

majority of dispossessed has grown wider. Plenty has been written on this subject from the point of view of those who don't have a bank account in dollars nor the possibility of going to Vail on vacation. Cristina Pacheco, for example, in *Sopita de fideo* (Noodle Soup) (1984) and in *Zona de desastre* (Disaster Area) (1986) has constantly stressed the anguish of those who can hardly manage to survive. Elena Poniatowska, another well-known writer, has become very much involved with the problems of the seamstresses affected by the 1985 earthquake and with the troubles of many other women, many of whom don't normally even earn the minimum wage. What we didn't have was a book written from the point of view of that "other Mexico" both opulent and elitist, of that sector whose attitude towards life and whose gigantic shopping-sprees abroad contributed and still contribute to the crisis. Loeza provides us with this vision we were lacking.

This book is really a collection of articles which appeared in two Mexico City newspapers, *Unomásuno* and *La Jornada*, and in the weekly *Punto* between 1982 and 1986. The first ones materialized shortly after the state take over of the banks on September 1, 1982. They reveal the malaise which prevailed among the middle class because of this presidential decree. The articles haven't been arranged in chronological order, but are grouped

together according to what they are about. The book begins with a section about the "nice young ladies", and in it these young girls are classified depending on which category they belong to, for they don't all fit into the same group. There is another section which describes how a lady from *Las Lomas*, an upper class residential area, becomes politically-conscious on the eve of elections in July 1985.

Loeza, with a sharp, often even caustic sense of humour, outlines the feelings of this class that apparently doesn't know about—or pretends not to—the extent to which their way of life affects the crisis the country is going through. These people, who used to travel abroad—usually to the U.S.—eight times a year and would come home loaded with things they had bought there, who own houses in Coronado, Houston or Florida and go to Veil and Epcott on vacation, believe (an easy way to keep one's conscience clear) that this decapitalization is simply the result of corruption, faulty administration or the world crisis. The élite is not, however, unaware of the crisis and Loeza in her articles tries to show that they are becoming more conscious about all this. Nevertheless, simple things like buying a pair of stockings at the local store and finding them acceptable are not all that easy for them.

The articles are written from a woman's point of view, general-

## The "Pretty Young Ladies"

*Las ninas bien* (The Pretty Young Ladies) by Guadalupe Loeza; Editorial Océano. México, 1987.

During the last few years Mexico has lived through a severe crisis. Because of this the middle class has become more and more impoverished. Also, the gap which separates two sectors of Mexican society: the small privileged minority—the "nice" people— and the enormous





ly a housewife from Las Lomas with various school age kids. In some we also get a male point of view, but the emphasis is always on the woman's reactions. They describe the usual tasks a woman belonging to this social class performs: shopping, taking the kids to school, choosing Christmas presents, visiting friends, etc. This woman is of course also undergoing psychoanalytic therapy and trying to adapt to this new way of life in the hopes of convincing herself that she loves

reproduce telephone conversations between women. Loaeza handles the way this type of woman speaks marvelously. These texts, in fact, are useful both for a sociolinguistic and a sociological analysis. Other interesting articles are "*Sueño de una tarde de invierno*" ("A Winter Afternoon's Dream") where the journalist has an imaginary interview with Por-

firio Díaz and "*Una hamburguesa doble*" ("A Double Hamburger") which parodies Don Quixote's battle with the windmills; the only difference is that Burger Boy tries to fight the street lights.

These articles had most meaning when they first appeared in the newspapers mentioned above. Now, put together

as a book, they tend to sound repetitive and result less effective. Their literary value is not too great either. In fact, though they haven't lost their vitality or their realism they do give the impression of being slightly dated, specially as the crisis has reached unexpected levels.

M.R.F.



Mexico. In the following excerpt we get an example of how Loaeza describes the identity crisis many middle class women are going through:



"This situation is giving me a very funny complex. I feel as if I owed everybody money, and also as if I had taken all those dollars out of the country. I feel guilty Doctor, I think my husband's name is going to appear on that famous list. It's as if I were mortgaged, I feel like a thief, thriving on gossip, belonging nowhere, illegal and devaluated. I'll tell you what, my problem is a credibility, an identity problem; I was never taught to accept myself as a woman or as a Mexican. My mom's one dream was for us to marry foreigners. I just don't believe in anything, I can't find any answers anywhere" (p. 27).

Some of the best articles

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