

Women Writers of Tierra Adentro Publishers

Part II

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Among the many short story collections published by the Fondo Editorial Tierra Adentro (Inland Publishing Fund), which seeks to promote the best young men and women writers of Mexico today, some are noticeably the product of a workshop. Almost all of them are fresh, although the desire to surprise the reader with an unexpected ending in many cases subtracts from their effectiveness. Nevertheless, among those that maintain a constant level of quality is *Prefiero los funerales* (I Prefer Funerals) by Yucatan native Carolina Luna. Despite its being her first effort, her writing shows maturity. Something in the ambiance of some of this collection's stories evokes echoes of two mid-twentieth-century writers, Juan García Ponce and Inés Arredondo.¹

Prefiero los funerales has seven stories, among them the title story, in which the author uses irony (a device she uses throughout) to refer to her pious mother's custom of always keeping up with the pain and troubles of relatives, friends and even acquaintances and taking her along to hospitals, funerals and burials. The stories vary in length and topic: some are very brief like the title story or "Secreto a voces" (Well-Known Secret) that narrates the tiring, frustrating routine of a housewife and mother whose worst nightmare is reality itself. Others are very long like "Isolina," which tells a story within a story —Isolina's— using italics, or "Vecinos" (Neighbors), which in eight chapters tells us the story of a love triangle between the narrator and a neighbor couple. Reality mixes with dreams, fantasy; the everyday life of the main characters is invaded by daydreams or wishes. The seven stories have a leitmotif: the presence of the body, whether a cadaver, central to "Prefiero los funerales," the yearned-for object in "La búsqueda" (The Search), or the desired, attained, utilized object in "Vecinos" and "La avidéz" (Avidity), a tale in which the characters' traditional roles are reversed, with the woman going out to hunt, seduce and then throw away her prey.

In part one of this article (*Voices of Mexico* no. 60), I pointed out that poetry was the genre most favored by Tierra Adentro authors. *La más mía* (The Most Mine) by Cristina Rivera-Garza is an exception example in several ways. First, the author is known for her non-autobiographical, historical novels, so this Tierra Adentro volume is an exception. In the second place, in the context of the collection, the narrative poem is also outstanding for its quality, for the intensity that it manages to transmit through a structure in which the cold descriptions of a hospital alternate with the intimate demands of the poetic voice to the dying mother. Of all of Rivera's work, *La más mía* is the best written. It tells the story of the illness and death of the poet's mother in a lyrical voice that builds images of the terrible cruelty of the diagnosis, the desolation of public hospital waiting rooms, the interminable monologue-like dialogues carried on with the unconscious terminally ill.

Precise words, complaints, pain; in *La más mía*, a voice complains while the reader does not know if anyone listens; love, loss of love, lack of recognition; *La más mía*, the most mine, ends up being the least hers because the narrator is someone the mother either does not recognize or recognizes and has not wanted to accept. That is why this beautiful, moving poem is so hard to read, because as readers we situate ourselves as spectators in an intimacy that was not desired but imposed by illness, an intimacy between mother and daughter, between the dying and the one who has lived in her shadow, between she who is no longer there and the one who has come to settle accounts and say good-bye.

These two examples confirm that women's literary production in Mexico goes beyond any publishing or publicity fad. ■■

NOTE

¹ Two of the twentieth century's most important Mexican writers, Juan García Ponce is from Mérida, Yucatán, and Inés Arredondo, from Sinaloa (Editor's Note).

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