

Los últimos artículos son una especie de recetas de cocina para alcanzar el éxito; la búsqueda de la vocación en el pueblo, la llegada a la gran ciudad, los peligros de la prostitución o las drogas acechan, la descripción del proceso de filmación de un primer filme en el alcantarillado pseudo-cultural madrileño. Almodóvar dice de Patty en el prólogo que «a base de reflexionar sólo acerca de la superficie de las situaciones acaba obteniendo lo mejor de ellas» (p. 10). Esta parece ser la clave de la actriz, los textos y el director: la superficie de las situaciones, el énfasis en la dialéctica rabo/almeja como axiología básica del desparpajo en el contexto del Madrid me mata. Aunque esta «obra» tiene el valor de puntualizar en versión autobiográfica algunas opiniones acerca de la filmografía de tan controvertido director, no deja de ser, por su incoherencia temática y temporal, más que una pasable recopilación de artículos de prensa. Ni siquiera las referencias del autor a otras cinematografías tienen comparación con, por ejemplo, la reciente antología de artículos y críticas cinematográficos de José Luis Garci (*Morir de cine*. Gijón, 1990), otro trovador de las luces de neón de Madrid (*Solos en la madrugada*), *self made man* del cine español cuya obra sí que está ciertamente a la altura de las circunstancias.

University of Iceland

AITOR YRAOLA

CREACIÓN

José Antonio Millán. *El día intermitente*. Barcelona, Anagrama, 1990, 170 pp.

His passion for mathematics, broad knowledge of computers, formal training in linguistics and professional experience as a translator, journalist (critic-reviewer-commentator) and sometimes poet have placed José Antonio Millán squarely in «the language business» and now serve him very well as a creative writer of prose fiction. Between two thin, fine collections of short stories (including an occasional novella), *Sobre las brasas* (1988) and *La memoria (y otras extremidades)* (1990), he published his first novel, *El día intermitente*. It subtly and successfully incorporates the com-

puter's technology, not merely terminology but its structures and operations as well.

On the surface, *El día intermitente* is a slowly-emerging tale of industrial espionage and government corruption, set in the Madrid of 1983-85, featuring intrigue, mystery, and suicide. Its protagonist, the skeptical young bachelor and free-lance computer programmer Alegre, by chance becomes involved in a situation and an enigma which represent antithetical operations but are really two sides of the same coin. Hired by a major manufacturer of slot and other game machines to design a computerized system that will monitor all of its operations, he also acquires a complex program from a stolen computer and struggles to decode its graphics—a thoroughly contemporary variant of the old «discovered manuscript» ploy. Along the way, his frequent meditations, sexual encounters, domestic chaos and observation of a great variety of places, events and offbeat phenomena—a speech by a visionary in an esoterica shop, an exposition of pinball machines and electronic games, the Retiro's gardens, the pornography industry—let Millán create a sensitive portrait of contemporary Spanish life. Alegre's intuitions and discoveries lead him ultimately to the cause and explanation of all that is happening, comic and tragic: a Big-brother-like conspiracy to monitor the behavior and relationships (familial, professional, personal, sexual) of all employees of the company. Such manipulation, Alegre protests, also *causes* that behavior—e.g. the suicide of the company's co-director to save the enterprise from being destroyed by the illegal collusion of its two chief competitors; it is an attempt to play God, or even surpass Him, since God created the world but surely does not try to be the Great Manager of all its causes and effects. Yet just when the reader expects a sermon, Millán provides an ironic twist: Alegre's strongest complaint to his villainous colleague Blanco is, «Why didn't you include me, the ingenious programmer, in your scheme?»

