

terms with her first experience with death and discovering "that death catches you completely," leaving you powerless. In "Daughter's weakness," a daughter tries to comfort her speechless father who is struggling with the death of the mother. On the other hand, a letter in "The last letter to my mother" brings back memories of problematic choices made in youth in the midst of her mother's health crisis. This part closes with two very strong poems. The first is for her grandmother and it is an acknowledgement of the strength of that incredible woman, who forged ahead during the Great Depression. The second concludes that something is watching over her, "Like a promise made as a child, whatever that is / I am paying attention, and I am listening."

"Evening" is the third part. Here, we find a female voice that is centered, thinking, "Just listen. Be quiet / And see what your body comes up with." She looks back at her experiences and different facets and roles that we have in our lives. Evening is a celebration of the past: "Lucky some days, not so lucky other days." She looks back at her relationships, some developed in secret. She gives particular attention to the women that have crossed paths with her; they are like surrogates for a mother who is no longer present. Jules is an old roommate with whom she shared incredible times, but it is also clear that time changes people and now they are in different places. Mom-Tana receives an old picture that brings back memories. Aunt Flossie dazzles with her magic tricks, while the hand that is missing three fingers marks a hard life, and horrifies. Victory, or Vicky, tries to fit in. There are also several poems that stem from a trip Borges Accardi made to Prague and the experiences that she had there, from moments of inspiration to arguments. Finally, several of the poems are directly connected to music: Miles Davis, Chopin—these are the soundtrack of a very particular life.

Borges Accardi takes life's superb moments and shares them in every poem. She is candid and loving, bright, and funny. She writes a life that is not always pleasant, that gives us agony and grief as much as it gives us happiness, but in Borges Accardi's work what is most important is making our way through, even if bruised, but always unbroken and better.

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Dovalpage, Teresa. *The Astral Plane: Stories of Cuba, the Southwest and Beyond*. New Orleans, LA: UNO Press, 2011. ISBN:978-1-60801-076-9. 230 pp.

In her collection of stories *The Astral Plane: Stories of Cuba, the Southwest and Beyond*, Cuban author Teresa Dovalpage presents a series of characters that attempt to transcend their existence to improve their lives. Some, like the members of the Cosmic Brotherhood in the title story "*The Astral Plane*," employ séances and the occult to give relief to their otherwise mundane lives in Castro's Cuba. Others try to physically attempt to transcend their existence by immigration to the United States. In all cases, the characters are seeking something other than their here and now. Some are more successful than others.

"The Astral Plane" and "Menina and the Chupacabras," the two longest stories, share some of the same characters. "The Astral Plane" set in Habana centers around a group named the Cosmic Brotherhood led by Maestro, a mentally disabled guru. He leads the group through exercises in meditation, séances and telepathy in order to transcend the physical plane of food shortages, unemployment and physical struggle suffered in their Cuban community. Although dedicated to their leader as demonstrated by their willingness to physically care for him when his family is less than interested, they are ultimately disappointed with Maestro's leadership and the results of their efforts under his direction. Immigration to the United States does not provide the anticipated escape in "Menina and the Chupacabras." Menina, a member of the Cosmic Brotherhood whose father forces her to leave Cuba with him to join her mother in California, misses her friends and has difficulty integrating into her new society. Dovalpage uses telepathic communication between Menina and her best friend Tanya to foreshadow the problems faced by Menina and her father in the United States and to carry the reader along to the frightening end of the story.

In "La Llorona's Son," Brenda's son appears after being missing for thirteen years. Although not overtly related to "Menina and the Chupacabras," the stories are eerily connected by locations (the son is living in San Diego), art constructed by "non traditional materials . . . inspired by the *chupacabras*" (136), and the son's secretiveness about where he's been for so many years and why he is going to Miami. "Goodbye, Santero," set in New Mexico as well, is the most tied to Southwest folklore. It is also a coming of age story with young men

seeking themselves with mixed results. This particular story is my favorite because of its lyrical language, poignancy, unresolved problems and complexity.

