



La parte inventada

Rodrigo Fresán

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¿Cómo funciona la mente de un escritor? La parte inventada busca respuesta a esa pregunta adentrándose en la mente de un escritor que trata de escribir su propia historia. O de reescribirla a su manera. La historia de alguien que conoció cierto éxito hace unos años, en el siglo y milenio pasado; pero que ahora siente que ya no hay lugar para él, ni en el mundillo literario ni en el gran mundo. Y que --entre las partículas aceleradas de letras de Francis Scott Fitzgerald, música de Pink Floyd, un antiguo juguete a cuerda y el paisaje de las playas de la infancia-- cree que ha llegado el momento de contar su versión del asunto...

«Con el tiempo, le preguntarán, una y otra vez, aquello de "¿Cómo se le ocurren esas ideas que escribe?" Interrogante casi obligado al que se responde -al que él responderá, siempre-- con vaguedades eternas o con certezas que se olvidan al día siguiente. Y se preguntará a sí mismo cómo es que nunca le preguntan algo mucho más importante o, al menos, más interesante. Por qué nunca le preguntan "¿Cómo se le ocurrió la idea de ser escritor?"»

La parte inventada Details

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From Reader Review *La parte inventada* for online ebook

Peter says

Illuminating, captivating, exasperating, changeable and such hard work at times but worth it absolutely.

Jared Davis says

I'm enjoying it, but it's a bit more difficult a read than I would have liked. I (unfairly) hoped for a firestorm like Bolano's best writing. Still, Fresan's managed a truly original (afaik) narrative and style. I can only imagine how difficult the translation must have been.

Paul Fulcher says

In a letter to Frances Scott Fitzgerald, dated December 31st, 1935, Gerald Murphy concludes, more in the voice of Dick Diver than Gerald Murphy:

“I know now that what you said in ‘Tender Is the Night’ is true. Only the invented parts of our life—the unreal part—has had any scheme, any beauty.”

Will Vanderhyden's translation, *The Invented Part* of Rodrigo Fresán's *La parte inventada* won the 2018 Best Translated Book Award.

Overall, I can admire what the author is trying to achieve, and it is certainly an impressive translation feat, but it wasn't a book that I personally enjoyed, indeed reading it was something of a slog and, in particular, it fails the 'would I read the sequel' (written but yet to be translated) acid test.

It begins, strongly and playfully:

How to begin.

Or better: How to begin?

(Adding the question mark that—nothing happens by chance—has the shape of a fish or meat hook. A sharp and pointy curve that skewers both the reader and the read. Pulling them, dragging them up from the clear and calm bottom to the cloudy and restless surface. Or sending them flying through the air to land just inside the beach of these parentheses. Parentheses that more than one person will judge or criticize as orthographically and aesthetically unnecessary but that, in the uncertainty of the beginning, are oh so similar to hands coming together in an act of prayer, asking for a fair voyage just now underway. We read: “Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch’entrate;” we hear: “Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.” And good luck to all, wishes you this voice—halfway down the road of life, lost in a dark woods, because it wandered off the right path—that the gag of the parentheses renders unknown. And yet—like with certain unforgettable songs, whose melodies impose themselves over the title and even over the signature lines of the chorus, what’s it called? how’d it go?—this voice also recalls that of someone whose name isn’t easy to

identify or recognize. And, yes, if possible, avoid this kind of paragraph from here onward because, they say, it scares away many of today's readers. Today's electrocuted readers, accustomed to reading quickly and briefly on small screens. And, yes, goodbye to all of them, at least for as long as this book lasts and might last. Unplug from external inputs to nourish yourselves exclusively on internal electricity. And—warning! warning!—at least in the beginning and to begin with, that's the idea here, the idea from here onward. Consider yourselves warned.)

Or better still: To begin like this?

At the heart of the book, it is a novel about writers and writing, particularly *Tender Is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, a story part inspired by Gerald and Sara Murphy (see this New Yorker story, large parts of which are drawn on in the novel <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/19...>). In particular, a letter from Gerald (the prototype for the Dick Diver character) to Fitzgerald, written after the Murphy's older son died suddenly of spinal meningitis, and quoted at the start of my review gives rise to this novel's title and one of its recurrent themes.

However, *The Invented Part* is about so much more besides, and to this reader the 'more' unfortunately detracted from the core.

