



Fantomas Versus the Multinational Vampires: An Attainable Utopia (Semiotext(e))

Julio Cortázar

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Octavio Paz: "If you love art, do something, Fantomas!" Fantomas: "I will, you can depend on it."

First published in Spanish in 1975 and previously untranslated, *Fantomas versus the Multinational Vampires* is Julio Cortázar's genre-jumping mash-up of his participation in the Second Russell Tribunal on human rights abuses in Latin America and his cameo appearance in issue number 201 of the Mexican comic book series *Fantomas: The Elegant Menace*. With his characteristic narrative inventiveness, Cortázar offers a quixotic meta-comic/novella that challenges not only the form of the novel but its political weight in contemporary cultural life. Needing something to read on the train from Brussels (where he had attended the ineffectual tribunal meeting), our hero (Julio Cortázar) picks up the latest issue of the *Fantomas* comic. He grows increasingly absorbed by the comic book's tale of bibliocide (a sinister bibliophobic plot to obliterate every book from the archives of humanity), especially when he sees the character Fantomas embark upon a series of telephone conversations with literary figures, starting with "The Great Argentine Writer" himself, Julio Cortázar (and also including Octavio Paz and a tough-talking Susan Sontag). Soon, Cortázar begins to erase the thin line between real-life atrocities and fictional mayhem in an attempt to bring attention to the human rights violations taking place with impunity in the country from which he was exiled.

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