

El libro cumple con su intento de abordar la adecuación o no de las teorías feministas producidas en los países norteamericanos y exportadas al resto del mundo/colonia cultural, pero como cualquier recolección de escritos de diversos autores, el problema es la coexistencia de textos que obligan a replantear y revisar el estado de la cuestión, con otros que no aportan demasiada luz.

The Ohio State University

ANTONIO FRANCISCO PEDRÓS GASCÓN

Perriam, Chris, Michael Thompson, Susan Frenk and Vanessa Knights. *A New History of Spanish Writing; 1939 to the 1990s*. Oxford, Oxford UP, 2001, 241 pp.

In their preface to this volume, the authors say that they want to write about more than traditional literature and that they intend to proceed by themes rather than chronology. This means including «frontier genres» such as the journalistic essay, comics and other non-canonical forms of writing. It also means that certain works will be discussed more than once because they contribute different thematic perspectives. The themes themselves include history, the family, power and resistance, realism, gender and eroticism, and the emergence of a new diversified Spain. Although many interesting points are made about all these, I have to admit being disappointed that much of the book ends up becoming a catalogue of traditional literary genres filled with lists of authors' names and titles of works that are described in a line or two. Unfortunately, the book stops well short of exemplifying a new kind of history.

The first chapter provides historical background on the emergence of the Franco regime, its early attitudes and organization, its gradual evolution through the 1950s and 1960s, and the later transition to democracy following Franco's death in 1975. All of this is well known but it provides a necessary point of reference for the more nuanced discussions that follow. One of the more interesting of these occurs in chapter two, which describes how the Franco regime implemented a national mythology of «La España eterna» in the educational system, children's books, comics, and also in the poetry, theater and prose of sympathetic writers. Again, it is well-trod territory but useful in establishing the norms of Spanish culture for much of the twentieth century. It also explains following chapters that present different kinds of resistance to the regime, whether by a historian such as Vicens Vives, dramatists like Buero Vallejo or Alfonso Sastre, or novelists such as Ramón Sender or Juan Benet, to name just a few.

The Franco regime placed great emphasis on the traditional, patriarchal family, and though writers of the 1940s and 1950s do not openly challenge this, their depictions of family life are very ambiguous. It would be difficult to describe the family as robust and healthy in works like Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, Laforet's *Nada*, Martín Santos' *Tiempo de silencio* or Delibes' *Cinco horas con Mario*. Indeed, a theme that keeps returning under different guises throughout *A New History of Spanish*

Writing is the claustrophobic, repressive environment suffered by women in contemporary Spain. This includes not only family life under Franco, but many areas of daily experience in democratic Spain, which has provided new forms of equality to women but has been slow to change traditional patriarchal practices in society at large. In this sense, one of the most interesting chapters deals with female pleasure in recent writing. Authors such as Rosa Montero, Paloma Pedrero, Ana María Moix and Concha García, to name just four from a long list, present women who are slowly and sometimes painfully, gaining control of their bodies in search of fulfillment.

The other major theme discussed in this book is realism. The authors disagree with what they say is the usual historical scheme of the period, which sees realism as dominant throughout the 1940s and 1950s, then detects a brief anti-realism in the 1960s and 1970s, and finally a return to realism after the death of Franco in 1975. Their argument is not entirely clear, but it seems to depend on the idea that even at the supposed height of «social realism» in the 1950s, many anti-realistic texts were being written. Also, some of the most intensely realistic works such as *El Jarama*, are permeated by a deeply poetic vision that enriches but perhaps also undercuts the realistic portrayal. After 1975, the authors contend, realism is «distanced and on the whole parodic, and interrogates notions of selfhood and identity through self-aware first person narrators or protagonists» (175). That is, realism is never really complete because it is textual, artistic, self-aware. Such an idea would be widely accepted nowadays even for nineteenth century realism and is therefore somewhat obvious.

