

Book Reviews

Michael Bishop, ed. *Women's Poetry in France, 1965-1995: A Bilingual Anthology*. Winston Salem: Wake Forest UP, 1997. 392 pp.

This bilingual anthology of women poets of the twentieth century fills a great void in the studies of French women: a great silence, concerning both contemporary French poetic creation, and the production of poetry by women. In this volume, the voices of 28 women are released, spanning several generations of women. The poets were selected for their creativity; their individuality and the whole of the collection demonstrates a great diversity. It is thereby possible to read and to reread in it beautiful texts by Andrée Chédid, Marie-Claire Bancquart, Joyce Mansour, and Jacqueline Risset, as well as by poets less well known in the field of studies of French women, such as Claude de Burine, Jeanne Hyvrard, or Esther Tellerman. It's no surprise that texts by two novelists, Marie Redonnet (*La mort & cie*) and Marguerite Duras (*Césaire*), are also found there.

The succinct introduction by Michael Bishop places their contributions among the ranks of Marie de France, Marguerite de Navarre, Louise Labé, and Marceline Desbordes-Valmore. The translations, faithful to the texts, speak eloquently of Michael Bishop's talent as a translator and of his profound knowledge of poetics. He also includes, at the end of the volume, an introduction to each poet through a short biographical sketch. This brief biographical note allows the reader to better situate the poet, while still permitting an open reading of the poems and their translations. For it is clear that Michael Bishop places the texts in the privileged position in the volume; on the page, the poems are autonomous. It is in this perspective that these women's poems are offered to the reader in all their materiality. That is precisely wherein lies the force of this anthology. For the first time, the

voices of women which are often ignored or which receive little attention are offered to be read and to be heard, some no doubt for the first time in the history of literature. This volume invites us to rewrite the history of poetry and that of the fundamental role that women play therein. Michael Bishop deliberately places women poets in the canon, and this process constitutes in a sense a second section of his previous critical work entitled *Contemporary French Women Poets* (Rodopi, 1995). Moreover, in this new work, the emphasis and the theoretical orientation are found in the ideas of *presence* and *experience*. This work situates itself at the heart of the discourse of contemporary poetry, while retaining the specificity of contemporary feminine production. Michael Bishop reminds us, then, that intertextual relationships are inherent to these texts, in which the problematics frequently relate to one another: "writing poetry as a woman today invariably involves reading the work of other contemporary women poets" (xvii). How can we thank an author of such an enterprise which addresses itself to a broad audience of researchers, teachers, students, and lovers of poetry?

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Stanley Black. *Juan Goytisolo and the Poetics of Contagion: The Evolution of a Radical Aesthetic in the Later Novels*. Liverpool UP: Hispanic Studies TRAC (Textual Research and Criticism), 2001. Vol. 18. x + 261 pp.

As suggested by his title, Black's primary objective is to portray the "radical aesthetic"—metaphorically speaking, the "poetics of contagion"—that governs Juan Goytisolo's evolution, both as novelist and essayist, from *Señas de identidad* forward. The critic shows considerable skills of interpretation (the dense and descriptive interludes notwithstanding) as he develops a suggestive and contextualized portrait of the way in which Goytisolo's theory and praxis are intertwined. He does so as he emphasizes the correlations between Goytisolo's novels and essays on the one hand, from *Problemas de la novela* (1959) until *Cogitus interruptus* (1999), and, on the other, between Goytisolo and a wide range of contemporary theoreticians and philosophers, formalists, structuralists and post-structuralists, deconstructionists and

Benveniste, Barthes, Marcuse, Said, Eagleton, and Ong. Two threads that advance in tandem—"cual implicantes vides," as Goytisolo would have it—and that, as such, help to reveal the intimate dialogue that Goytisolo maintains, in the intimate confines of his textual abode, with himself and with his world: this is the chord that Black plays most and best.

Goytisolo's evolution, in and of itself, is the paramount theme here, a fact that is underscored by the essay's formal structure. Beyond the introduction ("Goytisolo and Literary Theory"), where Black outlines the bases for the "radical aesthetic" (the "poetics of contagion"), the critic proceeds to explain, in the four central chapters, how and to what degree *Señas de identidad* (1966), *Don Julián* (1970), *Juan sin Tierra* (1975) and *Makbara* (1980) may be considered "contagious," aesthetically speaking. Taken in succession, Black's interpretations suggest something of an ascending order insofar as he sets out to show how the aesthetic *effects* of Goytisolo's writing increase by degree and in stages. The reader comes to realize en route that Black's strategy is motivated, more or less implicitly, by the notion that the writer's ideology is projected—*realized*—through his aesthetics, that they (ideology and aesthetics) are two sides of the same coin, at least for an author such as Goytisolo, who has championed the cause of literature as an "act of dissension," writing (initially) and reading (subsequently) as profoundly emancipatory experiences.

