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Review Of "Amerindian Elements In The Poetry Of Ernesto Cardenal: Mythic Foundations Of The Colloquial Narrative" By J. A. Morrow

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Balderston seguramente ha leído estos textos; es una lástima que sus aportes críticos no sigan la enseñanza que proyectan. Y es evidente que, en este caso, no ha leído *con* Borges.

Pablo Brescia, University of South Florida

Morrow, John Andrew. *Amerindian Elements in the Poetry of Ernesto Cardenal: Mythic Foundations of the Colloquial Narrative*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010. 334 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-7734-3660-2.

The Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal (b. 1925) is undoubtedly one of the greatest Latin American poets born in the last century. The award of the Premio Reina Sofia in Madrid last year and the translation of his life's work to many languages make clear his extraordinary stature as a world-class artist. In the last few years, several books have been added to the scholarly treatment of Cardenal's work, including the one under review and Morrow's most recent *Religion and Revolution: Spiritual and Political Islam in Ernesto Cardenal* (Newcastle, UK, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

Morrow deserves credit for raising "the Amerindian elements" of Cardenal's poetry to the attention of academic readers. As the author of the first full treatment of his topic, he enjoys a certain freedom, while at the same time he has to take into consideration a large number of excellent international critics who have addressed multiple aspects of the poet's abundant production—a tall order. While the title of Morrow's book refers to a theme, it analyzes mostly three key collections of Cardenal's poetry: *Homenaje a los indios americanos* (Homage to the American Indians, 1969), *Los ovnis de oro: poemas indios* (Golden UFOs: The Indian Poems; 1991), and *Cántico cósmico* (Cosmic Canticle, 1989). The first book was recast in the second, a more substantive undertaking, and while *Cántico* was published before *Los ovnis de oro*, the last of its poems was written in 1987. *Cántico* fuses some key fragments of "Indian poems" into a formidable poetic enterprise that synthesizes contemporary science, the troubled history of Latin America, and a mystical praise of God's love. The bulk of Morrow's analysis deals with *Los ovnis de oro*.

Morrow structures his book carefully, introducing it with a biography of the poet who is also a priest, a monk, and a former Sandinista who supported armed revolution, and for ten years directed the Ministry of Culture of the post-dictatorial Nicaragua. Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, poet, artist and peace activist, asked Cardenal to write about the Indigenous cultures of the Americas, old and new. Merton had been the Nicaraguan's master of novices in a Kentucky monastery between 1957 and 1959. Morrow also explains Cardenal's deep connection with some North American poets, especially Ezra Pound, from whom he borrows *exteriorismo*, an aesthetic standard that shuns complex metaphors in favor of a direct presentation of the object. He discusses Cardenal's participation in the Liberation Theology movement, a theme that needs a more focused study.

The second chapter deals with poems written on the Conquest, especially those included in *El estrecho dudoso* (The Doubtful Strait, 1966). Here we are exposed to one of Cardenal's most powerful writing devices: the ability to conflate historical facts and present day events or perspectives. With the help of critics like Russell Salmon, Tamara Williams, Edward Elias and others, but also differing from them, Morrow establishes how this device works, as the poet "manipulates past voices from a present perspective" (72), and can even say that "an agenda is sometimes sensed" (180), a healthy perspective on the underlying ideology of the poems. In this early chapter Morrow emphasizes humor as a poetic device in Cardenal, but we miss a deeper analysis of irony and its role in an otherwise solemn poetic text.

The rest of the book analyzes poems clustered by region or Indigenous cultures, devoting a final chapter to the Indigenous themes in *Cántico cósmico*. Morrow establishes historical backgrounds for the poems, sometimes letting them overshadow his literary analysis. At other times his focus on rhythm and language is insightful, and will reveal the powerful aesthetics of the poem to readers (112, 176). Still, I miss critical attention to the emotional charge of the poems, one of the sources of their effectiveness.

Throughout the book, we see Cardenal studying books on the conquest, old and new, and anthropological texts to understand the universe of Indigenous cultures. He visits groups of native peoples in the Americas, discovering values that stand in opposition to those of European-based cultures. We see that the poet opposes "foreign domination, poverty, and oppression" (190) in the Indian poems, trusting a day when those conditions will be reversed. Perhaps the single most important element of Indigenous cultures that comes through in these poems, as seen through

Morrow, is the sacredness of the earth, of which humans are a part. Morrow believes it is Cardenal's desire to open the wealth of aboriginal present-day cultures to the world, with all their redeeming powers.

