

donde es evidente el influjo de las ideas de Asín Palacios e Ibn Arabi, y *La saga de los Marx*, una obra que revela que las predicciones de Marx sobre las sociedades capitalistas se siguen cumpliendo hoy día.

El presente estudio se habría enriquecido con el desarrollo en el cuerpo central del trabajo de algunos de los temas recogidos en las notas de los capítulos sexto y séptimo, como el supuesto falocentrismo del escritor, su problemática captación de la mujer y del mundo árabe o la presentación de los enfermos del sida en sus escritos. Por su parte, también habría sido útil un análisis más detenido de dos hechos que han influido notablemente en la evolución ideológica del escritor, como son las causas de su decrecimiento de las ideas marxista o su compleja relación con el mundo árabe. Pese a ello, el libro sitúa la producción de Goytisolo, de forma detallada, en su contexto vital histórico, ideológico y estético.

Parece claro que el propósito del estudio no es tanto debatir punto por punto aspectos capitales de la narrativa de Goytisolo bien conocidos, o incorporar menciones, que podrían ser interminables, a artículos o libros sobre el escritor, sino dejar campo abierto al crítico, para que analice, bajo sus propios parámetros, estas obras, permitiéndole así desarrollar sus ideas. Y esta premisa la cumple el profesor Pope a la perfección a lo largo de estas páginas. Se debe mencionar también que otro de los aciertos del libro, escrito con un estilo elegante, claro y fluido, es el hecho de acometer un estudio de la narrativa de Goytisolo otorgando la misma atención a todas las novelas, mostrando muchos de los temas claves que en ellas aparecen, revelando sus mecanismos internos y anotando las características formales predominantes.

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Francisca López. *Mito y discurso en la novela femenina de posguerra en España*. Madrid, Pliegos, 1995, 204 pp.

During the last decade and a half, interest in the work of Spanish women writers has blossomed. Once considered an editorial fab by some critics, the strong production by Spanish women writers and the ensuing steady critical attention, especially that dedicated

to the novel, have consolidated into an ever-growing field of study. The proliferation of articles, books, and monographic issues of journals dedicated to the various aspects of the field have even led some to venture that the attention is disproportionate. It must be remembered however, that due to the obscurity in which the majority of Spanish women writers have, and still labor, the ground covered by these studies is, while clearly invaluable, only initiatory. In this sense, López's present contribution to the specific field of the postwar novel is as necessary as it is important.

As López notes in the introduction of *Mito y discurso*, particularly perplexing is the fact that much of the divulgation of Spanish women novelists has been done by Hispanists working in the United States, while in Spain only a handful of these writers are recognized. López attributes this in great part to the fact that their novels have been traditionally judged by the canonical values established by their male counterparts. This has led to the misunderstanding, underestimation, or dismissal of novels by the majority of Spanish women writers due to the fact that the Spanish social and literary experience is often different in many aspects for women than it is for men. López contends that it is necessary to evaluate this body of work from its own socio-cultural and literary context, superimposing neither potentially biased North American feminist values as recommended by Chown nor traditional masculine literary parameters. Thus, the premise of López's study is the examination of the dominant ancestral myths regarding women as propagated by the State, the Church, mass media, and popular culture of the period (postwar Spain to the present day), and the interaction with and response to these mythic discourses by Spanish women novelists.

Working from the notion of myth developed by Barthes, in the introduction López highlights the powerful use of myth by the Francoist regime, and key to the early parts of the study, by one branch in particular, that of the *Sección Femenina*. Through the latter's obligatory *Servicio Social*, and with the collaboration of the Catholic Church and the mass media, several generations of Spanish women were to be influenced. While the myths propagated were numerous, López focuses on those that most frequently appear as topics of discussion in the novels by Spanish women writers. Among the primary myths examined, which as López notes focus on moments and situations when the female experience is most vulnerable to mythic influence, are the classification of women in

their affective relations to men (la solterona, la chica casadera, la chica rara, la madre dolorosa, etc.), the necessity of the institutions of marriage and family for women, the social, cultural, and sexual education of women, and the essential feminine characteristics (abnegation, devotion, purity, etc.).

The responses to these myths by Spanish women writers are explored through five primary literary discourses: the *novela rosa*, the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of social realism, the demythologizing novel, and the parodic novel of the eighties. In each of the five corresponding chapters, López analyzes the interaction of three to four novels with the literary discourse and myths in question. López's choice of texts is particularly valuable because, for the most part, she concentrates on the work of less-studied authors (Ballesteros, Gómez Ojea, Icaza, Kurtz, Salisachs) or, in the case of recognized names, less-studied texts [*La mujer nueva* (Laforet), *El pez sigue flotando* (Medio)]. The historical distribution of the novels analyzed however is somewhat less-balanced. Of the eighteen texts chosen the majority (ten) were written in the 1950s, with the 1960s and 1980s represented by three texts each, and the 1940s and 1970s by only one each.

With a solid grounding in the work of her predecessors in the field [as evidenced by the thorough bibliography which includes the standard references (Brown, Díaz, Nichols, Ordóñez) as well as some lesser-known ones], López incorporates past criticism in her own in-context social/cultural/literary approach which results in the exploration of new territory. Each chapter first briefly outlines the principal mythic characteristics (often specifically-feminine) of the particular discourse in question, from which López then precedes with an analysis of the assimilations and subversions of the former embodied in each novel. The individual readings of each text are detailed and insightful, orienting the reader to the particular manner in which each writer interacts with the discourse and the myths. Because many of the same myths are considered in relation to the different literary discourses and novels, at times the study seems somewhat repetitive. However, the clear advantage of this organization is the emergence of patterns of subversion employed by the novelists across the decades and the discourses.

The timeliness of the study is reinforced by the subject matter of the last chapter; López observes that despite the political and social changes of the 1960s and 1970s, many of the dominant myths of the early postwar period still have a powerful influence on present day

narratives by Spanish women authors. Clearly, it is through laudable studies such as this one that reevaluate the texts of Spanish women novelists in their own context that a clearer, less-biased understanding of the value of this body of work will emerge.

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Judith Nantell. *The Poetry of Francisco Brines: The Deconstructive Effects of Language*. Lewisburg PA, Bucknell University Press, 1994, 122 pp.

At various points throughout this study, Judith Nantell comments that she used to believe that her task as a critic was to attain knowledge by clarifying the meaning of poetic texts. Over time, however, she has come to think that poets such as Francisco Brines really explore the impossibility of achieving knowledge because of the groundlessness of existence and the instability of language. This has led her to prefer deconstruction as a method for reading because it sensitizes one to the discontinuities, aporias, and unexpected associations generated by non-being and language in the work of such poets. At the same time, deconstruction opens us to a new idea of criticism, one in which the goal of the critic is not to master the meaning of texts but to explore perplexity and uncertainty. As a result, she tells us, her study does not try to offer a full interpretation of Brines. Rather, it seeks to ponder the play of *différance* in his work as an unfolding of incoherence and insufficiency.

Nantell raises these issues by studying three main themes in Brines's poetry: knowledge, time, and non-being. In the first chapter concerning knowledge, the critic comments on three poems, one each by Claudio Rodríguez, José Ángel Valente, and Brines. The goal is to establish a method based on detecting contradictions and double entendres that generate counter-meanings, excess or supplementarity, and finally, uncertainty. Unfortunately, I found the reading of both Rodríguez and Valente somewhat extraneous to the whole, possibly because the absence of attention to their other work made it difficult to contextualize what was being said. My sense is that it would have been better to leave these two poets for another occasion so as to concentrate more thoroughly on Brines, whose approach to knowledge is explained through reference to only one poem.