

Teodosio García Ruiz Irreverence and Nonchalance In the Tropics

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In the last 200 years, literature in Tabasco has leaned toward poetry and the novel. People like José Eduardo de Cár-

denas, Arcadio Zentella, Manuel Sánchez Mármol in the nineteenth century and the enormous pleiad of twentieth century authors including Carlos Pellicer, José Gorostiza, Andrés Iduarte, Josefina Vicens, José Carlos Becerra, Dionicio Morales, José Tiquet, Álvaro Ruiz Abreu, Bruno Estañol, Ciprián Cabrera Jasso, Ramón Bolívar and Francisco

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Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León.

Magaña, and the new generation of writers born in the 1960s and 1970s have woven a complex literature that opens up many roads. But underlying all of them is the dichotomy of festivity-melancholy characteristic of men from this land.

In the framework of this tradition, Teodosio García Ruiz (born in 1963) began to publish irreverent, un-archetypical literary work in the 1980s. He was then just a youthful poet shooting like a meteor through his first 20 years of life in Tabasco, marked at the time by the death of three of its greatest authors: José Carlos Becerra in 1970, José Gorostiza in 1973 and Carlos Pellicer in 1977. These prolific writers were the center of that literary tradition and simultaneously prevented the emergence of new poetic languages or excursions on untraveled roads that could be traversed by the burgeoning generations.

Teodosio García Ruiz published *Sin lugar a dudas* (Without a Doubt) in 1985, a book that would scandalize the state's cultural centers with its poetry thirsty for day-to-day life, immersed in both the purulence and vitality with which urban existence quivers. This writing was closer to the fierce figures of modern poetry, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Charles Bukowski, to the now far-off futurists of Marinetti, to Latin American figures such as Nicanor Parra and Antonio Cisneros (but particularly his dealings with Ecuadoran poet Fernando Nieto Cadena) and to Mexicans Gerardo Deniz and Efraín Huerta. Nothing at all, not a single verse, was reminiscent of the tradition he came out of. It was the vision of a new world for Tabasco-born poets, leaving behind metaphysics and scenery to make way for a new poetic subject, the city, the axis of the poetry written by all the writers whose shadows and echoes can be distinguished in *Without a Doubt*. In that sense, Teodosio García Ruiz is situated among the most contemporary of the poets of Tabasco's new generation.

Up until now, García Ruiz has published ten books of poetry: *Sin lugar a dudas* (Without a Doubt) (1985); *Textos de un falso curandero* (Texts of a False Healer) (1985); *Yo soy el cantante* (I Am the Singer) (1990); *Leonardo Favio canta una canción* (Leonardo Favio Sings a Song) (1992); *Furias nuevas* (New Furies) (1993); *Bananos* (Banana Trees) (1998); *Palimpsestos* (Palimpsests) (1998); *Sueños de la estirpe* (Dreams of Ancestry) (2001); *Poemas y canciones para la infanta* (Poems and Songs for the Infanta) (2001); and *Nostalgia de sotavento* (Nostalgia for the Leeward Side) (2003). He also has one novel to his credit, *Eco de lluvias* (Echo of the Rain) (2001); a volume of chronicles, *Villahermosa, peligro para caminantes* (Villahermosa, Danger for Walkers) (1997); and three anthologies: *Eroticom plus* (2000), *Para un ambiente sin hombre* (For an Environment without Man) (2001) and *Odiseo* (Odysseus) (2001).

This entire body of work reveals a singular, playful universe, based on the recovery of language and popular tastes, fundamentally urban ones, with an initial, fresh scatology, beautiful in its naturalness, without variegation or falseness. Henry Miller said that obscenity is a healing process, and this poetry, from the very first, reveals this with force, like a scalpel that pares scum and pus off of society. So, if the obscene irritates us, it is because it reminds us of our weaknesses, our imaginings and coercion, and, not uncommonly, our crimes. And all of this against a background of the urban scene and its orgies.

Because this is the way that organism called the city is conceived in this work: as a voluptuous, palpitating body, whimsical in its brilliance, but whose Dionysian nature will lead it to concupiscence, unending excess, just as a dictator must use violence to keep himself on the throne. This is why it is opposed to the image of the countryside, which continues to represent equanimity and contemplation.

Teodosio García Ruiz's poetry of this stage must be understood in the light of this knowledge, in the light of this vision of the city as an organism corrupted and that corrupts, that offers and degrades. Nicanor Parra says, "The modern world is composed of artificial flowers/ grown in glass bells that look like death." The Beat Generation insisted profoundly on the bitter, poison side of the city; García Ruiz is more inclined toward the Dionysian in it, toward the wonderful day-to-day life where music plays a predominant role, just as was the case for the American poets. In this way, García Ruiz's early poetry could well be worth other epigraphs: luminosity of the walls or transparency of the walls, or another: the fiesta in the streets and —why not?— the end-of-century carnival. Because this poetry of García Ruiz's is that and much more; an excessive party, an inexorable celebration from begin-

ning to end that manifests itself in a predilection for everything Latin American: its language, its music, its women. If the sun was central to Pellicer, life is central to García Ruiz. Its vitality hits one in the face just like Pellicerian colors blind our eyes. If Cabrera Jasso's pain and Gorostiza's loneliness depress and petrify us with their ice, Teodosio's warmth is an apotheosis that kicks us out into the street, gets us dancing amidst car horns and whores' chatter. García Ruiz's tumultuous words are only comparable to the vertigo of Becerra's first books. Words that are torrents and torrents that are words.

The appearance in 1993 of his fifth book, *New Furies*, was an exciting discovery for his readers since the living space in which the poet moves is no longer the city, but something broader and at the same time diffuse: the kingdom. And, as we know, kingdoms are not of this time: they are suspended between the reality of literature and the imagination of men. *New Furies* will thus be a long epic about the region, sung in a mythical, thousand-year-old voice, suspended in time. The city is now merely a minuscule space in that kingdom. And even if the city is Villahermosa and its events are modern, they are sung with that archaic voice of the timeless men of the road, with the heroic voice of the rhapsodists who travel from kingdom to kingdom, carrying with them only their priestly, prodigious voices.

With that new poetical interval in his work, García Ruiz did not contradict his initial discourse; rather, he broadened it out because the new poet that emerged was unexpectedly wise, capable of experiencing the abysses that have lacerated the souls of men for all time. In reality, the figure of Teodosio García Ruiz was the best omen in the birth of Tabasco's new poetry. With him, the break was ensured, but also, invariably, the enrichment of that literary tradition that emerges from the tropics of southeastern Mexico to carry its colors and shadows to the world. **MM**

