



Infante's Inferno

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Detailing the sexual education and adventures of the author, Infante's Inferno is a book about growing up in pre-revolutionary Havana. Viewing every girl as a potential lover, and the movies as a place both for entertainment and potential sexual escapades, Cabrera Infante captures the adolescent male mind-set with a great deal of self-conscious fun. With his hallmark of puns and wordplay - translated by Suzanne Jill Levine and the author - Cabrera Infante has written a hilarious version of the Don Juan myth set in the tropics.

Infante's Inferno Details

Date : Published June 1st 1984 by HarperCollins Publishers (first published January 1st 1978)

ISBN : 9780060152567

Author : Guillermo Cabrera Infante

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From Reader Review Infante's *Inferno* for online ebook

Simon King says

The portrayal of the women is completely stereotypical and superficial. Each time the character pursued a woman, I thought "Ok, can we get to know her? What is she like?" Instead, all the narrator is focused on is getting laid.

Infante's claim to fame is his use of word-play and puns in the Spanish language. Spanish isn't a language adept to these kind of word games in the first place. Most of the puns in Spanish in this book are ineffectual and lame, and most of the time they are in English anyway! The alliteration isn't particularly propulsive, it grates.

This book was written in London. Infante is compared to Joyce, because he's a quintessential Cuban reflecting on the land of his birth. Joyce, though, tried to create a kind of literary cosmology where every aspect of Dublin could be rebuilt and reconstituted. All Infante seems to care about is remembering juvenile shenanigans that, to be perfectly frank, he should have just forgotten. All you get is recollections of specific people, rather than time and place, and these recollections, as I pointed out above, are superficial.

A critic remarks that this is a "satire." I'm baffled as to how this is true. Infante just happens to be a Cuban dissident and just happens to have written this book in exile. But I could not disentangle ANY political commentary. It's just a series of over-long memories, which simply get more and more boring as they wear on.

Jacko Cabrera says

Una colección de mujeres, de amantes, de amigas. Eso es "Habana Para Un Infante Difunto". Una colección de historias de amor y sexo que marcan al autor y que se funden en un amargo abrazo con la ciudad post-colonial y precastrista. La literatura de Cabrera Infante, complicada a veces por el excesivo uso de paréntesis y aclaraciones varias, es tan mágica como visceral. Puedes oler la Habana, sus calles, sus paseos y el malecón, tan presente siempre. El capítulo dedicado a explicar la fauna del solar de Zulueta 408 es, simplemente, magistral. El final, onírico a más no poder, es único y deja los interrogantes justos, como debe ser. Ningún hombre entiende a la mujer, la observa, la ama pero no la entiende, eso es cosa de Dioses. Texto casi imprescindible, muy recomendable.

Nora says

"...pero ella ya estaba acariciándome, instándome a que subiera encima de ella de nuevo, a que volviera a mi tarea de profundizar nuestro contacto, de hacer del amor un verdadero conocimiento ... de convertir el amor en algo que dure no más de la muerte, sino mientras la memoria viva."

Ciudadano Cero says

Es una historia magnífica sobre lo que era la Habana

Glenn Russell says

Cuban author and master wordsmith G. Cabrera Infante's novel set in pre-Castro Havana presents a plot plodding along in four hundred pages with a sexual sameness as he recounts his many horny hormonally charged adolescent adventures in and out of luscious, lovely, lively lasses and in and out of many memorable movie theaters. The only reason a reader would want to continue reading past, say, page fifty, is the stunningly sublime wordplay: pungun punning, multiple malapropisms, outlandish onomatopoeia, lipograms, pangrams, tautograms, autograms and anagrams, neologisms, mangled morphemes, retronyms, oxymorons, acronyms, not to mention, among numerous others, regional slang and juicy janusisms. Apologies for all these odd obscure terms. I had to look most of these up myself to understand the author's wordplay more completely as I've been reading this novel on and off for the past several months.

Here's our narrator no pun intending as he moves among the movers and shakers: "I woke Etelvina dutifully many times, knocking on her door not like a cuckoo but like a woodpecker – no pun intended." And at another time, reflecting on an all-too-communal Communist: "But I feared that he was in Havana not for party reasons but for partying reasons – that is, he was after my mother, who was then a Communist beauty." And, at still another time, one young gal is described as "a fiddlestick on the roof."

Wordplay without end, as for example: "An April shower had begun, a typically tropical raucous rainfall, as abrupt in beginning as in ending." Again: "It became obvious that the little pocket was very tight even for my adolescent and hesitant hand, and so I paused paw poised." Yet again: "I locked myself up in one of the bathrooms to cry in anger and jealousy, forgetting the fermenting fumes of my pain of unquenched love, stronger than the stench. Then I got a fever which lasted a few days, and I have no doubt that its origin was viral not venereal." Such a prodigious plethora of play on words can wear a reader out, thus my recommendation is to read Cabrera Infante slowly, a page or two or three at a time, over a long stretch of time.

Guy makes James Joyce read like Raymond Carver. Well, more hyper hyperbole than accurate accusation but you get the point. Sorry, I could be taken to task for saying such, but when it comes to Cabrera Infante, I'm a bit of a polyglutton for punishment.

G. Cabrera Infante (1929-2005) - Born in Cuba and went into exile in London in 1965.

Tekla says

Me decepcionó el libro. Iba tratando de encontrar un retrato de la Habana del tiempo del autor entre las descripciones de mujeres pero no. No había mucho. Y aunque su uso del lenguaje era muy listo no compensó la falta de un cuento que me interesó.

