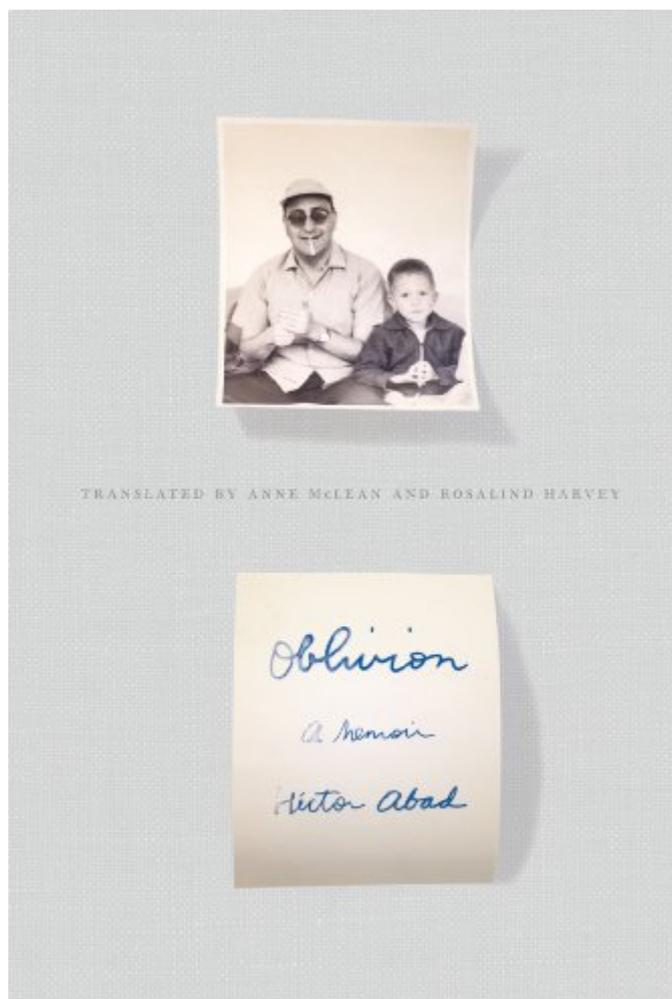


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Oblivion: A Memoir



Synopsis

Oblivion is a heartbreaking, exquisitely written memorial to the author's father, Hector Abad Gómez, whose criticism of the Colombian regime led to his murder by paramilitaries in 1987. Twenty years in the writing, it paints an unforgettable picture of a man who followed his conscience and paid for it with his life during one of the darkest periods in Latin America's recent history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mario Vargas Llosa wrote on the cover jacket of this book, "It is very difficult to summarize Oblivion without betraying it, because, like all great works, it is many things at once". Having been thus warned let me try to avoid betraying it. It is essentially a biography of the author's father, Hector Abad Gómez, a Professor of Public Health at the University of Antioquia who was assassinated by right wing paramilitaries in August 1987 at a time when as head of a Human Rights organization, he was condemning the violence on both sides. But, of course, being a biography of the author's father inevitably means it is an autobiography of the author growing up in a house with a very Catholic mother and an agnostic father who tried to vaccinate his son with readings from the Enlightenment after his days spent in a Catholic college. It seems that the vaccination worked. I picked up this book

at the airport bookshop in Bogotá about three years ago for something to read for the long journey back to Australia when it first came out in Spanish. I was enthralled, and couldn't put it down. It had the suspense of García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* because you know right from the start that the author's father will be assassinated and you have to wait until towards the end to find out how. His father had become a thorn in the side of the right wing Colombian establishment because of his demands for simple things like clean water for the poor, because, as Professor of Public Health he said it was useless dishing out pills to people when clean drinking water would cure the problem. For the haves, this was akin to dangerous socialism.

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