In many respect, this is a novel that acknowledges, proudly, its 'faults', but also one that highlights the type of reader that it suggests would not appreciate the book, a reader for the Kindle/smartphone age (a particular obsession of the narrator):

A reader who moves his increasingly deformed thumb increasingly quickly to, later, bring it in to his mouth. And suck it. Like a sleepy newborn waiting to be told a story. And that that story, please, be brief and simple and fun and no long sentences and parentheticals and parentheses, right?

There is plenty of digression in the text, which generally is a literary approach I admire (indeed as a 'grownup' but not a writer, I think like that most of the time not just when feeling childish):

But there's still plenty of time to worry about these issues and, you'll ask, what was the purpose or reason for opening the door to let such a digression come out and play. Easy but not simple, because that is how grownups think (jumping from one point to another, like drawing/connecting dots) when they feel particularly childish and allow themselves to be carried off by guts of ideas, like loose pages swept away by a storm. Better: that is how (and there are people who take drugs for years to try, without achieving it, to think like that for a while) more or less grown up writers think twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, twelve months a year, to infinity and beyond. So wanting to think like that for a little while, because if the effect is too prolonged, the whole thing loses its charm.

But some of the digressions - e.g. a rather tagged on Rushdiesque story of the Karma family, in-laws of the sister of the writer around whom the book revolves - are more than just digressions; this particular 'digression' lasted 108 pages and was where my interest started to wane after a promising first 100 pages.

For my taste there was also a little too much of an unstructured brain-dump of information:

But everything I'm telling you, if you're so intrigued, you could've found out in a matters of seconds via Google ... Why didn't you just do that?

And the Lonely Man doesn't have the strength to tell him that, if that'd been the case, they'd never have had

the conversation.

Albeit the organic nature of the work is key to Fresán's project. From an interview between translator and author (<http://rochester.edu/College/translat...>

Will Vanderhyden: Most of your books change over time, meaning subsequent editions are published with corrections, changes, and entirely new content. Like for instance, in the case of *The Invented Part*, you added some 60 pages of new material to the book as I was translating it. This tendency of yours to continuously rewrite, to add, reminds me, again, of Borges and his quintessentially postmodern ideas about the impossibility of an authentic or definitive original, about how all writing is rewriting, about how literature is alive and cyclically shifting with every reading, rewrite, translation, never fixed and never finished . . . Where does this impulse of yours come from? And, while we are it: can we call your novels novels?

Rodrigo Fresán: Let's say that it's hard for me to let go of my books (though it gets easier all the time: material fatigue as time goes by . . .) When it comes to what I do, the truth is I don't think much about genres and formats. I prefer to imagine that each one of my books is a different room in the same house that I am discovering as I move through it. Someday, I hope, I'll climb up to the basement or descend to the attic.

On the subject matter, the heavy focus on pop culture, rather to the detriment of literature left me rather cold, particularly the repeated references to Pink Floyd, The Kinks and (worst of all, since it reminds one of the terrible Nobel Prize call) Bob Dylan:

How was he going to transmit all this, all these echoes and heartbeats, all this melancholic passion? With the charged and adolescent prose, packed with titles and names and styles and dates, of rock journalists - because all rock listeners are kind of rock journalists - in which he thought about Pink Floyd? Impossible. Useless. Idiotic. Not recommended.

Although the author does, to be fair, make a literary connection (interview at <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/rod...>

Fran G. Matute: You're not just a Dylan fan, but his work has been important in your writing.

Rodrigo Fresán: Beyond the character, his work has influenced me a great deal on a technical, narrative level. I have learned so much from Dylan's serpentine verses, certain inflections of his voice, the use of ellipsis in his songs, that way he has of telling or not telling things.

Still not worth a Nobel Prize in Literature though I'm afraid.

And the lists, a feature of the novel that rather annoyed me but is clearly key to his style. At one point the narrator, when discussing how foreign literature is often received in translation, makes the very valid observation that:

Sometimes there are even discussions that establish absurd connections and comparisons - convinced to the point of fanaticism, insisting on impossible chronological influences of something written there on something written here.

So in that spirit, I will claim Fresán is clearly a disciple of the David Walliams's approach to literature: if in need of some extra material simply write a list:

Blocked in his writing, the Young Man writes writers. A cast of proper nouns that he makes strange and sets in motion, marching them from here to there - like the lead soldiers of his childhood - pitting them against each other in eternal battles. Duels without the first blood of sharp knifefighters. Intrigues in ruined palaces. Men and women. Young and old.