Conclusions after each chapter and final conclusions complete the book and underscore its value as a teaching device. We read at the end: "As only a master poet can accomplish, Cardenal has succeeded in integrating the Indian voice into the chorus of Spanish American voices, and the voices of humanity as a whole" (300).

In framing his subject matter, Morrow could have worked with some of the most important critiques of *indigenista* literature in Latin America. A brief discussion of Miguel Angel Asturias and José María Arguedas would have provided an analogy or contrast to Cardenal's poetic-political tentative. Equally important as referents are the works of Tzvetan Todorov on the Conquest (1982) and J.M.G. Le Clézio on the interrupted Amerindian civilizations (1988), as part of a new world consciousness about the cataclysm of the sixteenth century and its aftermath.

Morrow uses some non-academic sources for his discussion of historical background in relation to Central America (187-89), and occasionally no references at all (57). These, and the error of referring to "the recently discovered Suiza Indians" (287), a misreading of "Cantiga 32" in *Canto cósmico*, should be corrected in a future edition. Meanwhile, this book should stand as an ally to anybody who wants to enter the realm of some of the most powerful Latin American poetry available to us today.

Aurora Camacho de Schmidt, Swarthmore College

Franco, Sergio R. *In(ter)vencciones del yo: Escritura y sujeto autobiográfico en la literatura hispanoamericana (1974-2002)*. Madrid: Vervuert, 2012. 248 pp. ISBN: 978-84-8489-658-6.

En *In(ter)vencciones del yo* Sergio Franco analiza cinco obras autobiográficas de destacados autores latinoamericanos de la época contemporánea: *Confieso que he vivido* de Pablo Neruda, *Las genealogías* de Margo Glantz, *El pez en el agua* de Mario Vargas Llosa, los "Autorretratos" de Severo Sarduy y *Vivir para contarla* de Gabriel García Márquez. Franco observa que en el pasado la autobiografía recibió mucho menos atención que otros géneros literarios, pero hoy en día está generando mucho más interés debido a la información importante que aporta para la interpretación y valoración de la producción literaria de un autor dentro de su contexto histórico, cultural y político. El estudio crítico de Franco de la autobiografía se centra en el juego entre los dos términos indicados en el título: invención e intervención. Mientras la invención se refiere en general a la construcción de la vida histórica, la intervención profundiza en el propósito ideológico de la narración, a través del cual "[q]uién publica su autobiografía aspira a algún grado de participación y efecto en la esfera social" (19).

En cada una de las cinco obras Franco explora una variedad de instancias en las que se entrecruzan la invención y la intervención. A pesar de las diferencias entre los cinco textos, uno de los temas que sobresale en todos es la imagen plural y fragmentaria, no unitaria, de cada figura autobiográfica incluida. En el análisis de la escena en *Confieso que he vivido* en la que el poeta denuncia el bombardeo del Palacio de la Moneda en Chile el 11 de septiembre 1973, Franco muestra cómo diferentes representaciones ideológicas de Neruda emergen de la interpretación del texto. Por un lado, algunos investigadores como Jean Franco han cuestionado la autenticidad de algunos de los datos presentados en la autobiografía debido a que Neruda falleció doce días después del golpe. Por otro lado, personas cercanas a Neruda, como Matilde Urrutia y Hernán Loyola, han sostenido que el texto original de Neruda no ha sido alterado. Así, uno puede preguntarse si Neruda mismo se presenta como el defensor antifascista del pueblo o si en este caso Neruda es la invención de otras personas que han utilizado la nombradía del poeta para reforzar su propia posición política.

Sergio Franco también revela cómo divergentes perspectivas ideológicas que emanan desde posiciones jerárquicas de privilegio y de marginación fragmentan la imagen del personaje autobiográfico. Por ejemplo, la imagen de Neruda como defensor de los oprimidos ha reforzado el prestigio literario del premio Nobel chileno. Aunque esta imagen de Neruda prevalece en la cultura dominante, la voz privilegiada del poeta chileno no representa universalmente al marginado. Franco señala diferentes investigaciones que han criticado los valores patriarcales y elementos del discurso colonial europeo que se encuentran en la obra del poeta chileno. *El pez en el agua* de Vargas Llosa también ofrece dos imágenes ideológicas muy distintas del mismo autor. Durante las elecciones