"The Guerilla Girl and the Beatles" brings us back to Cuba and the personality of Társala from the Cosmic Brotherhood. Through this story, the reader learns of the tragedy of falling out of favor with the Young Communist League because of an interest in the Beatles, the ultimate symbol of Yankee imperialism, and the difficulty of coming to terms with sexuality in a traditional culture. In "Seven Pennies for Yemayá," Yemayá provides a surprise answer to the narrator's santería ritual requesting passage to the United States. "Poe, the Professor and the Papichulo" brings the reader back to New Mexico with a story of betrayal and revenge. "A Virgin for Cachita" ties New Mexican university culture, Cuba, loneliness and exploitation together with an interesting twist.

Dovalpage's collection combines folklore, the occult, and the magical to present us with the ordinary struggles of people like ourselves who long for something more and mostly fall short. Truly a touching read and one that provides the reader with insight valuably applicable to their own lives.

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Lorenzo Fuentes, José. *Las vidas de Arelys*. Miami Lakes, FL: Ediciones Atenea, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-9836351-0-9. 116 págs.

Con *Las vidas de Arelys* (novela breve), José Lorenzo Fuentes vuelve a ofrecer a sus fieles lectores una clase magistral de cómo aprovechar el tiempo y el espacio; de cómo apretar en apenas cien cuartillas varias historias paralelas, todas confluyentes y al unísono vitales, todas marcadas por esa elegancia de la sugerencia que hace siempre de la narrativa de este autor, como diría Lezama Lima, "una fiesta innombrable".

Esta es de esas novelas que se leen de una sentada y se agradecen nada más escudriñar el lector la primera página. Porque esa es otra de

las virtudes narrativas de Lorenzo Fuentes: aunar con soltura, armoniosamente, oficio y sensibilidad, y con ello brindarnos un producto de impecable factura. En este mundo urgente de la revolución tecnológica e Internet, la narrativa que va al grano y consigue evitar los meandros de la hojarasca estética tiene las de ganar. Lo curioso es que, en el caso que nos ocupa, la estética tampoco se desecha. Habilidad ésta, la de conjugar síntesis y profundidad, organicidad y belleza, sólo presente en narradores de primerísima línea, como un Jorge Luis Borges o un Juan José Arreola. Lorenzo Fuentes pertenece a esa estirpe.

*Las vidas de Arelys* aborda el siempre polémico tema de las regresiones, partiendo de la técnica esotérica y/o psicoterapéutica utilizada en la terapia de la reencarnación. Cree el autor que "cuando a todos nos sea posible hacer una representación física de los arquetipos supramentales —del amor, de la justicia, de la belleza, de la sabiduría— habremos dado el salto cuántico hasta nuestra perfección espiritual y —¿por qué no?— hasta ocupar un cuerpo físico no sólo capaz de experimentar la longevidad, sino también la inmortalidad" (en entrevista para el diario *Neo Club Press*), y esta novela incide lateralmente en ello. Arelys Cubero, (la protagonista en el presente de la historia contada), se somete a una indagación bajo hipnosis y en manos de José Lorenzo descubre que en una de sus vidas anteriores fue Carmen Sylva (la protagonista en el pasado), seudónimo de la reina rumana Isabel de Wied (1843-1916) y que fuera, a su vez, una de las plumas más importantes de su época. La historia está escrita en dos planos, el presente de Arelys y el pasado de Carmen, pero Lorenzo Fuentes se apoya una y otra vez en la atractiva historia de la reina para condensar la narración y darle perspectiva. Mientras, Arelys actúa como vehículo revelador:

La propia Carmen Sylva en sus libros, en su profuso epistolario e, incluso, en sus memorias, había dejado incompleto, por pudor o por cualquier otra razón, el mapa de su verdadero ser interno, es decir, la compleja urdimbre de los pensamientos y emociones que determinaron su conducta en la vida. Y esa suma de emociones, delirios, anhelos, satisfacciones por el deber cumplido, pero también las frustraciones, angustias y deseos reprimidos que cada noche se llevaba a la almohada, acaso sólo podían ser sacados a la luz mediante la regresión a vidas pasadas. ¿Qué le impedía ya a Carme Sylva desnudar su alma? (47).