A few examples.

The DJ Tomas Pincho (who found success in the US recording Iron Martin, a rap-dub-clunk version of the national and telluric poem about a fleeing gaucho).

....

The list is enormous - the names and faces get mixed up and confused more than once - and it keeps on growing.

Tomas Pincho a deliberately obvious nod to Thomas Pynchon, who alongside David Foster Wallace is the clear English speaking peer for this sort of work.

As for the translation, given the complexity of the text, and the multiple sources on which Fresán draws, Vanderhyden has done a magnificent job. This rather modest ('...luckily...') answer as to how he managed the translation, rather explains what an achievement it was: <http://conversationalreading.com/six-...>

WV: Well, luckily, I'm pretty familiar with a lot of Fresán's references. The writers who come up most in *The Invented Part*—Fitzgerald, Nabokov, Burroughs, Cheever, the Brontë sisters, etc.—are writers I've read quite a bit. I grew up listening to The Beatles, Pink Floyd, and Bob Dylan. So I didn't have to translate an entire culture of references like some translators have to. That made navigating the overload simpler.

I'm also familiar with writers writing in English who Fresán is stylistically and formally in conversation with (writers like Wallace, Gaddis, Pynchon, Vonnegut, Philip K. Dick, Dennis Johnson). And I think that can be really helpful for a translator in terms of finding the right register in a translation.

That's not to say it was easy. I still had to do a lot of research and I developed a knack for tracking down quotes that were originally written in English but that Fresán had translated into Spanish. A search engine well utilized is an incredible tool for a translator.

It also helps that Fresán provides an extensive acknowledgments section at the end of the book, listing many of the references that enter the book and/or informed his own research.

Still, some quotes and details were tricky to pin down. For example, there was one Nabokov quote I was never able to find. Something that he had supposedly translated from a Paris Review interview. In the end, I couldn't track it down, and Fresán told me to just make it Nabokovian, remarking that Nabokov might appreciate such a forgery, and reminding me that, when it comes down to it, it's all fiction.

Overall, an impressive achievement by author and translator and one for fans of pop culture and of Pynchon/Foster-Wallace - unfortunately I'm neither.

jeremy says

and writing is nothing but a solitary dance—a minuet where it's your turn to curtsy and also your turn to bow—whose art lies in executing a delicate and subtle choreography, knowing when to surrender and when to resist.

if that is indeed the case, then rodrigo fresán makes a compelling argument for being considered the george balanchine of modern lit. *the invented part* (*la parte inventada*), fresán's second work to be translated into english (after *kensington gardens*), is an altogether deft and dexterous performance, dazzling and delighting with a litany of literary grande jetés and tour en l'air. the spanish author's late friend roberto bolaño (who wrote lovingly of fresán throughout *between parentheses*), in his incomparable 2666, spoke of "the great, imperfect, torrential works, books that blaze paths into the unknown." *the invented part*, the first in a planned trilogy (the second volume, *la parte soñada* [*the dreamed part*], was released in spanish earlier this year and is likely due for a stateside release in 2019), is certainly that: a rollicking, meandering, and, quite frequently, astonishingly ambitious work.

from the 16 epigraphs that open the book through its 550 pages of how-the-fuck-could-a-mere-mortal-possibly-compose-something-this-magnificent, *the invented part* spans the scope of our hypertechnical age, sending up and taking down so much of our contemporary world. fresán masterfully weaves so many pop culture threads (most notably f. scott fitzgerald, pink floyd, bob dylan, and *2001: a space odyssey*) into his metafictional foray that it quite nearly exposes the thin line between reality and fiction to be an engulfing chasm. with its acerbic humor, acrimonious critique, vivacious storytelling, and ridiculously imaginative plot, *the invented part* is a roaring good time. unforeseeable, yet so quickly indispensable.

read this book. and then tell everyone you know to read it, too.

