

construir episodios a fin de probar la validez de estos asertos, en vez de dejar que aquéllos hablen por su cuenta. Se le olvidó a Rabazo que en novela, como en cine, mostrar una verdad resulta siempre mucho más interesante que contarla.

En conclusión, *Las paredes del acuario* propone una reflexión acerca del destino de todos aquéllos que no desean comulgar con el código burgués de nuestra época. La presencia de lo estético, reflejada en la exaltación de la juventud, el arte y la homosexualidad, le añade un elemento importante de transgresión de las normas sociales. Lamentablemente, la obra se cae del lado de lo novelesco: se echa en falta una evolución más sostenida en el proceso de aprendizaje del protagonista, al par que el exceso de didactismo constriñe al lector y le impide sacar conclusiones por su cuenta.

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José Antonio Masoliver Ródenas. *La sombra del triángulo*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 1996, 167 pp.

If one were to search for a representative example of postmodernism in Spain, the prose of Juan Antonio Masoliver Ródenas would serve as a fine candidate. In his first two prose works (Ródenas is also a recognized poet and critic), *Retiro lo dicho* and *Beatriz Miami*, the author makes use of two of the most common aspects of the postmodern tendency: metafiction and the autobiographical form. These two works, written as diaries but highly influenced by magical realism, give rise to a world that is simultaneously rooted in the author's contemporary literary surroundings and his youth in Cataluña. They are always directed toward the self, toward Masoliver Ródenas and his acquaintances, although the reader may not always be able to decipher what and who is real and what is invented. Certain authors, such as García Márquez or Cabrera Infante, for example, are generally referred to by their correct name, whereas others, such as Félix Grande, are not so fortunate; the reader's identification of the characters who populate Ródenas's inventions will be limited, therefore, by the extent of his/her familiarization with the author's literary world.

The present volume, *La sombra del triángulo*, continues to concentrate on the author's person, real or fictitious—or a combination of the two—in the manner of the writings of Henry Miller, but the narrative structure allows the author-narrator-character to create, at least minimally, a more developed portrayal of the world around him: his family, school, and the town he grew up in, to begin with. In fact, one might view the narrative as a losing battle against the tendency to write about the self, in this case a self limited mainly to its sexual awakening, or even more precisely, to the acceptance of one's own sexual activity, for Ródenas's

view of sex is not so much his experience with women as it is his coming to terms with the nature of his own sexual organ. The final acceptance of the pleasure of masturbation at the end of the large story that constitutes the bulk of the first section represents the inward direction of all of Ródenas's writings, the manifest egocentrism that is at the foundation of most of his literary production and that is more than supported by the egocentric nature of postmodernism itself.

In the first part, «Ausencias», one notable accomplishment is the careful and admirable creation of distance between narrating self and narrated self. His discourse is more adequated to the character than to that of the narrator who looks backwards from 1996. Through contrast, this is made even more clear in the very short story that gives its name to the section, which takes place in the present, and in which the tone and discourse belong to the mature Ródenas, and not the childhood self who serves as the protagonist of the earlier pieces.

In the second section, «Juegos prohibidos», Ródenas distances himself from the autobiographical mode, with the minimal exception of an illusion (a borrowing really) to a childhood memory from one of the earlier stories, and creates three short pieces that concentrate on the negative side of the human character. The third, and best, is a well written story, neatly crafted in a style that combines several types of discourse —direct, indirect, free, normal. It is composed very much in the pessimistic bourgeois style of Juan García Hortelano, and clearly demonstrates the subtleties of the author's narrative ability. Contrary to the overly personal nature of the first section, this story presents an admirable balance between narrative and theme with a flowing style that fits well into the quasi-stream of conscience that makes up the character's thoughts and actions.

In the third section, we find «La novela de Borges», which gives its name to the section. It is an excellent imitation, a parody, we read on the book jacket, of Borges's style of writing, with ironic yet pointed commentary on the role of the critic/investigator. At the same time, the existence of this story in the text, although it takes place in Argentina, serves to remind the reader of Ródenas's connection to London's Latin American literary world, which seems influential in Ródenas's writing, according to what we have seen earlier in his diaries.

The fourth section contains another well crafted story, «La espera», which might be considered the work that most represents the mentality behind every one of these pieces. On the one hand, it constitutes a well written application of magical realism, resonant of the stories found in García Márquez's *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* or Rulfo's *El llano en llamas*, while on the other it emphasizes Ródenas's obsession with his own self, his relationship with himself as a sexual being and the failure that he feels in this respect. In this sense, this story is the most important of the collection, in that we find the mature writer, at his best, sum-

ming up the sexual-psychological problems that he has been railing about since the beginning of the book, if not since the beginning of the first diary two books earlier. Perhaps more importantly, one finds here the clearest expression of the metaphorical relationship between sex and *felicidad*, for this is what the narrator's relationship with Lupita Araña represents. The narrator tells us of the momentary nature of happiness: «El ser humano es ajeno a la verdadera felicidad y sin embargo yo en esos momentos soy una persona feliz (139)». This, on his way to his place of birth, symbolically back to the womb. The failure of his relationship with Lupita is his return to unhappiness, the permanent state of mankind, as portrayed in his various fictional recreations of himself.

As always, when discussing autobiography, the reader must question what in a given life justifies the writing about that life. This question is easy to answer when reading autobiographies of famous people, people who have led lives whose descriptions will benefit the reading public. In the case of many contemporary autobiographers, however, those participating in the genre referred to today as «life writing», the problem is somewhat more difficult, because the self may not appear to justify its representation as literature. In the particular case of Ródenas, one must remember that what interests us is the writing itself, a narrative produced by an able intellectual, which aids us in accepting the obvious and purposeful confusion between autobiography and fiction. In these stories, the minimal importance of whatever in them represents the true existence of Juan Antonio Masoliver Ródenas is definitely overshadowed by the masterful literary recreation that is the ultimate product that concerns us.

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Laura Freixas, ed., *Madres e hijas*. Barcelona, Anagrama, 1996, 236 pp.

Esta década se destaca en el mundo de las letras por el creciente interés en la literatura femenina; prueba de este fenómeno es el enorme aumento de publicaciones de escritoras en todos los géneros y el que algunas de estas obras hayan alcanzado el nivel de «best-seller». Un cambio de enfoque acompaña las publicaciones recientes: en vez del ambiente de fracaso, soledad y alienación que caracterizaban el típico *bildungsroman* femenino de la temprana narrativa de la postguerra, se trasluce un tono más optimista: las mujeres ofrecen modelos más positivos e independientes con la opción de una vida más satisfactoria emocional y profesionalmente. Una indagación en las trabas personales, familiares y sociales resulta en una especie de catarsis; a veces la mujer saldrá con mejor conocimiento de sí misma y de su contorno. Al aspecto psicológico, la literatura femenina añade otro tema de suma importancia: la presencia de otras mujeres que ayudan a mitigar la soledad de la protagonista; estas personas sirven diversamente de confidenta, de paño de