

Muy evidentes en *La cruz* . . . son las enfermedades, sobre todo el cáncer (que parece afectar preferentemente los órganos genitales de ambos sexos) y el SIDA, plagas modernas cuya prevalencia ofrece una triste nota de actualidad. Por contraste, han desaparecido o están en trance de desaparecer figuras frecuentes en el primer cuarto de siglo de la obra celiana que reflejaban el subdesarrollo: los ciegos, los tísicos, los mutilados, los golfos huérfanos y gitanillos.

El título refiere al Apóstol pescador de Bethsaida, hermano de Simón Pedro, que según la leyenda fue crucificado en una cruz en forma de X; insinúa la narradora que lo crucificaron desnudo y cabeza abajo y que la misma suerte les espera a ella y a su marido. La devoción popular a San Andrés en La Coruña afirma que ni el viento ni ningún demonio quieren llevarse su cruz (208), detalle significativo en el contexto de repetidos motivos diabólicos. Figuran entre los personajes varios demonios que habitan la tierra, desempeñando oficios humanos. Aunque sean más visibles los motivos religiosos en esta novela, se trata de una religiosidad generalmente hipócrita o fanática, que no se limita al catolicismo sino que incluye practicantes de santería, devotos de la cientología, lectores de *Dianética*, y fieles de la "Escuela de Albores Gamma-Delta-Pi, Comunidad del Amanecer de Jesucristo" (28), que mueren todos desangrados al final en un masivo suicidio apocalíptico. Según afirmación en la sobrecubierta, se trata de "una lúcida y penetrante reflexión moral sobre la condición humana y los avatares que la acechan."

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Miguel Delibes, *Diario de un jubilado*. Barcelona: Destino, 1995, 214 pp.

Not long after Delibes published the second of the diaries of Lorenzo (*Diario de un cazador*, 1953; *Diario de un emigrante*, 1959), he implied he would continue adding periodically to the series. Nevertheless, nearly four decades elapsed without another installment from Lorenzo's journals, until retirement left time hanging heavy on his hands: "Te levantas y el cafelito, una ojeada al papel, los amiguetes, cuatro vasos donde el Arcadio, un meneo a las tragaperras y vuelta a casita" (13). The Lorenzo of *Diario de un jubilado* will surprise and probably dismay many readers, especially fellow



hunters who shared Lorenzo's (and Delibes's) love of the outdoors, hiking and the challenge of the chase. Not only have Lorenzo's values changed in the aging process, but his attitudes now reflect Spain's rampant consumerism (in other words, he has become a couch potato): "Hace treinta años aún me quedaba la caza pero ¿quién es el guapo que se pega hoy una chaqueta ladera arriba para bajar una perdiz de granja? Deportes del tercer mundo, como yo digo" (13). The implicit superiority in the despective reference to Third World pursuits becomes something of a leitmotif, although the most visible theme—money—pervades the entire work.

Diario de un jubilado begins the first week of October (year unspecified) when Lorenzo accepts voluntary early retirement in return for a cash settlement; the action covers the next fifteen months. Economic preoccupations quickly supplant initial euphoria as Lorenzo and Anita calculate that the pension will not stretch far enough, particularly upon investigating retirement communities. Talks with friends who retired a year earlier suggest a gloomy future: "Le pregunté qué otra cosa cabía hacer con siete kilos en mano y lo que él me dijo: bebértelos y olvidarte de esta puta vida. Y ¿después? le pregunté yo . . . El cipote . . . añadió: después reventar y que te entierren con pellejo y todo" (10). Financial constraints of retirement, aging and deaths of former associates are themes that recall aspects of *La hoja roja*, but less compassion and more irony inform *Diario de un jubilado*.

Despite its being against regulations, Lorenzo seeks part-time jobs to supplement his pension, becoming the jack-of-all-trades assistant to an aged, decrepit second-rate poet, spending several hours each day accompanying the feeble bard on walks and to mass, serving as chauffeur, running errands and pandering to his vanity. Among the most amusing and incisive passages Delibes has written concern the literary ambitions and pretensions of the aristocratic would-be laureate, don Tadeo, his run-ins and debates with other writers and critics, and his self-serving, hypocritical and sometimes totally phony pronouncements on poetics. As he waits in his employer's study, Lorenzo scans papers and files on don Tadeo's desk, allowing him and the reader to compare actual practice as observed by the diarist, contrasting or contradictory affirmations in conversations, and what is written for publication or lecture audiences. Although he balks at wearing the suits and overcoat his employer's family provides, Lorenzo comes to enjoy his finery and the chance to move in more select company; subsequently, he is annoyed to find himself expected to take on "servant" roles such as shining don

Tadeo's shoes. Clear class prejudice emerges as Lorenzo's adult children protest his earning money doing menial tasks but accept the situation when he receives the empty title of "secretary" for use when serving tea to don Tadeo's callers. Lorenzo rationalizes that the generous salary paid by don Tadeo's spinster sisters compensates, accepting humiliating subservience until finally don Tadeo makes homosexual advances so unmistakable that Lorenzo must acquiesce or resign.