it's not that he's happy. it's something else. it's beyond happiness—you have to pass through happiness and come out the other side to know what it is the boy feels now—something that has no name. it's the raw material that happiness, among other things, is made of. it's that raw and primal happiness that, over the years, proves irretrievable, and its memory—like a happy bison on a cro-magnon cave wall—is all that's left of it. a souvenir which we superimpose, in vain, the whole succession of happinesses—diluted and convoluted with preservatives more artificial than natural—that will or won't come, or that we'll pass by or won't know how to see, or that won't ever even make it out of their caves. happinesses that are false, in every case, like copies and imitations, like the postcards we resignedly pick up upon leaving the museum. reproductions, falsifications. believing that if you try hard enough, if you stare at them without blinking, the act of thinking about being happy can, for a while, convince us that we are happy.

with several more fresán titles due out from open letter in the coming years, the colossality of fresán's talent ought to become more widely apparent and deservedly appreciated by english-speaking audiences.

and, if you're late to the party, be sure to check out the inaugural season of three percent's "two month review" weekly podcast and the translator's interview with the author.

*translated from the spanish by nea fellowship recipient will vanderhyden (*labbé's navidad & matanza* and *loquela*, as well as forthcoming fresáns)

Jeremy Garber says

This. This is the best book I've read in a long time. I read it late at night, in bed, with a beer or an Old Fashioned or a gin and tonic on the night stand beside me, and I think that made it even better. This is the kind of book that made me copy quotes from it onto my computer so I could find them again later. The best kind of writerly book, full of gigantic vomituous shotgun blasts of pop culture references, from Batman to The Kinks to the almighty importance of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*. Examinations of the tortured writerly souls of Fitzgerald and Hemingway and William Burroughs. Characters like The Writer, who lunges into the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland and immediately becomes a godlike omniscient narrator of the very book you are reading; The Karmas, the Writer's sister's family-in-law, a kind of Argentinian Kardashians squared; The Young Man and the Young Woman, who are filming an interview with the Writer and his sister, who in a later chapter actually get trapped in a post-apocalyptic landscape ruled by the Writer's gigantic omnipotent head. Often these kinds of novels are impossible to read because of their lack of proper names and a staggering amount of meta, but this one speeds by as you delightedly turn the next page. This is the kind of novel, that, in the writer (Fresán, that is)'s own words: "in the twenty-first century, many readers—not too many, fewer all the time—explore with the joyful, retro-vintage wonder of someone who has to learn to breathe anew. To breathe like this: the way they breathed back then, opening and stepping inside one of those books that have the scent of book and not, as noted, the scent of machine and electric engine, of speed and lightness and short sentences, not for the wise power of synthesis but on the crass basis of abbreviation. To breathe differently, slowly and deep down inside." (12) Novels that make you write a short review exactly like the voice of the novel because you loved it so, so much.

Lula Mae says

En realidad serían 3 estrellas y media. No me atrevo a poner 4 porque terminarlo me ha costado más de lo que pensaba, no sé si es culpa mía o bien es que el libro es exigente con el lector. Por orgullo/vanidad prefiero creer que es la segunda opción. De ahí que a pesar de que me ha gustado, el recomendarlo alegremente no me parece correcto.

Mi edición tiene 652 páginas. Algunas de las partes (los Karma y 2001) las he leído dos veces, por puro placer, por lástima que terminaran. Otras han sido más farragosas, pero no menos interesantes.

Me sigue atrapando Fresán, porque fascina su capacidad para adjetivar y para jugar con el lenguaje. Porque comparto el fondo de armario de películas/series, actores, música/músicos, libros, autores y manías. Porque adoro sus agradecimientos (subrayo las coincidencias con mi biblioteca/discoteca y me siento WOW) y sus post-scriptum.

Tengo que leer *Wuthering Heights* antes de que termine el año y tal vez re-lea *Tender is the night*.
¿¿No es estupendo cuando un libro te hace tener ganas de leer otros??

Nick says

This is an exceptionally difficult novel to review because, as my friend quipped, Fresan is 'doing everything at once'. Though this is prominently a cerebral affair about readers and writers, Fresan deftly accomplishes

an undercurrent of emotional heft. One of the dimensions of Fresan doing 'everything at once' are the parts when The Writer protagonist speaks eloquently about the future of reading and writing, touching on the innate sadness of Writers, the solitude of work and how that work is sullied by the institution of Writing (the politics of promotion, publishing, speaking, describing what his books 'mean').

If nothing else-- and for lack of better articulation about all the wonderful things Fresan is doing here--and all the polymath metafiction acrobatics aside (I'm not being dismissive here, Fresan's tricks of the trade are fucking incredible) I feel Fresan is speaking to me personally, validating all the time I spend alone reading.

