

Christendom but not for the plethora of Christian religions now in existence. Not defining his paradigms of Christianity even as an institutionalized phenomenon to be rejected leaves his arguments wanting. While *his* personal version of Christianity is attractive, it certainly does question the intelligence and honor of many who could also claim to have had the *experience* of Christianity in a different way.

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## CREACIÓN

Ricardo Menéndez Salmón. *La ofensa*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2007.

It is difficult to classify Menéndez Salmón's fifth novel, *La ofensa*, a work that takes place during World War II and its immediate aftermath, in Germany, France, and finally Great Britain. Structurally one might consider it a fairy tale gone awry, given its Kafkaesque plot and tragic ending. One might also think of it as a morality play, a denunciation of the evil visited upon Europe by Nazi Germany, with all the horror that Menéndez Salmón portrays, mostly in one terrifyingly graphic scene, although in terms of succinctness, one finds an even more riveting passage in Eugenio Suárez Galbán's *Balada de la guerra hermosa* (Premio Sésamo 1982), whose protagonist states so matter of factly, «Y yo, que sí lo viví, me lo sigo preguntando: ¿cómo es posible que se reunieran tantos cabrones en un solo país y tiempo?»

The novel might best be described as a long prose poem, a quasi-symphonic series of movements in which the protagonist unknowingly travels toward his tragic fate. Although it deals with the war and makes mention of certain historical figures and actions that are necessary for its minimum plot development, the text does not fit the traditional definition of a historical novel. Rather, it is an extended fictional essay that offers the reader one more literary denunciation of the horrors of Nazism, with the additional suggestion that part of the problem is the German's inability to fully separate him/herself from his identification with the German State, even when that State has carried out one of the most horrid crimes in modern history. To be sure, the fantastic nature of much of the plot, and definitely the ending, undercuts that historical statement, thus reducing the extension of the denunciation, and the existence of a love theme within the plot also helps to maintain the extremely human and humane nature of the tragic protagonist; the nature of the evil that determines the plot, however, is much more powerful than any of the plot's positive aspects and statements.

One wonders how to read this text, an obviously popular work that saw four editions in the first two months of 2007. While other authors—Muñoz Molina, Puértolas, Lago, Ferrero, Ovejero, for example—have chosen to extend the horizons of their plots, this novel is less a vision of a non-Spanish reality than it is a utilization of the most widely accepted horror of our time to refer to all the horrors that we still face every day. In that sense the work belongs in a category with a text like Muñoz Molina's *Sefarad*, in that it also forces the reader to recognize man's ability to destroy his fellow human being, the inhumanity, unfortunately, that exists within our humanity.

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Gonzalo Navajas. *En blanco y negro*. Verbum: Madrid, 2007. 178 pp.

Algo fundamental nos quiere mostrar esta límpida y persuasiva novela de Gonzalo Navajas. Los acontecimientos humanos, por humillantes y dramáticos que sean, pueden transformarse tras un lapso de sufrimiento y redención en recorridos de carácter más benigno. Aunque el magma de la realidad permanece mezclado y confundido, se vislumbra un hilo conductor de signo positivo. Lo comprobamos cuando el protagonista perdido en la «ciudad del fango» (o de las ratas), Tijuana, encuentra allí mismo a su ángel salvador en forma de mujer, madre y amante (como en Unamuno), procedente de la «ciudad del oro», Los Ángeles, la cual mostrará después amargas y maldades tras el resplandeciente oro hollywoodense. Novela de ideas convenientemente atrapadas en la carne de los personajes, de diálogo y discusión, de inmersión en los infiernos y de redención de culpas, está llena de paradojas y de elipsis pues únicamente las cosas esenciales caben en sus formulaciones. Sintetiza la vida de Miguel, combatiente en la guerra española en el bando de la CNT, que huye a América y reedifica su vida como guionista en el mundo del cine y al mismo tiempo glosa el recuerdo que ha dejado en su hijo Mike que se propone hacer una película testimonial, entre la ficción y el documental, sobre la aventura paterna.

Todo se da doblemente, en parejas. Así sucede con las ciudades. Barcelona vista durante la guerra y después en la época actual cuando Mike se presenta para filmar la película. Tijuana, recorrida malamente la primera vez por Miguel y visitada en la vejez para despedirse de ella. O el mar de la californiana San Diego relacionado con el rompeolas de Barcelona. También hay un doble viaje. Los dos como un itinerario que incluye intensas revelaciones. Primero, Miguel va de Barcelona a Los Ángeles y después Mike inversamente de Los Ánge-