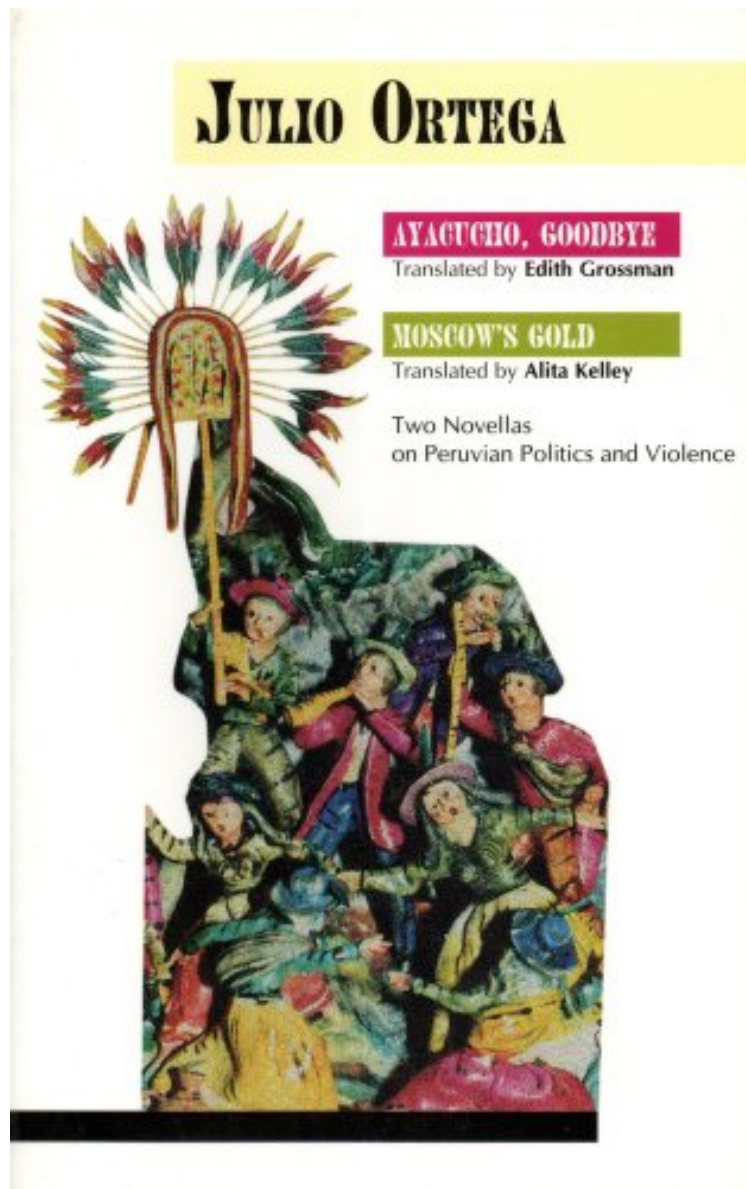


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Ayacucho, Goodbye: Moscow's Gold : Two Novellas on Peruvian Politics and Violence (Series Discoveries) (Spanish Edition)

Julio Ortega

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Julio Ortega : Ayacucho, Goodbye: Moscow's Gold : Two Novellas on Peruvian Politics and Violence (Series Discoveries) (Spanish Edition) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ayacucho, Goodbye: Moscow's Gold : Two Novellas on Peruvian Politics and Violence (Series