MJ Nicholls says

A testosterone-fuelled mastercodpiece, *Infante's Inferno* is a testostathon like no other: a novel rife in relentless cunnilexicon, non-stop punnilingus, and frequent polylickwell play, a rampant semi-autobiographical account of the author's late teenage erotic exploits. A vivid evocation of life in '30s and '40s Havana, the novel chronicles the protagonist's fumbblings and failings in cinemas and cheap hotel rooms, his first erotic encounter with prostitutes, and his initiation into the sexual arts with Juliet Estevez: a curvaceous expert in providing pleasure on tap to willing men while her husband works. The second half of the novel is devoted to Margarita: his first love, whose mysterious charms and missing breast opens the narrative up to a comic feast of delirious proportions. Like Alexander Theroux's *Darconville's Cat*, a banal topic is elevated to staggering levels of erudition and wordplay, only in this case Infante revels in loves past and the female form: he has no scores to settle. I am spent from days in bed with this beaut so say simply: read this mastercodpiece.

Juan Carlos Santillán says

Aliteración: dícese de la figura literaria consistente en la armoniosa repetición de sonidos que con Cabrera Infante alcanza su máxima y mejor expresión.

Flood says

This is one of my all-time favorites.

Manuel Alejandro Crespo Rodríguez says

Pocos libros cautivan con su prosa como este. El relato es uno que nos mantiene en la intriga.

Book Soup says

The Ulysses of Havana. A must read. You feel like you're there. Literary realism.

--Tyson

Leo Robertson says

So my dad just came back from Havana, he really did, just got back from having dinner with him. I said, 'I'm reading this book, maybe you want to read it when I'm finished? It's a bit like a memoir of life in Havana.'

My dad opened up one page, read a line, wrinkled his nose. Flicked to another page, read a line, wrinkled his nose. Read the blurb, frowned.

'Where did you find this?'

'Well I saw it had rave reviews, and I was enjoying it but-'

'This book is trying too hard.'

This book is trying too hard. I enjoyed the 50 pages I read, honestly they were really good. But each page was the same. Do I want to read that same page I enjoyed 50 times 400 more times? Eh, have you seen the books waiting for me on my shelf?

F**k this book! I've got things to read :D

Héctor Rodríguez says

No entendí el final o.O

Frank says

Mi sono dedicato a questo dopo la lettura di Prima che sia notte di Reinaldo Arenas, pensando di avere un secondo e diverso punto di vista riguardo alla vita nell'isola.

Il libro si può riassumere come educazione e vita sessuale dell'autore.

La scrittura è scorrevole e le pagine passano veloci, ma quasi 600 sono davvero troppe.

Infatti il racconto è strapieno di divagazioni, con la narrazione principale che viene continuamente interrotta per inserire aneddoti, ricordi e qualsiasi altra parentesi venga in mente all'autore.

Molte cose vengono scritte, raccontate e ribadite.

Analizzato da questo punto di vista, il libro potrebbe essere tranquillamente almeno 200 pagine più corto, senza rischio per il lettore di perdersi alcunchè, anzi probabilmente si guadagnerebbe una qualche stellina in più.

Regna costante per tutto il libro un'atmosfera di sesso facile e spensierato da parte del protagonista, al punto da diventare abbastanza scontato e a volte noioso.

Le mie aspettative iniziali non sono state soddisfatte perché l'autore descrive la maggioranza della gente come poveri o poverissimi, ma non spiega come queste persone riescano a sopravvivere.

Non sono pertanto riuscito a farmi un'idea precisa di come fosse la vita della gente comune ed era questa la cosa che mi interessava maggiormente.

Un libro di gossip, non molto di più.

Si salva la parte dedicata al cinema, il protagonista è stato critico cinematografico, perché vengono nominati molti film dell'epoca che potrebbe essere interessante riscoprire.

Nel blog qualche dettaglio ulteriore sul libro:

<http://ferdori.wordpress.com/2010/02/...>

Benito says

Segunda lectura y segundo disfrute de esta obra prodigiosa. Un escrito es literatura cuando la forma del lenguaje es un objetivo autónomo respecto a la función comunicativa. Y en Cabrera esa autonomía es sublime.

Es una pieza para disfrutar del humor, del retruécano, del habla habanera y en general, de una agilidad con el lenguaje que no soy capaz ni de describir.

Martin says

One of the best books I have ever read. Brilliant. A real jewel. One of those books you do not want to end...Cabrera Infante goes back to his youth-hood in La Habana, Cuba, in the 30-40's and describes his "education sentimentale" and the progressive learning of love, sex and seduction. The book is a real hymn to the woman (or women) always searched, always desired, and to la Habana, discovered at the same time and loved in the same passionate way. I had the chance to read most of this book while I was visiting La Habana: this combination was a unique experience that I recommend. Thanks Cabrera Infante for the literature...

Andrew Sare says

Much of the criticism of John Updike's work could be leveled at Infante. Writing as a wanker wanking, no plot,... what else? Oh, he comes off as a jerk, hes sexist, self absorbed. - hah, well my response to critics of both Updike and Infante is that both writers could be all those things, suffer all of those faults (I've never been acquainted with either) but they're still both great writers. I don't read to judge morality. I read to be entertained and learn about the human condition. Playing it safe and hitting me on the head with morality turns me off.

One pointer I'd give to a future reader, especially those of you who know you are squeamish, easily offended, or tire easily - is to read the postscript first. That's where you'll find the keys and heart of the text. He's saved the best for last. - But who am I to suggest differently from the author's intention? Maybe its better to be disgusted a good bit by him as he rolls you through the mud.

Keep on rolling.

Rafa says

Tribulaciones de un Don Juan en La Habana precastrista. Tengo la sensación de tiempo perdido.
