

Nevada Days

Bernardo Atxaga

Margaret Jull Costa, Translator

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Bernardo Atxaga's *Nevada Days* novelizes the author's writer's residency in Reno, Nevada. In it, he relocates from Spain with his wife and two daughters for the spot, working against the backdrop of a United States at war—though tired of war and its turmoil. As Atxaga participates in local culture, the mythos of the American West, and presidential politics, his account navigates the territory between fact and fiction.

Imagination and dreams permeate this memoir, and Atxaga flags these transitions in passages labeled “according to the version,” “dream,” etc. Subtle yet intentional, Atxaga's gesture signals caution. Nonetheless, it's all too easy to slip into his world and trust it as authoritative and absolute.

But *Nevada Days* plays with a fundamental unknowability. There's a tension between the acknowledgement that “No one lingers in the memory in all his or her complex biographical detail, and there are very few who become emblematic figures” and the narrative that Atxaga crafts, full as it is of big personalities, grand gestures, majestic landscapes, and looming threats. Even though this seems to be part of Atxaga's warning, it's also a human weakness: a propensity to fall into a story despite all warnings that we're being led.

Maneuvering from daily life in and around Reno through fragments of imagination and dreams, *Nevada Days* explores the often unnavigable space between experience and meaning. In a memoir that could be read as a straight, factual account, Atxaga is persistently interested in the personal narrative's vulnerability and the disruptions any story undergoes on its journey to become known: “As Daniel Sada might have said, reality was the desert, and representations of reality the stage set.”

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