Valor
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Valor is a striking and original novel that is an imaginative mix of past and present, structured in three chapters. The first chapter starts with the scene of the executions of Fermín Galán and Captain García Hernández, sentenced to death for their leadership of the failed insurrection in Jaca of 1930. The description is barely a page long, because the reader is immediately transported to contemporary Spain and Matí Oliván, her fifteen-year old daughter Mar and her friend Flor. Mati is about to separate (although she still lives with her husband, a man with money problems who has fallen in love with a younger woman and wants a divorce); Mati has been a bank manager in the city of Sagunto from before start of the economic present crisis. Mar, a typical adolescent is always arguing with her mother. She has nothing but contempt for her mother and her desperate attempts to appear young and beautiful. Mar's ambition in life is to be a go-go dancer.

The second chapter (78 pages) recounts the story of Father Casimiro, an old Croatian priest, a repressed homosexual and ultra-conservative, who feels nostalgic for Franco's dictatorship and admires Hitler and Mussolini …

The third chapter is entirely set in the here and now. Mati has contracted a gigolo, Sami, to spend a weekend with her in Benidorm. Sami from the Lebanon came to Barcelona when he was eleven after his mother was widowed by one of the many wars in that country

Valor is an excellent novel that reads fluently about the courage of ordinary lower middle-class women trying to survive in a society that is caving in and those who fought against Franco. It has an original take on the Second Republic and the civil war and the way those events shape the present (Mati and Flor are related to Duch's family, though they don't know that). The way a corrupt banking system and the economic crisis impact on the lives of individuals in contemporary Spain is described in poignant detail as bank manager Mati falls apart and fails to cope and New Agery becomes the new vogue. Chapter 2 draws parallels between Croatia and Europe in the present and Spain and Europe during the civil war. As in La hija del este, Clara Usón is one of the few contemporary novelists able to trace the invisible threads leading from the mess of yesteryear to the mess of today, from the detail of suffering in the daily lives of ordinary citizens to the posturing and platitudes of careerist politicians.

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