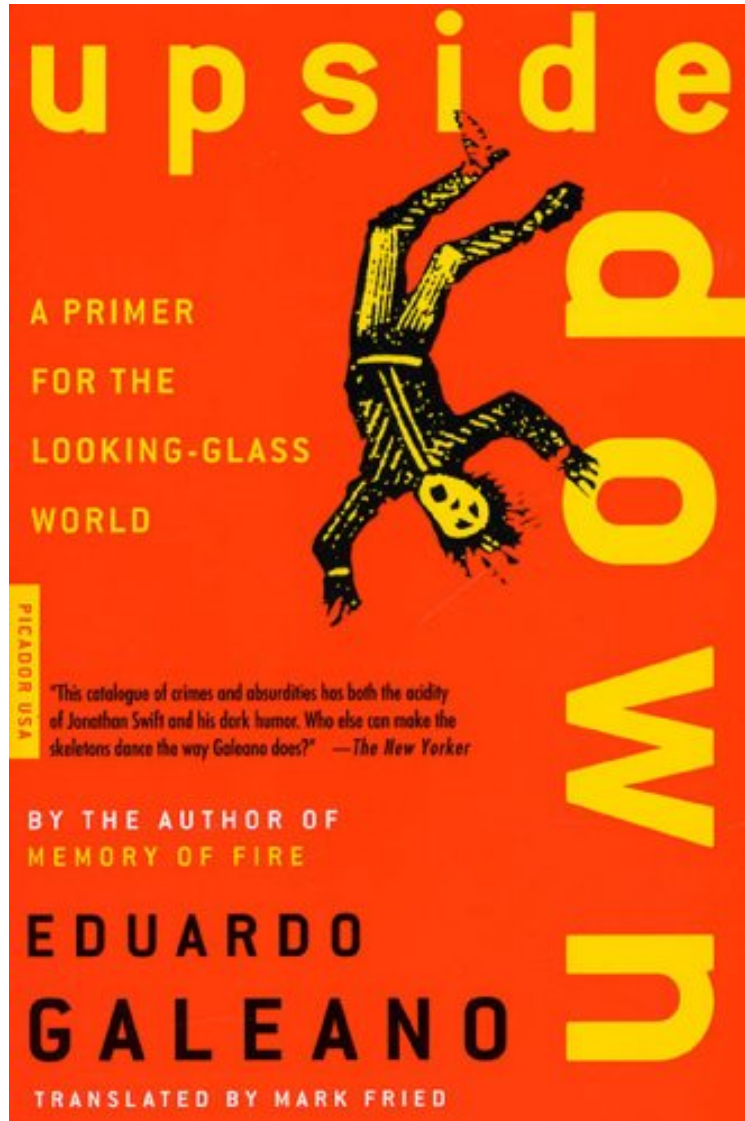


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Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World

Eduardo Galeano

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Eduardo Galeano : Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fortunately By Glenn Russell Eduardo Galeano's 'Open Veins of Latin America', describing 500 years of brutalization and exploitation of the peoples, lands and resources of Latin America by Europe and North America makes for tough reading. 'Upside Down, A Primer For the Looking-Glass World', on the other hand, takes hard-to-swallow subjects such as racism, sexism, corporate manipulation, government betrayal, workplace dehumanization, child brainwashing, environmental poisoning, systematic jailing, torture and murder and treats them alternately with laugh-out-loud black humor, out-and-out

