

dado un ritmo ligero, vivo y con sensación de movimiento. Obeso fue el primero en usar el lenguaje costeño del negro para elevarlo al nivel del arte literario escrito. "Los cantos populares de mi tierra" son obras cortas de lenguaje sencillo, espontáneo y con escasos adjetivos ornamentales. Su estilo enérgico, personal y ligero es causa del uso de los verbos de tono vivo, en voz activa. Estas obras populares fueron inspiradas por el pueblo y llaman la atención a la música interna que lleva el negro por dentro, su mensaje lírico, y su deseo de vivir en paz.

Desde el principio, Prescott compara las obras de Obeso con la poesía negrista tanto la temática como la forma y nos señala ciertas diferencias.

La originalidad de Candelario Obeso no consiste, entonces, en fundar un movimiento literario o una escuela poética sino en ver al negro desde una perspectiva nueva, como ser plenamente humano, con todas sus complejidades, ambigüedades y contradicciones; en iniciar en Colombia una tradición literaria en la que el negro se expresa a sí mismo con voz auténtica; en despertar una conciencia racial que le permite al negro verse de manera positiva —no como payaso, hazmerreir, esclavo o entretenedor—; y en permitir también al otro mirar al negro con ojos distintos, con los ojos del alma y del corazón. pp. 205-206.

En la conclusión de este estudio, Prescott identifica a "Cantos populares de mi tierra" como la obra de arte negrista mejor escrita en Colombia. Una de las maravillas de estas obras es que los temas trascienden de lo particular a lo universal y permiten que el lector participe en el acto creativo.

Prescott ha conducido este estudio informativo teniendo en cuenta una serie de preguntas claves, las cuales comparte con el lector mediante la introducción del libro. Las preguntas de gran valor tratan desde el propósito de Obeso por escribir y publicar sus obras hasta el lugar que la poesía de Obeso ocupa dentro de la lírica Colombiana. Sin duda alguna Prescott da al lector un conocimiento de quién fue Candelario Obeso y cómo sus obras se relacionan con la poesía negrista de su época.

## Germán Vargas. Sobre literatura colombiana.

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As its title suggests, Germán Vargas's book is not a systematic survey of Colombian literature; rather it consists of a grouping of articles and short essays, most of which probably appeared in newspapers or literary journals, about various facets of modern Colombian letters. The book is divided, somewhat arbitrarily, into three parts. The first deals with a sprinkling of writers, the majority of whose works were published between 1920 and the early 1980s; the second focuses primarily on "el Grupo de Barranquilla"; the third chronicles sundry details of García Márquez's life and writings.

Vargas states that prior to 1950 Colombia was above all a nation of poets, but toward mid-twentieth century a group of young *cuenteros* (Jorge Zalamea, Hernando Téllez, Wills Ricaurte, Eduardo Caballero Calderón) began to alter the literary landscape. In another piece, Vargas alludes briefly to some of Colombia's better known novelists: Jorge Isaacs, whom the critics have yet to elucidate satisfactorily; José Eustasio Rivera, "mucho más poeta en *La vorágine* que en muchos sonetos de *Tierra de promisión*" (p. 34); Tomás Vargas Osorio, who died too young to realize his potential; and the above-mentioned Caballero Calderón, whose amusing *Tipacoque* Vargas considers superior to his better known *El Cristo de espaldas*.

In a short article entitled "Tres novelas colombianas" Vargas lauds the adroit treatment of character in *El terremoto*, by Germán Pinzón, but he harshly criticizes the "tremendismo blasfematorio" (p. 43) of Pablus Gallinazo's *La pequeña hermana* and the lack of plot in *Los días más felices del año*, by Humberto Navarro. Ano-

ther piece is dedicated to the celebrated *poetas piedracielistas*, whose principal influences were Juan Ramón Jiménez and Pablo Neruda. These poets include Jorge Rojas, Carlos Martín, Arturo Camacho Ramírez, Eduardo Carranza, and Darío Samper. Of the many authors who have written about *la violencia*, Vargas believes that the *cuentistas* from Tolima have excelled in their sensitive treatment of the subject, outstanding numbers of this group being Eutiquio Leal, Humberto Tafur, Héctor Sánchez, and Germán Santamaría. The founding during the 1970s of two cultural publications of Barranquilla, *El Suplemento del Caribe* and *El Suplemento Libertad*, is another subject Vargas discusses at some length.

