



Night Shift

Author:

EDGARDO COZARINSKY

Edgardo Cozarinsky, preeminent author and cinematographer from Argentina whose books have garnered awards such as Best Novel 2008-2010 and the Gabriel Garcia Marquez Hispano-American Story prize, excels again with "TURNO NOCHE," a new addition to the Andanzas collection through Tusquets Editores, S.A.

The story focuses, one at a time, mostly through inner monologues and dream-like memories, on three disparate characters whose lives seem unrelated. Yet, decades, distance, and social connections eventually close some gaps in what is known about them, to reveal the junction points of their destinies. Omissions serve the mystery and the sense of significant discovery, as seemingly random details from one story reemerge significantly in another, sometimes in reality, sometimes as a dream or mystical hint at a different reality.

READER'S NAME: Jeanette (Jenny) Lockington

The reader does not know the name of the first character, a girl who reflects on her unsatisfactory life in a provincial town that she intends to forget as she traverses the vast Argentine landscape toward the far away capital, nor do we know her fate after that journey. We then discover that an aging journalist, Pedro, through a story he was assigned, had encountered a recent arrival to Buenos Aires, a young woman named Lucia, with whom he fell hopelessly in love. When she abandoned the relationship with him and disappeared without a trace, she left him to share with a younger writer, Rafael, his obsession with the woman, couched in the guise of seeking Rafael's advice to write a novel about her, to help him learn where she might have gone and why she left. When

Pedro dies, alone, outside his apartment, Rafael as his friend goes through his things, seeking some trace of the planned novel, and picks up a bit more understanding about the woman and Pedro's feelings for her. Eventually, at a musical concert, a chance encounter and memorable night with a woman leads Rafael to the recognition that she must be the long-lost Lucia, the girl from the village, whose words on life cycles of decomposition stay with him after other details of the night have fled. He has the presence of mind not to verify her name and instead to let the mystery ride, remembering it as his own and not encumbering the experience with other pasts and disappointments. Yet she rises in his mind again years later, as he canoes in the waters of which she spoke from memories of long ago.

The narration and the characters' musings cover a range of themes, from what shapes and determines one's identity to perceptions of reality, and the impermanence of memory, especially with aging. The clearly etched imagery evoked with careful, intelligent word choice, appropriate to the experiences lived by the characters in their geographic and emotional states, seems a character in its own right, so powerful and visceral is the writing. The prose is measured and rhythmic, poetic and mesmerizing in its flow and precision, underlining variety and imperfection in characters and

life, faults and flaws, beauty and tragedy combined. Seemingly unimportant snippets from the past arise and tie events together—a poisonous spider bite treated by a witch doctor, later revealed as a spell to give the girl strength; the music of an accordion, heard when she left her drunken father to die, that presumably brought her to the concert with Rafael; the rotting of plant life in the waters that smelled like home. All of the themes, images, and plot lines merge intricately in an exploration of what makes us human and how individual experience yields unique perceptions of and responses to the living.

Turno Noche [Night Shift] would be an excellent and challenging book to be translated into English by a highly competent literary translator. I would suggest for the reading public of the United States, though, the addition of a detailed map of the geography and terrain, perhaps with some annotations of history, ecology, and lifestyle, which would make the book more understandable and relatable to audiences who have not experienced Argentina in its own right. I recommend the book for publication in the US and look forward to seeing it translated.

-