

to, sus virtudes —fidelidad, honor, honestidad, obediencia— están vinculadas a esa posición dependiente y sometida, y sus actividades («estrado» y «fogón») se desarrollarán en espacios exclusivamente caseros. Por ello, la sociedad considera transgresoras a las que desligándose de las ataduras domésticas y actuando con cierta autonomía se han atrevido a ocupar otros espacios tradicionalmente masculinos.

El amor es algo tan natural como cualquier otro fenómeno de la naturaleza pero por muy ardiente que sea nunca debe sobreponerse a la razón. El deseo amoroso sigue siendo tan intenso como en tiempos de Lope pero ha de ocultarse pues a la pasión se oponen la constancia, la cordura y la prudencia. La obediencia es un rasgo esencial del modelo femenino positivo en la comedia dieciochesca y particularmente en las mujeres jóvenes, cuya educación les impide expresar abiertamente sus sentimientos por lo que para sobrevivir en un ambiente familiar opresivo no tienen otra estrategia que la simulación y la hipocresía (*La mogigata*, *El sí de las niñas*, *Tanto vales cuanto tienes*) y los autores dieciochescos culpan a la educación que han recibido éstas de sus padres y tutores.

El matrimonio es un tema central en el teatro neoclásico pues de la estabilidad de la pareja depende la de la sociedad. La decisión matrimonial acertada es la que se ajusta a la visión patriarcalista de la sociedad contemporánea, ya que la voluntad de la mujer no desempeña absolutamente ningún papel en todo este proceso. Esta insatisfacción de la mujer ante una sociedad que ignora sus sentimientos e incluso niega su existencia, pone en primer plano el fracaso de los matrimonios que se contraen sin consentimiento de los novios; la aparición de las figuras del *cicisbeo* y del *cortejo* a principios del siglo XVIII hará pública una situación que hasta entonces no se había tenido en cuenta.

El teatro neoclásico es un estudio innovador con una sólida base teórica cuyo rigor documental hace de él una imprescindible obra de referencia. La «Bibliografía» selecta (303-311) va precedida de un breve estudio crítico-bibliográfico («Los caminos de la crítica», 295-301) de gran utilidad.

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SALVADOR GARCÍA CASTAÑEDA

CREACIÓN

Martínez, Alberto. *Soy Julia*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2001. 283 pp.

The uniqueness of this novel lies in its narrator, Julia, a two year old brain-damaged and epileptic child whose father, Alberto Martínez, has given her the opportunity to tell the story of her brief existence from her perspective, often a very funny one. The basic constitution of the work is best defined by the opening and closing sentences of the novel:

Pronto cumpliré dos años y, puesto que ésa es la edad que me señalaron al nacer como la más probable para mi muerte, he decidido ordenar los recuerdos de mi vida, no vaya a ser que se cumpla el augurio y tenga después que reprocharme no haber intentado pelearme un hueco en la posteridad (11).

Porque chí, diría mamá, y yo me quebraría de la risa, aunque no entienda nada de nada yo me despanzurro por si acaso, es una risa preventiva, porque si no te ríes qué a lo tonto se va la vida (283).

Child-narrated prose is not new, but in Spain it has come to the fore in recent years thanks to Elvira Lindo and her many books dedicated to Manolito Gafotas. Thus, a comparison between Martínez and Lindo is impossible to avoid. The contrast between the two, more essential than a comparison, is that the protagonist/narrator of *Soy Julia* should not logically possess the capacity to think and narrate, a phenomenon that heightens the comic irony of the novel. Starting out as an obvious tragedy, *Soy Julia* is converted, by the father/author, into a humorous work that combines the fantastic —Julia's ability to narrate and express judgements— with a minimal level of light-hearted commentary on everyone —including Julia herself— involved in the child's trials and tribulations.

The complexity of the work grows from its conception, in that it is a tragicomical combination of the continuous description of a mortal infirmity and the antics and humorous commentaries created by the very victim of that condition. This, however, is, in a sense, only a signified, which in turn creates a connotation, constituted by the role, inside and outside of the novel, of the author, Julia's father. In other words, who really narrates is a father as he witnesses his daughter's suffering and suffers in turn. Converting this pathos into humor is the principle and surprising thrust of the work. The more the daughter jokes, the more the reader understands the father's necessity to find a solution to his, and his wife's, personal tragedy.

Humor, thus, is the essential element of this novel, once the reader has accepted, has naturalized one might say, Julia's malady. Humor results from an infant's ability to ironize, satirize, and even make elaborate use of metaphor in the creation of that irony and satire. No character, not even her loving parents, escapes her wit, so the work is essentially burlesque criticism and self-criticism (on the part of the father), more burlesque than critical.

In a text of almost three hundred pages that is based mainly on one concept, almost an extended gag, it is difficult to maintain a constant level of humor, so the novel necessarily has its stronger and weaker moments, since its success depends, in spite of the child's fully tragic situation, on the laughter that her words bring out in the reader. Perhaps the most salient defect is the lack of real plot development, in spite of gradual improvements in Julia's condition (one could not say health). Although

the chapters and subchapters are in strict chronological order, there is no real plot development, in the sense that though the reader is aware that two years have taken place, there is rather an atemporal sequence, based on the narrator's decision to alternate between the present and the past at will in any given passage. Thus the temporality of the narrating is not in line with the chronological sequence in which that narrating takes place. Rather, the chapters all constitute variations on the constant theme of Julia's illness and how she, her parents, and others deal with it.

How does one classify a work like this? It does not carry the weight of traditional works of canonical contemporary authors such as Muñoz Molina or Marías, nor does it reach the levels of hilarity created by Elvira Lindo in her Manolito Gafotas series. It does not attempt to represent a marginalized group within society, unless we were to consider Julia a champion of patient's rights (and a case may be made for this). There is no profound message to the work, but it succeeds in creating a curious and entertaining narrator. In a period when both writers and critics are making attempts to extend the limits of the canon, it represents at least an experiment in narrative voice, a depoliticized Spanish version of Gunter Grass's Oscar in *The Tin Drum*. Like the novel as a whole, Julia is light-hearted and at times capable of drawing a hearty laugh from the reader. The novel does, unfortunately, drag because of the lack of real plot development, and, in this writer's opinion, because of the protagonist's endearing nature, one would expect that it would function much better as a serial text, perhaps even in comic book format, in the daily press.

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Adelaida García Morales. *Una historia perversa*. Barcelona, Planeta, 2001, 219 pp.

Intermingle rudiments of Poe, Pygmalion, and Pythagoras with the affairs of a burgeoning Madrid art gallery (*Galería Nilo*) and its thirty-seven year old owner, Andrea, and you have the makings of *Una historia perversa*, which melds gothic horror and mismatched men and women who are driven by fatal attractions to each other, all of which nonetheless heralds the characteristic refinement in diction and tone for which García Morales' works of fiction are known. There is, however, one notable exception. Its main female character, Andrea, contrary to other female counterparts in this novelist's other works, such as *El testamento de Regina* (2001) and *El secreto de Elisa* (1999), for example, relishes being swept off her feet by a man she considers physically attractive, yet whom she barely knows, agreeing to marry him in the hopes of finding happiness. She speaks freely, if not obsessively (but without detail), about her