An informative essay called "Ventana al mar" contains commentaries on a number of contemporary books, some of which are *El cuento colombiano*, an excellent anthology edited by Eduardo Pachón Padilla; *Con los que viajo sueño*, a volume of poetry by Víctor M. Gaviria; Umberto Valverde's collection of short stories entitled *Reina Rumba Celia Cruz*; Arturo Echeverri Mejía's *En marea de ratas*, which depicts episodes of *la violencia*; a biography of the Colombian poet Porfirio Barba Jacob, *Barba Jacob el mensajero*, by Fernando Vallejo; and *El pez en el espejo*, Alberto Duque López's novel based on a widely publicized crime committed in Barranquilla.

Perhaps the most interesting sections of Vargas's book deal with "el Grupo de Barranquilla," of which García Márquez is a member. Other leaders of this group include Ramón Vinyes, the Catalan book dealer fictionalized in *Cien años de soledad*; José Félix Fuenmayor, an intellectual of the older generation who inspired most of "el grupo," including García Márquez; Alfonso Fuenmayor, the son of José Félix; Alvaro Cepeda Samudio, author of the highly praised novel *La casa grande*, who died in 1972; and Germán Vargas. (Fuenmayor, Cepeda Samudio, and Vargas are immortalized as Aureliano Babelonia's book-loving friends and fellow-carousers in *Cien años de soledad*). Vargas also recalls García Márquez's activities in Barranquilla during the late 1940s and early 1950s: his editing of the column "La Jirafa" in *El Heraldo*; his vain attempts to finish his novel *La casa*, which years later would evolve into *Cien años de soledad*; and his position as *jefe de redacción* of two literary journals, *Voces* and *Crónica*.

As a longtime intimate friend of García Márquez, Vargas provides interesting details about the Nobel laureate's personal life and career. We are told, for example, that while García Márquez was writing *El coronel no tiene quien le*

*escriba* in París, he asked Vargas to send him from Colombia detailed information about cockfights, information he would use in his famous novelette. Vargas's memory fails him, however, when he states that this occurred "a comienzos de la década de los años sesentas" (p. 217); García Márquez wrote *El coronel . . .* in 1956 and by 1960-61 was living in New York or Mexico City. About García Márquez's engaging portrait of the impecunious retired army officer, Vargas writes, "Para mí gusto personal, como para el de otros muchos, lectores y algunos críticos, y también para el propio GGM, *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* es hasta ahora la mejor de sus obras por su sobriedad, por su ausencia de desmesura, por esa ejemplar economía de palabras, de situaciones, de personajes lograda por un entonces todavía muy joven narrador en la segunda de sus novelas" (p. 219) Vargas also has the highest praise for *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* which, in his view, "está en la misma línea de *El coronel*" (p. 220).

When the Colombian author won the Nobel Prize in October 1982, Germán Vargas spent several days in his friend's luxurious Mexico City home before accompanying him to Stockholm. The description of the fiestas given in García Márquez's honor and attended by world-famous admirers in both Mexico and Sweden attest to the fabulous journey he has made from a tropical backwater known to the world as Macondo. Vargas's comments on Colombian literature fall far short of scholarly analysis, but they do provide interesting personal insights into some of his nation's leading men of letters, especially those from the Atlantic coastal region. And for García Márquez's fans unaware of his formative years in Barranquilla, this book should be especially rewarding.