Below its surface, however, *El día intermitente* is a laid-back metaphysical novel: a wise meditation on the interconnectedness of all things and, as the title suggests, on the intermittence of human relationships, plus an expression of a deep, obsessive awareness of all systems great and small, and their vast intricacies and ramifications. Its thematic nucleus could be located in key passages that mention «las relaciones intermitentes» (p. 19) and «las

naturales discontinuidades de la vida moderna» (p. 77), stress how «la vida tiende a dominar su entorno, captarlo y relacionarse con él» (p. 97) and how the root of the world of commerce and money is «la intrínseca intercambiabilidad de todo» (p. 98), suggest that the essence of life is its complexities (p. 125), or seem to summarize Alegre's (Millán's?) world view, his unflinching excitement about «el espectáculo de la versatilidad del ser humano trazando su camino entre las corrientes y remolinos de una sociedad demasiado compleja» (p. 98). For Alegre, reality is a series of networks, systems, connections, processes. Millán possesses a great sense of the whole, of the rhythms of life and nature, of human adaptability. He sees the life drama in and around every phenomenon which invests it with meaning; computer chips, for example, are the product of loss of vision in the forever-replaceable young, poor Chinese girls who manufacture them.

Millán's comprehension and his fine sensitivity to cityscapes make the vast variety of phenomena experienced by Alegre be interconnected and relevant, and not digressive *costumbrismo*. Thus, the novel's slow start and apparent meanders —readers may feel that its first quarter is unessential, or that it could have begun with page 75's fine passage, «Estático ante el mudo paisaje de puntos...»— are deceptive. Everything is thematically relevant and interrelated. The novel is carefully setting forth the tone and framework of intermittence and discontinuity in time, space and human life which are reflected in its somewhat computeresque structure: its division into three main parts and many short sections (or «capillaries») with catchy, melodramatic, suggestive titles (often resembling dated computer entries), its time markers and rejection of strict chronology, etc. Reiterated vocabulary reflects the computerization, mechanization and commercialization of contemporary life, saturated by electronic media: *calcular, categorizar, manejar, simultanear, acumular, procesar las cosas, sistematizar, conectar, transacción, operaciones, matriz, organigrama, montaje...* Such harmony and interweaving facilitates new and surprising perspectives and discoveries: «La escalera estaba llena de culos» (p. 30), the imposing glass windows of labyrinthine corporate offices are «auténticos Ojos del Poder» (p. 56), slot machines are rigged to make players believe that winning is imminent, Spain has only 1,300,000,000 25-*peseta* coins in circulation and 300,000 slot machines waiting to swallow them...

Millán's prose is richly suggestive, capturing the bizarre that lies hidden in or behind the quotidien and trivial, with humor, originality, and robust Iberian moral healthiness. While *El día intermitente* does not have —nor should it— the tightness and brilliance of his best short stories and novellas —for example, the masterful «El parachoques de niebla» of *La memoria (y otras extremidades)*— it is a well-written and extremely promising first novel.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

WILLIAM R. RISLEY

José María Merino. *El centro del aire*. Madrid, Alfaguara, 1991, 350 pp.

Dar forma de novela a un proceso de búsqueda del pasado a través del recuerdo supone una aventura difícil sobre la cual habría de pesar demasiado la sombra de Proust si la aventura se plantease con dilatada y minuciosa trascendencia. *El centro del aire* limita la pesquisa a la infancia y mocedad temprana, y la reparte —con exquisito tacto evocativo, pero hacia una sinopsis más bien que como centrífuga expansión analítica— entre las conciencias de tres personajes llegados a la edad madura: Bernardo, abogado sin empleo que convalece en la casa materna de su ciudad natal, sujeto débil, alma nostálgica vuelta hacia el pasado y proclive a las tentaciones del soñar y del presentir; Julio Lesmes, escritor en trance de componer una novela sobre la infancia y el fin de los sueños, atento más que a ninguna cosa a su labor literaria como única vía de salvación; y Magdalena, antigua compañera de Bernardo y de Julio, apiadada siempre del huérfano inerme y poco apreciada por el escritor a causa de su falta de encanto, su realista dedicación a la vida práctica y su condición de comparsa en el grupo de los amigos que, con sus juegos e ilusiones, poblaban aquel ámbito de la niñez simbolizado en «el Patio».

La anécdota que pone en movimiento la trama de *El centro del aire* es el hallazgo, por parte de Julio, de la fotografía de una ceramista en la que cree reconocer a Heidi, la niña alemana que en aquel patio provincial concertaba los juegos del grupo y los inspiraba. Todos la creían muerta en un accidente aéreo después