says

Beautiful writing and some of the most fascinating retellings I've yet to read. Hansel and Gretel, Sleeping Beauty, The Evil Queen (Snow White)... she hits my biggest weaknesses with hooked knives and digs them so deep that I don't care that they hurt. I like the pain. I was completely captivated from beginning to end. Have definitely become a fan. Will have to go grab up her other books just to get another taste of her layered writing style.

Kris says

Have you ever had a book that you really wanted to savor but, like your favorite dessert, cannot seem to slow down enough to feel that rich decadent taste roll around your tongue before it is gone?

Catherynne Valente is like that for me, and *Ventriloquism* even more so. I cracked open the cover yesterday and am already (sadly!) halfway through. Her lush prose and evocative stories draw me in like few other can. And I love her short stories most of all! I know that Ms. Valente can take pages and pages to get a concept across - and beautifully done at that, such as *Palimpsest* or *The Habitation of the Blessed* - but I love how condensed these stories are and how varied the plots from Buenos Aires of no discernible time but yet also all time, to Gunkanjima after the 1970's, Vienna in an alternate time, Hell, and even the story of a time that never was with a king who was once only known as John in our own time so many years ago.

This book will take a special place on my shelf next to my two other books of short stories that I cannot live without - Theodora Goss's *In the Forest of Forgetting* and Elizabeth Hand's *Saffron and Brimstone*. These are the kind of books that I can read and read again, re-shelve and come upon some years later to re-live through those stories and smile and laugh and cry just as I had when I first came across it.

Brilliant!!
