This Foolish Haze
Author:
Enrique Vila-Matas

READER'S NAME: Adan Griego

In his latest novel award-winning author Vila-Matas gives readers a text at times resembling a treatise on the value of literature. The two main characters, "invisible writers," articulate opposing facets: Simon Schneider residing in Spain, receives a meager pay for supplying countless literary quotations to this younger sibling, Rainer Bro, a successful writer in New York. Much of that success comes from being a recluse figure. In a Vila-Matas noted: "Right now I'm working on a character who is a compiler of quotes; he works for a disciple of [Thomas] Pynchon while at the same time planning a portable encyclopedia containing all of the world's possible phrases." The book is filled with phrases from past and current authors alike: Cervantes, Shakespeare, Flaubert, Kakfa, Joyce, Hemingway, Miguel de Unamuno, Luis Cernuda, Raymond Chandler, Colm Toibin, Salmon Rushdie and countless others. Their words are crafted into a dense narrative that moves back and forth in time.

The most intense part of the book is leading up to the meeting of the two brothers who have not seen each other in twenty years. The journey (yes, like Conrad's *Hearth of Darkness*) to Barcelona is narrated by Simon and happens during the politically charged October weekend of 2017 when Catalonia declared a short-lived independence from Spain. A city surrounded with a constant helicopter noise, reminiscent of the film *Apocalypse Now*, welcomes them to a crowded bar. But, did the meeting take place? Readers will have to find out for themselves! Vila-Matas is no stranger to English-speaking audiences with at least already available in translation. *Esta bruma insensata* may be the most challenging book awaiting them.

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