Discoveries) (Spanish Edition):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Two small treasures make a wonderful book By Alejandro Ayacucho, Goodbye by Julio Ortega This small treasure was translated from Spanish by Edith Grossman, whose translations of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Alvaro Mutis have received international acclaim. The book was written by Julio Ortega, a wonderful author, literary critic and literary magazine editor, and professor of Latin American Literature at Brown University. The title of this novella in Spanish is *Adiós, Ayacucho*, and it narrates the adventures of a Peruvian peasant leader named Alfonso Cánepa. At the start of the story, Alfonso is dead. He still has mobility and full consciousness, and laments that during his murder at the hands of the police he has been torn apart and is missing parts of his body. The premise that dead people have stories to tell is powerfully and poignantly explored. Alfonso decides to find his missing limbs, and surmises that the police have taken them from his mountain village to Lima. Along his journey to the capital city, he meets Shining Path members, counter-revolutionaries, intellectuals, peasants, revolutionaries, the military and even the president himself. In 56 pages the reader is treated to a wonderful story. The writing is superb. I was reminded at times of *Don Quijote*, and other times of the *Canterbury Tales*. The picture of Peru that emerges in the story is rich, colorful and eerily realistic. The history, culture and geography of South America come to life in this compact epic narrative. If you are interested in Latin American Literature, or in an excellent book, open the pages of *Ayacucho, Goodbye* and fall in love. My friend and co-worker Luz Torres happened upon this book while browsing the table at a book sale. Her curiosity piqued by the back-of-the-book blurb, she purchased this paperback for a couple of dollars. In an act of generosity for which I am most grateful, she loaned it to me. The book contains a second, equally wonderful story titled *Moscow's Gold*, or *Oro de Moscú* in Spanish. This 26 page story brought me back to the Bogotá of my youth. Back in the 1950s capitalism, communism, democracy and fascism were hotly debated political and ideological subjects. Our father Gustavo would meet his friends regularly, to keep each other informed of events in Europe and in Asia, particularly Russia. My uncle Manuel was a card-carrying communist. Even my middle name serves as a reminder of the fervor with which people held and espoused their political views. Conversations were suffused with the fear left over from *La Violencia*, a period of civil unrest following the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a popular and charismatic liberal candidate for the country's presidency. People would not venture out of their homes at night, and in the morning victims were regularly found lying dead in the streets. There was no count of the number of deaths, but it is regularly estimated to have been in the hundreds of thousands. Out of this unrest were born revolutionary movements including *Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC. Julio Ortega provides a very clear picture of growing up in this period of unrest and mistrust. The main characters are in high school. One is a communist, and the other a conservative Fonz-like worldly boy. They are both connected by the main character, who is coming to terms with his place in this world. The story is riveting, and the ending superb.

two novellas, tr Edith Grossman/Alita Kelley

From *Library Journal* The first and more effective of these two aptly subtitled "novellas on Peruvian politics and violence" is told by a murdered peasant leader wandering the countryside looking for his missing bones to complete his burial, a sepulchral vision that provides an allegorical mouthpiece ("this national cemetery is a wake...a graveyard with an airport"). The premise of *Moscow's Gold*, which involves an adolescent's coming of age, is on the whole less convincing. Ortega (Latin American literature, Brown) has achieved fame both in fiction (*The Land in the Day*, LJ 1/15/79) and in criticism (*Poetics of Change*, LJ 7/84); Grossman is a successful translator of Garcia Marquez. A startling and very clever attempt by exile Ortega to disguise Peruvian reality. Recommended for informed readers. Lawrence Olszewski, OCLC, Dublin, Ohio Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Kirkus* In these two Peruvian allegories, Ortega tries to use caustic humor to convey a nation haunted by government repression, daily terrorism, and communism--but fails when every joke falls flat. The first novella, "*Ayacucho, Goodbye*," focuses on the plight of a young campesino leader named Alfredo Cánepa. In order to halt his involvement in the socialist peasant uprising, the government publicly accuses him of being a Red terrorist, tortures him, throws him into a ravine, blows his limbs off one at a time with grenades, and buries him in an unmarked grave. But Cánepa can't rest without a proper Christian burial, and that can't happen because so many body parts got lost in the excitement. So the dead man gathers himself up (at least, what's left) and makes for Lima to collect the bones that remain in police custody. He meets lots of people along the way, including fellow reformers who complain ("You're not dead and you're not alive. In the revolutionary struggle there's no room for centrists") and some cocaine dealers who force him to become a carrier ("You only have one choice...and it's the choice this country faces too: either get rich or die right now"). Readers root for Cánepa in his struggle to reach his final resting place--but less because he deserves it and more because it means an end to the painful dialogue. Fortunately, the next novella, "*Moscow's Gold*," proves less irritating. Here, a high school student suffers when his best friend Alberto reveals he's a Communist. The narrator wants to think Alberto has been brainwashed and tries to focus on the things they have in common (writing, books, and women), but during high school military training, when the two find themselves on opposite teams, the narrator's true animosity

surfaces. Ortega's heavy-handed approach and obsession with satire overshadows these potentially powerful narratives. -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. Language Notes Text: English (translation)
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