sarcasm, and sharp steely needles of cynicism. Tell us what you really think, Eduardo! Modern culture and society as a bushel basket of rotten apples. Here's a sample of some of those most rotten and; and, I've linked a few words of my own experience tasting the unfresh fruit. The first chapter deals with education, which makes abundant sense since that is how we begin our human odyssey, as children imbibing our culturers' values. Galeano writes, "The looking glass world trains us to view our neighbor as a threat, not a promise. It condemns us to solitude and consoles us with chemical drugs and cybernetic friends. We are sentenced to die of hunger, fear, or boredom; that is, if a stray bullet doesn't do the job first." Fortunately, I grew up in a shore town where I spent many hours at the beach swimming and diving and at the ocean surfing. One thing I could never figure out: why were all the kids I knew armed to the teeth with cap guns, water guns, pop guns and even BB guns. When many of those same kids grew up and were sent to Vietnam, I started figuring it out. In Eduardo's chapter: Racism and Sexism 101, we read, "In the Americas and Europe the police hunt stereotypes guilty of wearing an unconcealed face. Every nonwhite suspect confirms the rule written in invisible ink in the depths of our collective conscience: crime is black or brown, or at least yellow." I witnessed a white mass exodus fleeing North New Jersey for Central New Jersey after the 1967 Newark race riots. If you live in the US, there isn't a hotter hot potato than race, both back then and now. When it comes to race, all you have to do is rub people the wrong way ever so slightly and an avalanche of anger and rage can pour out. One of personal favorite chapters: The Sacred Car. Eduardo begins by saying, "Human rights pale beside the rights of machines. Automobiles usurp human space, poison the air, and frequently murder the interlopers who invade their conquered territory; and no one lifts a finger to stop them." Ain't that the truth! Being a walker myself as a kid and adult, I've had an entire lifetime of playing dodgeball with cars. But I must admit one good thing: other than the occasional dog-owner walking doggie, I have the sidewalks pretty much to myself. Men and women in the US taking on the role of "the inside peoplers"; in other words, padding from home to car to work to car to shopping mall to car back to home. An entire population of ass-ploppers, plopping posterior cheeks in front of the TV, at the computer, at the dinner table, at one's desk at work, and, of course, behind the wheel of one's car. The automobile as the noisy, dirty glue fitting all the pieces together. And, God forbid, if anybody has any doubts, check out the flood of TV commercials: an unending stream of handsome, happy men and beautiful, sexy women driving sleek, shiny new automobiles. Good times in the land of plenty. On commercialization and brainwashing, we read, "Hours spent in front of the television easily surpass those spent in the classroom, when hours are spent in the classroom at all. It is a universal truth that, with or without school, TV programs are children's primary source of formation, information, and deformation, as well as their principal source of topics for conversation." As a boy I lived in a small house where the TV was king. My only escape was going off to college. As an adult I've never been a TV watcher. I suspect a good measure of my modest success in creativity endeavors is my freeing myself from the boob tube. Come to think of it, why do I no longer hear people calling that silly thing the boob tube or the idiot box? "The number of unemployment keeps on growing. The world has more and more surplus people. What will the owners of the planet do with so much useless humanity? Send them to the moon? . . . In Mexico, work is the only commodity whose price goes down every month. Over the past twenty years, a good part of the middle class has fallen into poverty the poor have fallen into misery, and the miserable have fallen off the charts." If anybody reading this has a steady job with good pay and adequate benefits, count your blessings. But, as you are counting, reflect: is your job empowering you to express the full flower of your creative energies, or is it just a tad deadening? I'll let Eduardo have the last word here. He writes toward the end of his book, "Every day, the ruling system places our worst characteristics at center stage, condemning our best to languish behind the backdrop. The system of power is not in the least eternal. We may be badly made, but we're not finished, and it's the adventure of changing reality and changing ourselves that makes our blip in the history of the universe worthwhile, this fleeting warmth between two glaciers that is us." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. First, Empty your Cup...By Mark John Herrera I really like Galeano's style- Humorous, yet poignantly insightful. This book will make you laugh, grimace, shake your head with ironic agreement, and will bring the reader to more than one realization about the absurd nature of our human experience in this Man-Made system, masquerading as it does, as a wholly benevolent entity. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. He's one of my all time favorite authors! By Mark Patterson I read EVERYTHING that Eduardo Galeano writes! He's one of my all time favorite authors!

From the winner of the first Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom, a biting funny, kaleidoscopic vision of the first world through the eyes of the third Eduardo Galeano, author of the incomparable Memory of Fire Trilogy, combines a novelist's intensity, a poet's lyricism, a journalist's fearlessness, and the strong judgments of an engaged historian. Now his talents are richly displayed in Upside Down, an eloquent, passionate, sometimes hilarious expose of our first-world privileges and assumptions. In a series of lesson plans and a "program of study" about our beleaguered planet, Galeano takes the reader on a wild trip through the global looking glass. From a master class in "The Impunity of Power" to a seminar on "The Sacred Car"--with tips along the way on "How to Resist Useless Vices" and a declaration of "The Right to Rave"--he surveys a world unevenly divided between abundance and deprivation, carnival and

torture, power and helplessness. We have accepted a reality we should reject, Galeano teaches us, one where machines are more precious than humans, people are hungry, poverty kills, and children toil from dark to dark. A work of fire and charm, *Upside Down* makes us see the world anew and even glimpse how it might be set right. "Galeano's outrage is tempered by intelligence, an ineradicable sense of humor, and hope." -Los Angeles Times, front page