Sebastian Uribe says

El cintillo del libro lo promociona como "La novela total". Esta vez creo que la frase trasciende el márketing. "La parte inventada" es una novela que parece encerrar todos los temas del mundo. Una sátira de nuestro tiempo. Genialidad que se percibe en cada párrafo. Ideas que llevan al lector, de forma inteligente y nostálgica a explorar su propia mente. Un texto que te da ganas de al terminar, salir corriendo a escribir, pero sobretodo a LEER. Aquí va mi reseña <http://unperroromantico.blogspot.com/...>

Muzzy says

All due respect to Fresan, who is a very clever and cunning author. And to the remarkable translation.

Sorry, I couldn't do it. It's not Fresan's fault. It's just too too close to a big dream project I've been needling away at for years. I would prefer to finish my own work without any interference or competition.

Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says

Really. If you are even slightly tempted by a title offered by this Open Letter Press outfit ; please don't hesitate as long as I have. You will (more than likely) be delighted in a manner slightly above (and likely far above) the average manner of delightedness you experience in your novel adventures. Yes, you. (Unless of course you don't go for that kind of thing at all in which case I'm sure no doubt your spidey=senses will have already kept you well informed). But this. This. Is a book for readers by readers of readers (and some writerly stuff thrown in too). Even if you like me don't (or haven't) really ever go(ne) for the Fitzgerald stuff, which is to this like Jay Gat is to Daisy Buchanan's Daughter, you'll still be thoroughly delighted by the readerly experience offered herein. And even if you think prog=rock is as bloated as punk is stupid, if you've ever been a musical fan of any sort, the Pink Floyd fan meltdown herein will (should?) also delight you (instead of for instance the Wish You Were Here Fanboy thing imagine like a TG24 fanboy meltdown). And if you love anti=cell/smart phone rants you'll love the one in here ;; and but if you hate anti-tech meltdown=rants you'll love the fact that the rant herein is depicted as an indictment of a sad oldman/writer. And if you love sci=fi *in* your fiction but don't much find interest *in* sci=fiction, you'll love the particle accelerator bit. There's some Bob Dylan dancing in here too, a bit lyrical I found that one. So that's what it's all about. And muchmuch more. "The Invented Part" ; you, dear reader of novels, know is always the best part. And this one right here will be the best damn pop=culture soaked novel you'll read this year. btba? Damn=straight.

Chad Post says

The publishing house I run--Open Letter--will be publishing the English translation of this book in the spring of 2017. It will be followed by publications of *The Bottom of the Sky* and *Mantra*.

That out of the way . . . read this book! Damn, Fresan is incredible. This book is right within the Open Letter aesthetic, a book about the creation of a book, one that intends to let you in on "the invented part" the what happens in a writer to make them a writer. It links back to Macedonio Fernandez--one of the few authors *not* mentioned in here. (Burroughs and Fitzgerald are the most prominent, but the novel is loaded with allusions and meditations on great artists and works of art, including Bob Dylan, Pink Floyd, and 2001: A Space Odyssey.)

Can't wait for Will Vanderhyden to finish his next translation!

MJ Nicholls says

I have been in an egregious reading slump recently, and this remarkable novel, as Jonathan Lethem blurbs, “[brought] a blast of oxygen into the room.” I would like to shower several thesauruses of superlatives and superduperlatives on this astonishing and breathtaking novel from an Argentinian marathon runner, however, this’d eat up time that could be spent reading the actual novel, so no. A 545-page (large A5 size pages, small-ish font) maximalist masterwork (part of a trilogy, thank Ganesh) with the incredible frenetic pace and encyclopedic scope of DFW (epigraphed on p.x), an impressive sprawling stream of low-to-high musical and literary references, essays, interpretations, and freewheeling opinions. An ur-meta novel that attempts the insane feat of encapsulating the whole world of writing and writers in a sweeping swooning style that is packed with hilarious, lyrical, thoughtful reflection and satire, and a rapturous repository for the author’s passions and obsessions. And more, and more, and more, and more. If the second and third novels are up to this calibre, Fresan’s trilogy will etch itself in the hallowed pantheon of the everlasting encyclopedic classics.

