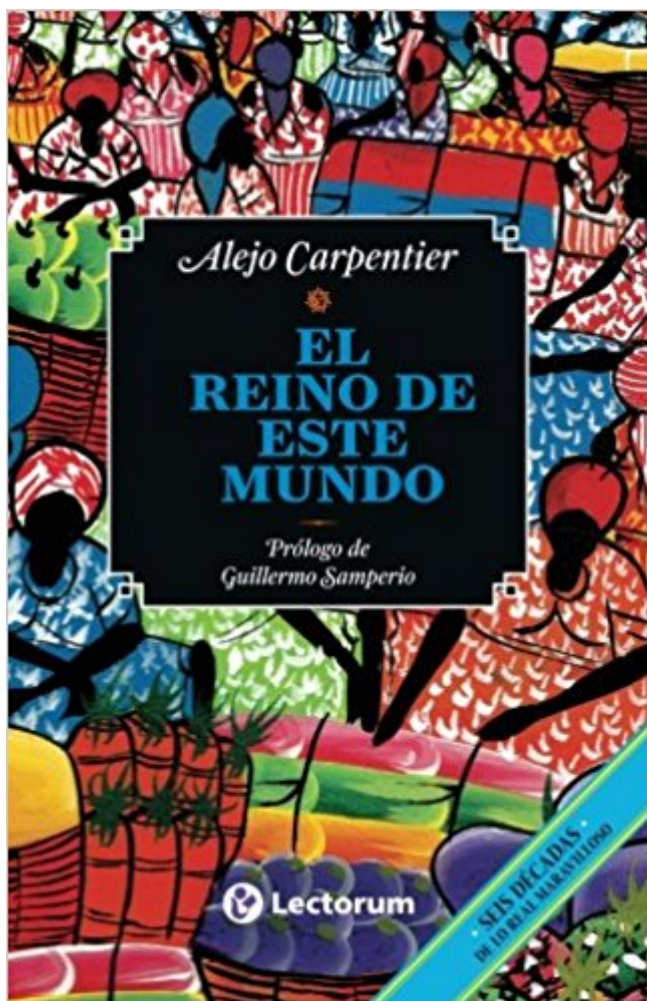


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El Reino De Este Mundo (Spanish Edition)



Synopsis

El reino de este mundo es una novela publicada en 1949 por el escritor cubano Alejo Carpentier cuyo tema principal, lo real maravilloso, se enmarca en la Revolución haitiana. En esta novela, ampliamente aceptada por la crítica y que pertenece ya al canon académico, el lector se introduce, a través de los ojos de un esclavo, en la fascinante atmósfera de una Haití en busca de independencia, un mundo de pasiones que se desenvuelven en medio de la feroz caricatura de los extraordinarios lujos de la corte bonapartista. Novela pionera del realismo mágico, en una América donde lo mágico es cotidiano y real.

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Customer Reviews

Fortunately my Spanish is competent enough to have read this in the original. I might otherwise not have as much enjoyed the full yet controlled prose had I read the work in doubtless sincere translation. The fascinating theme of the Haitian revolution, Henri-Christophe and the Fortress Sans Souci, is complemented by evocative characterizations and colourful, well-balanced sentences without the purplish tendencies I had noticed in the other book of Carpentier's ("El Siglo de las Luces") that I had read. For anyone wishing to sample Spanish excellently written, I would recommend this work.

Ti Noel vive una triste y monótona vida de esclavo resignado en la hacienda de Monsieur Lenormand de Mezy esperando la tan anunciada sublevación de negros prometida por Mackandal

y llevada a cabo por Boukman que le trajera la tan ansiada libertad. Salvado de ser pasado por las armas después de ser sofocada la revuelta pasa a Santiago de Cuba con su amo que acaba vendiéndolo para pagar sus deudas. Ya mayor vuelve libre a su tierra para caer prisionero y obligado a trabajar para el rey negro Henri Christophe en su palacio de Sans-Souci y la Ciudadela de la Ferriere, unas recreaciones antillanas del boato y la corte de los Borbones franceses. Ya anciano y abandonado a su suerte ha de soportar una tercera tiranía, la de los mulatos de Puerto Príncipe, que no dudan de impartir orden a la fuerza. Ti Noel no puede más, se rebela con todos sus poderes contra la opresión que nunca termina. Novela corta, precursora de lo real maravilloso en la literatura latinoamericana, a través de las memorias del esclavo vamos siendo testigos de la Revolución Haitiana (1791-1804), el reinado de Henri Christophe (1767-1820) y la llegada de la casta mulata al poder ambientando esta trama con descripciones de las costumbres de la colonia, la religión y el folklore haitiano sin olvidar los momentos mágicos de metamorfosis que hicieron esta obra original en 1949, año de su primera edición.

This book begins before the revolution that freed Haiti from the French and uses the life of the slave Ti Noel to describe life in Haiti under the rule of the French, Henri Christophe and after. I think of life in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries as running at a slower pace, and I was amazed at how tumultuous the life of Ti Noel is. In some ways, this book reminds me of "The Good Earth" (Oprah's Book Club) by Pearl Buck. Like the family in the "The Good Earth" and due to political and economic upheaval, Ti Noel is forced to move from place to place and when he returns home things are never the same. The chapters describing the building of the Citadelle under Henri Christophe's rule were difficult to read in Spanish because I wasn't sure whether the stories were that fantastic or if I was misreading the Spanish, but through subsequent research I now believe that the stories about the cruelty involved were true. In general, what happens to Ti Noel throughout his life is so far removed from my life experience that I have difficulty connecting to it, but the historical aspects of this book make me realize that the recent earthquake in Haiti is just another in a long line of devastating events in that country over several centuries. Of course, one of the main features of the book is magical realism, especially involving the character Macandal. Often readers do not appreciate the magical realism of Marquez and other writers, but I actually look for this in Latin American writing. I thought the best parts of the book were the chapters describing the transformations and travels of Macandal and was a little disappointed that he or similar characters did not occur throughout the book.

El reino de este mundo (This world's kingdom) is perhaps Carpentier's earliest great work and best masterpiece. As other reviewers have described, Carpentier tells us of the strange Haitian revolution, where the slaves freed themselves, killed their white masters (the master:slave ratio in Haiti was appalling) and created their own country. The title itself has deep evangelical resonance (as Jesus said "my kingdom is not of this world") and so the novel is a deep musing on how revolution comes to be and how it develops. One cannot separate this novel from the actual history Carpentier lived: in those years the Cuban dictatorship was trembling and the Cuban revolution was nigh. However, Carpentier (a convinced communist and devoted to the cause) doesn't fall into a pamphletary speech about the evil masters and good oppressed slaves. More than anything he was a writer and he doesn't spare any cruel detail, any absurd human behaviour. But his writing takes us further and further, into the realms of magic, people's hidden hopes, beliefs and illusions. Mackandal, the slave who frees himself and magically tries to free his fellow slaves is the main character. However, the story is told through the eyes of an old slave, Ti Noel who witnesses and survives all the turmoil. The style is magical, contained, but at the same time powerful and imaginative. Land, sky, heaven, earth, insects, dogs, houses, tyrants, masters, slaves, woods... all are magical and play a role in this magnificent tale. One cannot avoid remembering Faulkner and his Yoknapatawpha county. Mario Vargas Llosa, not suspicious of leftism, wrote a laudatory review of this book in his essay collection "The truth in lies". The novel is short (less than 200 pages) but exhilarating. Extraordinary read.

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