For the present reader, the biggest gap in *A New History of Spanish Writing* is the absence of a sustained discussion of what I believe is one of the most important themes in contemporary writing, the collapse or dissolution of the subject understood as a sovereign self. The topic is mentioned in passing here and there, such as in the quotation above, but it deserved more complete attention. Certainly, it lies at the core of Cernuda's poetry, and from there migrates to Gil de Biedma, Valente, Angel González, and later poets such as Siles, Villena, and many others. Nor is it limited to poetry. The authors manage to point out how Martín Gaité, Goytisolo and Marsé often give a sense that identity is performance. This could have been explored much more. Women writers in particular possess an especially acute perception that the script of their lives has already been written and that their major challenge is to find a new understanding of the self and its relationship to the body. For them, life was never going to include sovereignty of the self because that was an illusory masculine entity. Given the number of women writers discussed in this book, one wishes that these kinds of problems had received more direct attention.

Still, it is important not to be too critical. Few nations are more complex than Spain, and *A New History of Spanish Writing* covers a lot of ground while offering solid insight into Spanish writing over a period of some sixty-five years. The volume carries an excellent bibliography and a

helpful index. All in all, this is a good contribution to Spanish historical criticism.

The Ohio State University

STEPHEN J. SUMMERHILL

CREACIÓN

Dulce Chacón. *La voz dormida*. Madrid, Alfaguara, 2002, 387 pp.

«La mujer que iba a morir se llamaba Hortensia». Con estas palabras Dulce Chacón inicia su novela e introduce la primera paradoja de las muchas que la caracterizan. Porque a pesar de la sistemática deconstrucción del suspense, ejemplificada en esta cita, *La voz dormida* induce a una lectura compulsiva. Cuesta dejar de lado este relato de unas mujeres reclusas en la prisión de Ventas en la inmediata posguerra. La trama gira en torno a Hortensia, presa por servir de enlace a la guerrilla, y a su hermana Pepita, quien se ha trasladado a Madrid para poder visitarla. Otros personajes cobran relieve —la dueña de la pensión de Pepita y unas compañeras de celda de Hortensia, junto con sus familiares— y presentan un mosaico de historias de los vencidos: presos, guerrilleros, militantes clandestinos, y otros surcadores de la penuria generalizada.

Las paradojas constitutivas de *La voz dormida* se encuentran tanto en el contenido como en el discurso y en el género literario. Ofrece algunos problemas taxonómicos esta obra, basada en los testimonios orales y escritos de mujeres que vivieron penalidades parecidas a las narradas. La última sección consiste en el agradecimiento de la autora «a todas las personas que me han regalado su historia», seguida de una lista onomástica. *La voz dormida*, cuyas tres secciones son rematadas por reproducciones de documentos oficiales, es una obra híbrida, una mezcla de testimonio y de ficción en la cual lo verídico funciona para hacer más conmovedora la ficción. Cabe dentro del rubro de «relato real» acuñado por Javier Cercas, autor de otra novela híbrida sobre la guerra y la posguerra, *Soldados de Salamina* (2001).

El discurso de *La voz dormida* conjuga otros opuestos, desdibujando la línea entre historia y poesía en el sentido platónico de las dos palabras. Se le ha denominado una novela coral por la cantidad de personajes que dialogan en ella, pero es igualmente llamativo el engaste poético de las conversaciones. Se evidencia en las constantes anáforas, los epítetos repetidos como si se tratara de un romance y los pequeños objetos simbólicos, como la maleta de Elvira, el trozo de franela gris con florecitas blancas, el mar, la araña peluda y el cuaderno azul. Hasta la foto de la portada se convierte en icono poético dentro de la novela.

El manejo de los tiempos verbales es otro rasgo distintivo de *La voz dormida*. Se narra frecuentemente en presente, aproximando ese mundo tan distante al lector de hoy. Pero con frecuencia el presente cambia sú-