Review Of "Crítica Del Exilio: Ensayos Sobre Literatura Latinoamericana Actual" By G. Rojo

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Review
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Published by: University of Pennsylvania Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/473745
Accessed: 21-08-2015 16:57 UTC

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matization; there are various modes of separation, e.g., spatial, antithetical, structural, symmetrical blocking and other binary contrasts. García-Posada closes his Introduction to the Romancero with a summary of the work as a polemic, i.e., the myopic critical emphasis on gitanismo and the excesses in personalizing Federico as agitanado, the attack on the work by Dalí and other vanguardistas for its being too traditional, and Lorca’s attempts to defend himself and the authenticity of his poems.

García-Posada’s approach to the individual romances is very effective. He persistently incorporates the views of other critics into his notes without being negative or dogmatic. While the critical research is extensive, the search into Lorca himself for interrelationships is especially penetrating. On the other hand, García-Posada is never averse to putting his own intuition into play, and even when readers are not fully convinced, they will be sufficiently provoked into rethinking their own interpretations and meditating on their validity in the face of this editor’s perceptions. The gloss of “San Miguel (Granada)” may be the most problematical segment of the edition. Not only does García-Posada seem to be less secure in his interpretations here but in the process of relating the poem to Doña Rosita la soltera, he tends to overread Lorca’s criticism of Granada just as critics of the play so often do. Also disappointing is an error of omission. There is no comment on the ironies of the second poem on Antoñito el Camborio vis-à-vis the first one, nor in fact is any effort made to relate the two even though they share the same protagonist. Despite these points, the reader will hardly fail to be impressed by the substance of the whole, including the Llanto where the strength of the explication is to be found more in the Introduction than in the notes. García-Posada’s edition is a work of genuine merit, and he is to be congratulated for it.

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In spite of the heterogeneous nature of this collection of essays and the often convoluted style in which they are written, this latest book by the author of Los orígenes del teatro hispanoamericano (1972) and Muerte y resurrección del teatro chileno: 1973-1983 (1985) is well worth the reader’s attention. Rojo’s overall objective has been to establish an equilibrium between the esthetic aspect of the literary text and its relationship to the socio-historical reality in which it has been written. His criticism reflects
careful readings of Lukács, Althusser, Ángel Rama and Fredric Jameson as well as much of recent feminist criticism. At the heart of his critical approach is a firm belief that the literary text “knows what it wants its reader to know” and that such knowledge is the result of the socio-historical conditions under which it was produced and the ideological perspective that these conditions impose upon the work. Rojo is quick to add, however, that in these essays he has not always read what the texts in question might have wanted to say but rather what they have sought to disguise in the never ending masquerade that is literature.

Rojo’s study is divided into six chapters that deal specifically with the following: 1) The function of literary history in general and of Latin American literary history in particular. In this essay, the author takes up the question of the generational approach to literary history and finds it deficient for its insistence on the diachronic and its failure to establish a meaningful link between literature and the conditions that determine the process of its “production.” He does not, however, underestimate the role played by the individual in the creative process but rather seeks to clarify the interplay between the individual creative psyche and social structures. 2) In his attempt to address the terms modernity and postmodernity Rojo examines the development of Chilean poetry during the past three decades. In this essay he rejects the notion that the experimental aspects of recent Chilean poetry have their roots in the tension and violence created by the Pinochet dictatorship. According to Rojo such changes manifested themselves long before the military coup of 1973 and were due principally to the fact that a repertory of poetic forms had reached its limits. 3) Through a study of works by Gonzalo Millán, Federico Schopf and Nain Nómez, Rojo undertakes an interesting study of trends in recent Chilean poetry. He explores the voice of exile in Millán’s La ciudad, showing the unique interplay between the poet’s historical circumstance, exile and the destruction of his country (ciudad) during his involuntary absence. Schopf’s Escenas de peep-show provides Rojo with the opportunity to examine the nature of the poetic subject, particularly its embodiment of the postmodern period, while the poetry of Nómez suggests a tormented psyche produced by the phenomenon of involuntary exile. 4) The interest in the theme of exile continues with an essay on the narrative of Antonio Skarmeta, which includes No paso nada, La insurrección and Ardiente paciencia. While comments on the first two novels reveal few new insights into Skarmeta’s writing, it is in Rojo’s discussion of Ardiente paciencia that he provides his reader with some fascinating comments on the relationship between the writer (Skármeta) and his people (Chile). 5) Through an application of Lukács’ model of the Bildungsroman, Rojo convincingly demonstrates how La bella durmiente de Rosario Ferre and Los cachorros de Mario Vargas Llosa embody both a subversion and a parody of this type of novel. This is Rojo at his critical best and despite his undisguised antipathy towards
Vargas Llosa, which at times leads him to some very questionable conclusions regarding the Peruvian author’s literary texts, this is a highly readable and perceptive chapter.

The book closes with an essay (6) on García Márquez’ _El amor en los tiempos del cólera_ in which Rojo explains how the novel functions simultaneously as a typical nineteenth-century romantic novel, as a realist novel on bourgeois society and as a novel of female self-awareness. It is especially in the final section of this chapter, in which Rojo investigates the question of textual authority through a study of the text’s ironic discourse, that one recognizes the presence of an agile critical mind at work.

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Up to now most commentators of José Lezama Lima have fallen generally into one of two camps. There are those, like Margarita Junco Fazzolari, who attempt to extract from Lezama’s writings a “poetic system.” There are others, Severo Sarduy among them, who read Lezama as if he were a subtropical Derrida. Nonetheless, Lezama is neither a poetician nor a pre-post-structuralist—which is not to say that his works do not contain brilliant theoretical insights or that his writing does not exhibit the dense verbal texture that one associates with poststructuralist discourse. As Gustavo Pellón points out in this perceptive new book, Lezama’s theorizing is too erratic to be congealed into a system, and for all of its neobaroque fury, his writing is relentlessly logocentric. Pellón’s emphasis, therefore, is on the tensions that run through and give distinctive shape to Lezama’s work, among them the tension between “culture” and “system” (to use Said’s terminology) as well as that between verbal excess and the search for transcendental signifieds.

Of the book’s six chapters, four are dedicated to _Paradiso_. The first chapter, “Beyond the Aesthetics of Realism,” argues that Lezama is neither an intertextual demon nor a realist manqué. According to Pellón, the novel is characterized by the competition between hostile literary paradigms—the romantic paradigm of the _Bildungsroman_ and the Bakhtinian paradigm of the carnivalesque. Chapter 2 is somewhat misleadingly titled “The Aesthetics of Excess: The Novel as Fibroma,” for Pellón’s careful reading of the fibroma episode does _not_ suggest that the tumor is a double for the text, a kind of “mass” _en abîme_; rather, the author persuasively