



The Wind Traveler

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The Wind Traveler is a lyrical novel about loss and atonement.

Ángel, seeking to numb the pain of losing his mother, abandons his law training and joins the army to fight against Peru's Shining Path revolutionaries. He finds camaraderie among fellow soldiers, but is traumatized by war's senseless brutality. Most especially, he is haunted by a woman who pleaded for his help, but whom he left for dead.

After leaving the army, Ángel goes through the motions of living, despising and punishing himself for what he's done. When the woman reappears, he becomes obsessed with discovering what happened to her and assuaging his guilt. The story follows his self-destructive pursuit of her, which leads to him paying for a crime he did not commit. Imprisoned, he finds solace and a path to redemption.

The story unfolds in layers, moving smoothly back and forth in time. Amid his existential odyssey, Ángel consults unexpected guides: his upstanding brother, fellow soldiers and wrestlers, priests, prison guards, outcasts, and prisoners, each with a unique life philosophy and portrayed with complexity and empathy.

Throughout, details capture the essences of places and people. Cueto's scenes and descriptions are tactile and immediate, conveying subtext and deeper meaning. Metaphors set a mood that supports the story's overarching themes of trauma, guilt, and the idea that we are forever bound to people we harm and who harm us, even if that harm is unintended. Spare language and well-placed observations result in interludes for absorbing the deeper implications of situations, adding tension and emotional texture. A series of quiet moments build to a crescendo and emotional catharsis.

The Wind Traveler is a powerful, multilayered novel that meditates on life and death, pain and suffering.

WENDY HINMAN (September / October 2020)

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