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### Review Of "Antonio Skármeta And The Post Boom" By D. Shaw

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and eloquently written, it raises many polemical issues—particularly regarding the process of selecting the novels. Why not begin the study with María de Zayas whose works embody embodiment perhaps more persistently than any studied here? Why present such a limited view of the novels of Postmodernity? Why include only one of La Pardo Bazan's texts? Can a female writer convincingly impersonate the *vivencia* of a male character? Conversely, is it now possible for a male writer to embody the *vivencia* of a female character? Why is it that when women are writing, her/the body always becomes an issue? Even though these questions and others are left unanswered, Scarlett's readings of these texts are sagacious, invigorating and sure to inspire continued critical dialogue. Elizabeth Scarlett's *Under Construction: The Body in Spanish Novels* represents a significant, thought-provoking contribution to the study of Spanish literature.

Washington University in St. Louis

Lori Pattison

**SHAW, DONALD. *Antonio Skármeta and the Post Boom*. Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte, 1994. 238 pp.**

In recent years the number of critical studies on Chilean author Antonio Skármeta and his fiction has been growing at an impressive rate and this, no doubt, is due to the quality of his narrative as well as to his importance as a leading figure in what has come to be called the Post Boom of Spanish American fiction writing. To the insightful studies already provided by Raúl Silva Cáceres, Grñnor Rojo, Constanza Lira and Monique Lemaitre, we can now add this excellent book by Donald Shaw.

Shaw begins his study by identifying what are for him three key dates to our understanding of Skármeta's importance in the evolution of recent Spanish American narrative: 1926, 1950 and 1968. Those well versed in literary history will immediately recognize the first as the year in which Güiraldes's classic regionalist novel, *Don Segundo Sombra*, first appeared. But what many may not remember is that it is also the year of Roberto Arlt's *El juguete rabioso*. It is this second text that interests Shaw because Arlt, in the twenties and thirties, was taking Spanish American fiction in a different direction, in much the same manner that Skármeta in the sixties was attempting to move it away from the dominance of the Boom. The type of fiction initiated by Arlt produced, according to Shaw, two ingredients that were virtually absent in regionalist narrative: humor and sexuality, which will become linchpins in Skármeta's fictional world many years later. The second important year for Shaw, 1950, corresponds to the publication of Onetti's *La vida breve*, which he identifies as one of the first true examples of Boom writing. While Onetti and his generation will underscore their inability to understand and portray reality, Skármeta and his Post Boom contemporaries (particularly Gustavo Sainz and Manuel Puig) will reinforce, according to Shaw, a return to observable reality and a belief in a more stable relationship between the linguistic sign and meaning.

The third key year, 1968, corresponds to the publication of Puig's *La traición de Rita Hayworth* and in it is contained, in Shaw's words, not only an emphasis upon

observed reality but also the incorporation of youth and pop culture as integral elements of the author's narrative world. Shaw is quick to point out, however, that this tendency was already apparent in Skármeta's short story "La Cenicienta en San Francisco" published in 1963.

At the heart of Shaw's study are three important assertions that shape his understanding and appreciation of Skármeta's narrative: 1) an undeniable shift occurs in Skármeta's perception of reality during the Allende period, which is only intensified after the violent overthrow of the Popular Unity government. This shift affects not only the way the writer sees himself but also his themes and the techniques he employs to present them. His fiction, as Shaw points out, moves from a concern with overcoming the "otherness" of the individual to a higher sense of the collective and social justice. 2) There is in Skármeta's narrative a conscious rejection of both regionalism and the aesthetics of the Boom. 3) Skármeta's fiction reflects a style that is more "readerly" than "writerly"; one that is more focused on the daily reality faced by human beings and more interested in groups and sectors of society that were conspicuously absent in the texts of the Boom. This type of fiction is designated by Skármeta as "hiperrealista," lest we confuse what he and his cohorts produce as just another return to old style realism. Unfortunately, and this is one of the few weak points in an otherwise superb study, Shaw does not adequately distinguish between traditional realism and what Skármeta may mean by his brand of hyperrealism.

Shaw's critical analyses of Skármeta's texts, beginning with his first collection of short stories (*El entusiasmo*, 1967) and ending with the writer's most recent novel (*Match Ball*, 1989), are concise and extremely perceptive. Certain critical convictions guide his approach to each text and these include his belief that artistic skill determines the successful arrangement of episodes that make up a narrative's organization. In this sense it is always theme that governs the selection of such episodes and conveys what he calls the author's "insight." This explains why we find in his commentary so much interest in the skeletal framework of the text, the isolation and disposition of its narrative parts and how they function within the context of the whole. This approach is particularly illuminating in his commentary on *La insurrección* (1982) and *Ardiente paciencia* (1985) in which Shaw convincingly elucidates the writer's artistic control over the pace and rhythm of his narrative material. Shaw's study will become an invaluable resource for students of Skármeta's fiction and the literature of the Post Boom.

Swarthmore College

John J. Hassett

**SZMETAN, RICARDO.** *La situación del escritor en la obra de Manuel Gálvez (1916-1935)*. New York: Peter Lang, 1994. 257 pp.

It may be true that hardly anyone reads Gálvez these days, but the last critical word is yet to be written on this controversial figure. Rather than continuing to censure the Argentine novelist for his pedestrian and uninspired approach to fiction,