Daniel Valle Lara says

Un libro a ratos brillante, con una estructura y estilo originales, con varias capas que se entrelazan entre sí (meta literatura, la propia ficción de la trama y de sus personajes, la del escritor que lo narra) un buen dominio del lenguaje, con una buena capacidad de introspección, mucha imaginación, y muchas referencias cultas y populares que despiertan interés, aunque sea por el gusto de identificarlas y reconocerse en ellas. Sin embargo, creo que el autor se recrea en demasiadas páginas, páginas en las que se pierde por las ramas y en las que no aporta nada a la obra más allá de un intento de epatar al lector, de hacerle ver de lo que es capaz de imaginar, de cuán profundo llega en el buceo de la psique. El libro abunda en la introspección, pero en ocasiones es una introspección vacía, como si por añadir pensamientos digresivos ya hubiera alcanzado grandes simas abisales de la profundidad y no, muchas veces se aleja del centro de la diana por esas reflexiones que no llevan a ninguna parte. En algunas partes del libro se intuye que Fresán escribe por escribir, párrafos que no aportan realmente al personaje o al conjunto de la obra más allá que la de intentar ir un paso adelante en la originalidad y en la verborrea. En definitiva, me parece que la novela podría haber ganado más de haberla acertado. Pero bueno, la obra está bien y tiene esa virtud de ser diferente. En

resumidas cuentas, el libro me ha gustado. Cuando se centra, escribe francamente bien, con profundidad, estilo, agilidad y gracia, pero, por ponerle un pero peca de inconcreción, de irregular y de excesos que en ocasiones aburren. Por eso, aunque es una buena novela, no es una novela redonda.

Eileen says

The Invented Part is not so much a novel as it is a sprawling, maximalist work of metafiction that stands in defiance to a frenetic digital culture that can't be bothered to read anything longer than 140 characters or (I'm looking at you, Booktube) more complex than the next derivative bestseller. So yes, there is a fair amount of "kids these days" and "Get off my lawn!" but that's about what I'd expect from a fiftysomething curmudgeon with idealistic views on creativity and creation. The fertile interplay between a writer's headspace and a writer's external environment is the unifying theme threaded throughout the stream-of-conscious ramblings; the seemingly disparate chapters following different characters with no real plot or aim in mind; the extended ruminations on Bob Dylan, Pink Floyd, and the relationships between F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and their patrons in France during the Roaring Twenties; and not to mention the tragedy of the writer's doomed parents during Argentina's period of political unrest, as well as their collapsing marriage intertwined with their and their son's favorite book, Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*. Fed up with the state of literature in the twenty-first century, Fresán's unnamed writer would make the whole world his imaginative playground, not realizing that it already is.

In unjust times, when everything seems to settle for the bare minimum: abbreviating, reducing, miniaturizing, and when he, from action to reaction, is expanding like a gas, resolving to occupy all available space, repeating himself and correcting himself and repeating himself again.

The Invented Part is amazingly quotable.

A book that - aired or aerated - would be like the stand-up comedian of itself, all alone, in a club on the last night of the end of the world. . .

A book like antimatter, like the anti-material that - its energy so dark - will turn into another book, in another dimension. . .

A book that would invite you in with a "Draw your chair up close to the edge of the precipice and I'll tell you a story" and that, once you're there, would push you over the edge and, as you fall headlong into the void, would shout at you, "But why'd you believe me? Didn't your parents ever tell you not to talk to strangers?" . . .

A book that's toxic - both for its author and readers - but a book that, once processed and digested, the fever broken, functions as a kind of exorcism, leaving behind someone who, after feeling like hell, looks up at the sky and smiles that smile of prayer-card saints.

There's certainly plenty to disagree with Fresán's writer on - the blanket condemnation of ebooks, the narrow perspective of literature as thunderingly exalted Art (hey, I love me a good Warhammer 40k novel), and the irritating portrayal of women as either crazy, airheaded, or as muses rather than creators themselves. (The only time we even hear about female authors is from the POV of the writer's crazy sister, who is obsessed

with the Brontës. And William S. Burroughs only became a writer when he killed his wife, REALLY???) But Fresán's fiftysomething narrator is intentionally and ironically flawed despite his pretensions to godhood. That's another misunderstanding one encounters among readers - the idea that the protagonist, as the character we identify with the most, is supposed to be correct in all things, like the infallible god of their setting.

Regan says

4.5 Stars, Review Forthcoming
