‘Reina de América o los pasos reencontrados de Nuria Amat’

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Abstract

My paper deals with the literary evolution of Nuria Amat (Barcelona 1950) one of the most original voices in the contemporary Spanish literary scene. Her last novel, *Reina de América* (Barcelona: Seix Barral 2004, trans. in English and published by City Lights), can be read as a personal memory and an homage to Colombia, the country where she wrote her first novel while married to writer Oscar Collazos, and to which she makes a fictional return, twenty years later, to portray the ravages of civil war on the most vulnerable of its population, the fishermen and peasants of the Pacific coast.

As other Spanish writers of her generation (Juan Goytisolo, Cristina Fernandez Cubas, Enrique Vila Matas, Antonio Muñoz Molina, Enrique Vila Matas), Amat has repeatedly stressed her debt the Latin American writes of the “boom.” Her essays and novels abound in references to Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, José Donoso, as masters who helped her to unleash her imaginative and linguistic potential from the constrains of bourgeois Spanish social realism.

In my analysis, I stress the confluence of autobiography, metalanguage, and transnational history in *Reina de América*. Amat transcends the solipsistic and psychoanalytic approach of her Barcelona-novels, *La intimidad* and *El País del alma*, devoted to the morbidity and mental illness that mark her family (Catalan) heritage, to embrace a transcontinental saga of the displaced, the persecuted and the dispossessed in the midst of half century of Colombian civil world. The circular awareness of solitude and death portrayed in Amat’s previous novels becomes in *Reina* a communal account of survival from a feminine perspective, that of a young idealist woman who relinquishes her European critical conceptions to merge into the fate of the natives of the Chocó coast and their conflictive subsistence among the guerrilla, the paramilitaries, and the American pre-occupation forces.

*Reina de América* masterfully blends the motif of interior and physical exile merging Western and Indigenous myths of travel (tales of the underworld, colonial travels, magic realist tales, anthropological case stories) with the experiences of deterritorialization and displacement brought about by a new global order; experiences that have expanded the “geographies” of the novel and multiplied the faces of the “other” as mirrors of oneself.