

*Tagrera*. Antoni Clapés. Col. Balbec, 2. Barcelona: Cafè Central. 1997. 59 pp.

The latest book by Catalan poet Antoni Clapés, *Tagrera*, maintains the elegant and suggestive style of *Matèria d'ombres*, the previous collection of poems by Clapés. The title "Tagrera" alludes to a place inside the Sahara desert where Clapés stayed in 1992, and its obvious connection with his poems lies in its solitary nature.

The first part of the text contains a series of brief poems that are a variation upon the basic theme of writing as a materiality of silence, a theme already explored by Clapés in his previous book. *Tagrera's* second part focuses on two works by painter Caspar David Friedrich. It is a long poem depicting two landscapes of absolute solitude.

Clapés' poems escape from worldly crowds to a realm imbued with nature; settings devoid of any human being but a poetic voice searching for meanings. This voice, in first person, carries the reader through the worlds of solitude expressed in the second part of the text, whereas in the first part, a more ambiguous voice obsessively questions silence and the significance of written discourse. Although the second part of *Tagrera* breaks away from the word "silence" (constantly intertwined in the first part), it embraces the contemplation of the solitary scenery where silence is nevertheless felt throughout the whole poem. In the poems contained in *Tagrera* solitude becomes a supreme enigma, which the poetic voice contemplates and attempts to conceptualize. Either while gazing on a still night or standing at the top of a high mountain, the voice moves incessantly between contemplation and conceptualization.

Antoni Clapés' use of the Catalan language reaches a level of command and beauty only possible through the mastery of the language itself. His lavish lexicon and his ability to shape the language into the visions and concepts he is reflecting upon, enables him to create poems that are powerful in their evocative images and interesting in thought. Clapés's obsessive repetition of the word "silence" and the similar obsession with solitary environments become a singular contrast with the purity of his style which is, otherwise, free of neglectful repetitions.

The only possible weakness in *Tagrera* would be its lack of flexibility regarding the subject matter of its poems. In spite of Clapés' talent for abstracting intriguing perceptions from the solitary atmospheres he envisions, his poems never venture into other topics. *Tagrera* experiments by awakening sensations through intimate reflections of the moment, yet the intensity of its topic—intimate, absorbing, obsessive—does not allow any deviation towards a broader array of perceptions. Nonetheless, *Tagrera's* evocative force is a towering achievement difficult to surpass.

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