

The Mexican Flyboy

Alfredo Veá

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Anyone who enjoys magical realism would be committing a crime by skipping this remarkable piece of work.

Dreamlike and fantastical, yet strangely earnest, Alfredo Veá's *The Mexican Flyboy* is a magical realist tour de force.

Simon Vegas is a self-made man with a dream: end human cruelty and suffering. As a soldier, he encounters the mysterious antikythera device, invented by Archimedes for the purpose of time travel, steals it, and embarks upon a series of surreal journeys through history ... or, perhaps, through his own tortured past. All the while, he struggles to understand cruelty, to individually right every wrong ever perpetrated, and to resolve his own tragedy-marked past.

The Mexican Flyboy is both strange and beautiful, embodying the best of magical realism and literary fiction. In fact, Simon's time machine is literally magic: a manifestation of his childhood obsession with magic and magic-based superheroes. The book openly embraces an almost childlike form of magical thinking, which adroitly reflects Simon's early trauma and makes his character arc all the more satisfying at its conclusion. At the same time, the colorful, well-fleshed-out peripheral characters are generally well-rooted in reality. They provide an anchor to objectivity that reassures us that Simon isn't completely crazy, that his quest may be true, at least in part.

The book apes the style and structure of pre-Code comic books brilliantly, evoking a literary whirlwind of sudden, fantastic deeds and abrupt plot developments. At first, this over-the-top style is bewildering. Yet Veá never loses the thread of the story, and the plot progresses clearly, never abandoning the audience. Though reminiscent of the style of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, this book is distinct and unique, far more invested in objective reality than Marquez's world of layered metaphors.

The Mexican Flyboy is a book about which longer, more complicated analyses could—and should—be written. It is more an experience than a book, a piece of literature that grabs and transports. In fact, it is not to be missed, and anyone who enjoys magical realism would be committing a crime by skipping this remarkable piece of work.

ANNA CALL (Summer 2016)

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