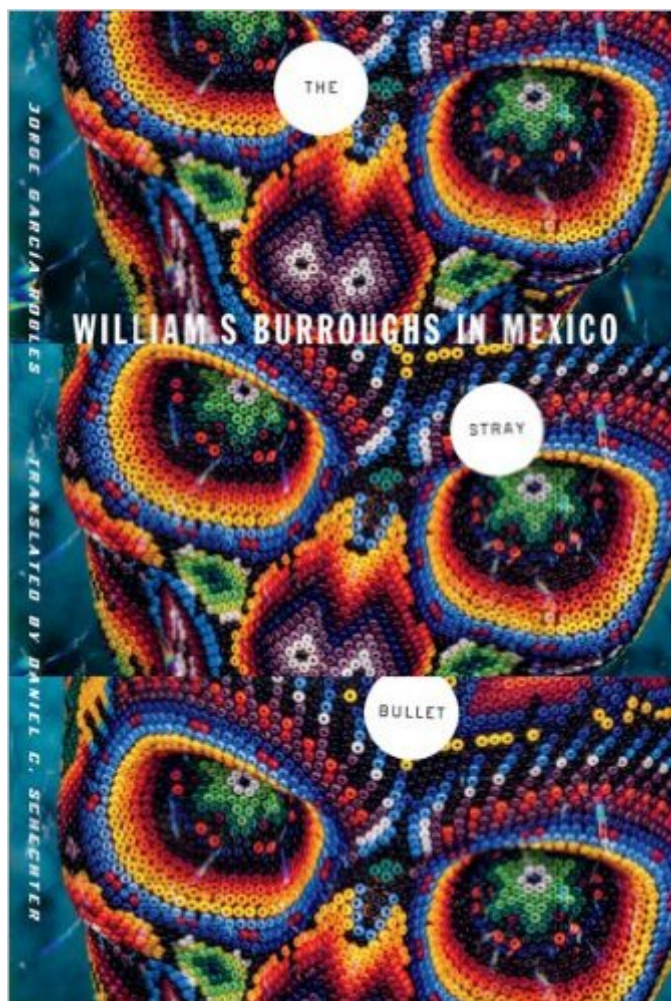


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The Stray Bullet: William S. Burroughs In Mexico



Synopsis

William S. Burroughs arrived in Mexico City in 1949, having slipped out of New Orleans while awaiting trial on drug and weapons charges that would almost certainly have resulted in a lengthy prison sentence. Still uncertain about being a writer, he had left behind a series of failed business venturesâincluding a scheme to grow marijuana in Texas and sell it in New Yorkâand an already long history of drug use and arrests. He would remain in Mexico for three years, a period that culminated in the defining incident of his life: Burroughs shot his common-law wife, Joan Vollmer, while playing William Tell with a loaded pistol. (He would be tried and convicted of murder in absentia after fleeing Mexico.) First published in 1995 in Mexico, where it received the Malcolm Lowry literary essay award, *The Stray Bullet* is an imaginative and riveting account of Burroughsâs formative experiences in Mexico, his fascination with Mexico Cityâs demimonde, his acquaintances and friendships there, and his contradictory attitudes toward the country and its culture. Mexico, Jorge Garc  a-Robles makes clear, was the place in which Burroughs embarked on his âfatal vocation as a writer.â Through meticulous research and interviews with those who knew Burroughs and his circle in Mexico City, Garc  a-Robles brilliantly portrays a time in Burroughsâs life that has been overshadowed by the tragedy of Joan Vollmerâs death. He re-creates the bohemian Roma neighborhood where Burroughs resided with Joan and their children, the streets of postwar Mexico City that Burroughs explored, and such infamous figures as Lola la Chata, queen of the cityâs drug trade. This compelling book also offers a contribution by Burroughs himselfâan evocative sketch of his shady Mexican attorney, Bernab   Jurado.

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Customer Reviews

The Stray Bullet was first published in Mexico in 1995, where it won the Malcolm Lowry Essay Award; it's now been deftly translated by Daniel C. Schechter into English and contains a new preface. So, when I received an advance e-book version, for the purposes of feedback, I was glad to at long last be able to read this work in English. In 1990, Jorge Garc a-Robles, professor of literature, traveled from Mexico to meet and interview William S. Burroughs in Lawrence, Kansas. Much of the information presented in The Stray Bullet was gleaned from Garcia-Robles' interviews with Burroughs and those who knew him in Mexico City; extensive research on the Beats' lives in Mexico filled in the blanks. Burroughs contributed a written portrait of his Mexican lawyer, Bernab  Jurado for this book, and also supplied previously-unpublished letters written by him while living in Mexico. Garc a-Robles begins by painting Burroughs' history in broad strokes. The genesis of what would later be dubbed the Beat Generation is clearly explained, introducing us to the various players and untangling their often labyrinthine relationships. The author deftly takes the reader through Burroughs' life leading up to his exile in Mexico, an attempt to avoid jail time in the United States. It was an exile which would be life-changing, ending with his wife's accidental death in a tragic game of "William Tell." It's an event which is described here in detail, along with its aftermath. It was also in Mexico City that Burroughs began his novel Junky, which kicked off his writing career.

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