Narratological irony, less subtle than that of *Cinco horas con Mario*, expands to include much of the culture and values of post-Franco Spain, the consumer society of the 1990s, membership in the European Economic Community, and television's control over Spaniards' daily lives. Daily rituals for Lorenzo and Anita include game shows, bingo and the lottery: "Esta tarde escribimos diecisiete cartas al concurso de la tele «El precio justo». A ver si esta vez hay suerte" (16). Hopes of becoming contestants, winning the lottery and similar get-rich-quick dreams appear frequently, along with other indices of rampant materialism. Fans of the former Lorenzo may shudder as he hurries home for their favorite soap opera: "Estos culebrones son historias de puta madre. ¡Menuda gozada! Al acabar el episodio de hoy, la chavala y yo nos miramos y los dos andábamos con la lágrima a punto" (78).

Major occurrences during the diary's fifteen months' duration include Lorenzo's trip to Mallorca for his daughter's marriage and his purchase of a lot near his old hunting grounds; he plans to build a weekend cabin but sells at a loss after encountering property owners' restrictive covenants on construction. The longest series of connected episodes involves Lorenzo's falling victim to a seduction and blackmail scheme operated by a prostitute and photographer who prey upon recent retirees, demanding their cash retirement bonus for the incriminating photos. Tempted to pay to keep Anita in the dark, Lorenzo calls the police when the ring insists on more money than he has left. Anita vanishes upon learning of his infidelity and Lorenzo lives alone until being hospitalized, critically ill with salmonella after a diet of raw eggs. While repentance might have been out of character for Lorenzo, his lack of even perfunctory recognition when Anita returns to nurse him hardly endears him to this reader.

Like *El disputado voto del señor Cayo*, *Diario de un jubilado* is as much a portrait of Spanish society in transition as of individuals. Reflections of cultural change, not necessarily for the better, include the drug addiction of Melecio's son, Lorenzo's daughter bringing her live-in lover home to visit, numerous soap-opera intertexts, portraits



of homosexual encounters and pedophilic pursuit of children of both sexes, partially counter-balanced by unmistakable material improvements in the standard of living, in the infrastructure of roads and services, social security and civil liberty. Despite his own consumerism and compromised values, Lorenzo occasionally recognizes that something irreparable has been lost in the exchange: "Ahora te dirán que el mundo ha cambiado. De acuerdo, pero la chicha que le sacábamos entonces a la vida no se la sacamos hoy" (104). Here, for once, he speaks for Delibes.

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Ramón Hernández, *El joven Colombo*. Boulder, CO: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1995, 159 páginas.

En los últimos años, debido al ya pasado quinto centenario del llamado descubrimiento de América, ha surgido un renovado interés por la elusiva figura de Cristóbal Colón. Como contribución a la celebración del aniversario, el novelista Ramón Hernández dedicó varios años a estudiar la vida del explorador. Sus investigaciones resultaron en la publicación en 1992 de *Cristóbal Colón: Lloro por ti la tierra*, una larga novela que narra los viajes, fracasos, y aventuras de Colón, y que finaliza con su muerte. En el prólogo de esta obra se encuentra la materia para la segunda novela de Hernández sobre el controvertido navegante: en las primeras páginas, se plantea la biografía del joven Colón, describiendo su niñez y dando un esquema de los acontecimientos más importantes de su juventud. Todo esto permite que el autor presente al protagonista después de un naufragio en la costa de Portugal; el héroe tiene veinticinco años, y su carrera como capitán y gran navegante está por iniciarse. La intención de Hernández de humanizar al famoso hombre que ha sido vilificado, mitificado y glorificado a través de los siglos no podría estar más clara: conocemos al héroe en un estado debilitado mientras se repone del naufragio, y se nos presentan sus recuerdos del horroso incidente ("Durante horas había combatido con el terror del naufragio . . . No quiero morir, todavía es pronto . . .").

Si el primer fruto de la labor investigadora sobre Colón fue esta narración de más de seiscientas páginas, en 1995 Hernández publica una breve novela que satisface la curiosidad provocada por la bio-