

The End

Fernanda Torres

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The End is vivid and irascible as it confronts the reality of aging, regrets, and death.

Famed actress Fernanda Torres's debut novel, *The End*, is a brutally unflinching look at the lifelong friendships of five aging male friends and the women in their lives. Set in Rio, the novel travels back and forth through time, following the men's self-indulgent escapades throughout the city from hole-in-the-wall bars to luxurious penthouses.

Torres's conceit is that she introduces each man through his death. All of them—Álvaro, Sílvio, Ribeiro, Neto, and Ciro—get their own chapter, highlighting their women, their intertwining relationships with each other, and ultimately their ends.

Álvaro is an old curmudgeon who is alone after leaving his ex-wife and daughter. Never very interested in sex despite many attempts, he finds women "nagging, sniveling, needy." Sílvio lives his life to excess, up until his death, via eight balls and gaúchas. He was once married to Norma but cheated on her continuously.

Ciro is an elegant ladies' man who gaslights his wife so badly that she is sent to a psychiatric hospital. Ribeiro is a simpleminded bachelor whose life is the beach and illicit purchases of Viagra. Neto, who loves and resents his domineering wife until her death, is the most staid.

Within each man's story, Torres switches between the first and third person. The method showcases her agile hand at establishing voice, pacing, and tone. Hers is strong, economical prose.

Moments of humor offer much-needed relief from the unrelenting pessimism of the story. The machismo of each character is impressively rendered, though it creates an underlying current of resentment and unhappiness that can be overwhelming.

The story of each man could be considered a cautionary tale about the damage brought on through his own faults. The ever-present misogyny, realistically explicit, is sometimes difficult to read. These unlikable characters meet just and uncomfortably gratifying ends.

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MONICA CARTER (July/August 2017)

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