



The Deaths Of Natalia Bauer Aline Pettersson's Most Recent Novel

It is not the first time that writer Aline Pettersson ventures into Canada. In her children's story *Ontario, la mariposa viajera* (Ontario, the Traveling Butterfly) (Mexico City: Alfaguara/CNCA, 1993), she had already done it, though in a very different way.

Las muertes de Natalia Bauer (The Deaths of Natalia Bauer) (Mexico City: Alfaguara, 2006) places its main character in the globalized, computerized beginnings of the twenty-first century, but very far from automatism, the rush and the coldness that characterize it. The book is divided into five parts, each with its own narrator and with a different narrative technique that completes the kaleidoscope that is each human life.

The novel opens and closes in the north of the American hemisphere. Why does Pettersson choose those scenes to situate us in the last months of Natalia Bauer's life? Perhaps because from this chaotic south, Canada is always a fantasy linked in our mind's eye with a place that has achieved development and tolerance without destroying the environment.

From Canada, Natalia uses e-mails to tell us how she is trying to settle into a new environment, rested, calm, surrounded by luxuriant nature, full of possibilities for creativity and intellectual growth. All of this, without neglecting those who have been left far behind, to the south, with their roots in the asphalt of our beloved and hated Federal District. Aline Pettersson contradicts those who think that the art of letter writing must be lost because of cyberspace, although she does reaffirm that on the screen, writing is stripped bare.

The beginning of the novel is full of good-byes—the nostalgic and brief good-byes of a narrator conscious of her illness—and then unfolds into a long retrospective look in which Natalia alive, goes from being a mature woman, the writer of diaries, to an intense, enthusiastic young woman who rejects social impositions to follow her own personal and political convictions. The end, a surprise, leaves the reader full of questions.

Like in the rest of her work, the precision of language and the intensity in creating characters and environments characterize this, her most recent novel; a novel of endings that are, however, always doors opening onto new beginnings. ■■■

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