
Las teorías salvajes

Author: Pola Oloixarac

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Genre: Fiction

Reader: **Rosalind Harvey**

Las teorías salvajes is Pola Oloixarac's highly accomplished yet critically divisive first novel. It is a highly self-conscious demonstration of learning, a series of literary parodies shot through with biting sarcasm directed at pretty much everyone and everything in it, an examination of the parallels between sex and war, and a hard-to-classify work of philosophical fiction/fictional philosophy.

The narrative structure consists of three main intertwining stories. Little Kamchowtsky and her boyfriend Pabst are a repulsive yet highly intellectual couple with perverse sexual appetites and a love of new media. Their theory that intelligence is inextricably linked to physical unattractiveness is blown out of the water when they are approached by Mara and Andy, beautiful and clever, who propose a multi-way foursome. Johan Van Vliet, meanwhile, is a young anthropologist who, while on a field trip to Africa in 1917, traces the first drafts of his Theory of Selfic Transmissions, which proposes that mankind's history of being preyed on by wild animals is somehow stored as a cellular memory, affecting our actions and culture to this day. The final story is that of the narrator, pseudonym Rosa Ostreech, an intelligent, beautiful, and extremely pretentious philosophy student at the University of Buenos Aires. Obsessed with her professor August Roxler, the only man to have developed Van Vliet's theory, she believes only she can complete and improve the theory and aims to seduce Roxler in order to demonstrate what she is capable of doing for him and his theory.

Oloixarac's biting satire leaves nothing unexamined: from the blunt caricatures of Argentina's revered 1970s revolutionaries in a computer game invented by Pabst and Kamtchowsky called 'Dirty War 1975', to Rosa Ostreech's relentless attempts to appear erudite. Several chapters begin with a snippet of anthropological information about the violent initiation rites of various tribes, and the novel is peppered with theories and references of all kinds. It can perhaps be read as a reflection of the internet itself and its vast amount of easily-accessible yet randomly accessed information.

Oloixarac has been compared to Houellebecq for the relentless cruelty of her prose, and the book's world is certainly violent, perverse, and un-orthodox. The novel argues that our daily elaboration of theories, no matter how insignificant, is what makes us us. It has a confident tone and is clearly well researched, mixing high and low art to create a self-consciously multi-layered discourse laden with quotes and cultural references.

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