From Publishers Weekly One of Latin America's most honored historians and authors, Galeano (*Memory of Fire*) returns with more barbed and bewitching accounts of the contradictions of the First World, as filtered through the enlightened sensibilities of a Third World scholar-writer from Uruguay. He chastises the moneyed First World, which he terms the "upside down world," as a culture gone amok that "scorns honesty, punishes work, and prizes the lack of scruples." In a series of wickedly on-target parables, lessons and homilies that force the reader to question the state of the world as we know it, Galeano slams industrialized nations for turning their backs on critical issues of our time, including poverty, child abuse, patriarchal arrogance and political deception. In "Practicum: How to Make Friends and Succeed in Life," he examines the nature of power, be it cultural, political and religious, revealing how in each area power is maintained through secrecy, money and terror. Humor, sarcasm and careful research inform his short tales of greed and tyranny in full bloom in "Master Class on Impunity," which displays the author at his witty, sardonic best. Concluding his primer with the most potent of his lessons, "The End of the Millennium as Promise and Betrayal," he delivers his hardest blows with stream-of-consciousness truths that match the best work of Richard Pryor, Lenny Bruce and Thomas Merton: "What has the world left us? A desolate, de-souled world, that practices the superstitious worship of machines and the idolatry of arms, an upside-down world with its left on its right, its belly button on its backside, and its head where its feet used to be." This is arguably Galeano's most spirited and eloquent examination of our topsy-turvy modern world. Da ticking literary hand grenade waiting to detonate in the mind of the reader. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal With this near-reverent look at current Latin American culture, Uruguayan Galeano adds to his impressive list of publishing credentials (e.g., the "Memory of Fire" trilogy) and awards (the American Book Award and the Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom). He subtitles this lively volume a "primer" — that is, a primer for pessimism and doom. Considering life in what he terms the South (for readers, the nations of Latin America), he highlights the hopelessness of countries that are not the United States. Galeano offers realistic perspectives on children, crime, racism and sexism, advertising and consumers, and haves and have-nots in a corporation-dominated world. His writing is entertaining and often humorous, yet it yields considerable insight into the everyday expectations of our neighbors to the south, and the author's conclusions are most troubling. Small inserts within the text illustrate his points — the most telling of which focuses on a young boy consumed with watching television, who, when informed of the death of a favorite aging aunt, asks "Who killed her?" Highly recommended for academic and larger public libraries. — Boyd Childress, Auburn Univ. Lib., AL Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s Galeano (*The Memory of Fire Trilogy*, etc.) has set to paper an astonishingly straight-faced indictment of yanqui capitalism that — for all its freshness and wit — could well have been freeze-dried at about the time of Che Guevara's assassination. The author views the world as essentially a matter of conflict between North and South, rich and poor, First World and Third World, big business and the small guy, and man against nature. Big business pollutes the Third World, uses their cheap labor, and sells them Big Macs, unleashing its power (and power is everything to Galeano) on the poor and voiceless. Galeano sees the US as heavy-handed and heavily armed — using its might to quell any uprising it doesn't like and to impose any government it prefers. The North he holds responsible for most social injustices — "free trade" being his euphemism for the slave trade. He also believes that whites were responsible for the annihilation of Jews, Gypsies, blacks, and gays during the Holocaust. Hitler, he points out, sterilized Gypsies — not very different, he believes, from the sterilizations performed in America during the 1930s on criminals, blacks, and alcoholics. Yet Americans, he believes, feel inexplicably superior. Blacks have been treated poorly in both the northern and southern hemispheres; dark-skinned black or Indian Brazilians form an underclass, rarely seen in the media or at universities. The author writes of the Argentine death squads, and he sees drug trafficking as a plot of the banks and gun manufacturers: "An illegal industry of death thus serves the legal industry of death." Galeano brings an almost Manichean dualism to his disquisitions on stock markets, capitalism, unemployment, nuclear arms — and much, much more. Old-time agitprop from south of the border -- Copyright copy; 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.