These are, in short, the conceptual underpinnings (solid and timely) of a study that is configured as a quest for the answer to an essential question: how to reconcile Goytisolo's "shift to what might seem a highly aestheticist approach" during the postmodern phase of his literary production "with the social commitment that continues to lie at the center of the work" (6). To answer this question Black turns initially to the new sense of commitment Goytisolo expresses, during the formalist/structuralist phase of his development (example: *Señas de identidad*), with literary form and language per se. The confusion between "literary language and social discourse" that emerges during this phase of Goytisolo's thinking opens the doors, as Black claims, to the new levels of metafiction and the increasing emphasis on the performativity of literary discourse that predominate in *Don Julián* and *Juan sin Tierra*, attributes that announce, in turn, the discursive subversion (the Marquis de Sade's "crime perpétuel" announced in *Don Julián's* epigraph) that Goytisolo seeks to effect, textually, on his reader. However, if the "contagious effect" of these works

is truly limited, as Black affirms, by the centralizing presence of the narrator-protagonist—"deprived of any direct effect on that reality but an essential area of contestation of the real . . . *Juan sin Tierra* fails to meet the radical standards it sets for itself" (153)—*Makbara* marks the spot and time in Goytisolo's fictional universe where (when) the novelist fully realizes his potential. A dynamically pluralistic text, engendered as it is by the centrifugal force of a voice that passes amongst different figures (from the angel to the pariah to the reader), *Makbara* transforms its readers into the direct "beneficiary" of the "redemptive potential" of the act of reading: all according to Goytisolo's utopic plan.

In the final analysis, Black narrates the story of a triumph achieved at long last, after years of searching and experimenting, when Goytisolo finally manages to close the gap between his own theory and practice. Black's essay has the appearance of a tribute or homage in this regard, an impression that is reinforced by his final chapter. The critic remains immersed in Goytisolo's own fictional universe to the very end as he reaffirms *Makbara*'s primacy, in what reads like an afterword more than a conclusion, by showing how in his later novels (1982-1997) Goytisolo continues to apply the same formulas with the same effects. The essay therefore lacks a critical and dispassionate questioning of the novelist's standard in the face of the ongoing and extraordinarily complex debate over whether such literary praxes are *really* reconcilable within the realm of *social* commitment. To his credit, Black does address certain contradictions that are inherent in Goytisolo's fiction: the will to "orality," for instance, in *Juan sin tierra*, a novel that is, as Black admits, patently literate. Other tensions that may help us to see Goytisolo's "triumph" in more relative terms—between the social and psychological, the collective and the intimate—elude the author.

One must admire the depth of Black's and Goytisolo's shared faith. To be sure, the critic is consistent in his approach and true to his values and to the goals that he sets out for himself from the start. The story that unfolds pivots on moments of lucid and penetrating synthesis that, in the final analysis, make reading this essay a worthwhile endeavor and a provocative experience in the best sense.

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Petra Fachinger. *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: "Other" German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001. 159 pp.

Framing Petra Fachinger's engaging study of oppositionality in ethnic-minority writing in Germany is an explicit call for the diversification of American German Studies, a call to read contemporary German writing through a pluralistic and cross-cultural lens without obscuring the specificities of particular cultural situations and to adopt a comparative, more conflict-oriented approach to the literature(s) of a society in transition. Fachinger focuses on a representative group of texts, all published in the 1980s and 1990s, by second-generation migrants from Italy, Spain, and Turkey, German Jewish authors of diverse ethnic origins born after World War II, second-generation GDR writers, as well as other writers who have been marginalized. In all the texts under discussion, Fachinger seeks to throw into relief a counter-discursive thrust "present in the literary text as a structure of intentionality as much as it is grounded in multiple structures of ideological subject formation." In her introduction, Fachinger surveys the effects of Germany's rapid transformation from relative homogeneity to ethno-cultural plurality in the last 20 years and the resultant shifts in constructions of national identity, particularly with regard to the debate about citizenship, the impact of xenophobic violence, and the continuing homogenization and exoticization of migrants and their writing in the mainstream media. As one might expect, the literary responses to these developments are manifold. In her analysis, Fachinger draws on a number of postcolonial theories to elucidate the texts' position within a larger cultural context and the specific textual strategies employed to signal oppositionality and ambiguity. True to her stated purpose, Fachinger posits analogies on a broad scale, referring to, among others, the terms hybridity, creolization, and *métissage* derived from West Indian writing and the hybridization evidenced in the border literature of Chicana writers.

In the subsequent chapters, it becomes apparent to what degree many of the texts articulate intertextual connections in order to "write back" to both the German canon and the seminal texts of guest worker literature, a category that includes Günter Wallraff's hugely successful *At the Bottom* (1985) as well as works by first-generation migrants. Akif Pirinçci's autobiographical *Tears Are Always the End* (1980) alludes to GDR writer Ulrich Plenzdorf's *The New Sorrows of*

Young W., itself a counter-canonical rewriting of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and effectively deterritorializes the literature and the language of the German "master(s)." The text melds Akif's refusal to perpetuate the stereotypical image of the Turkish migrant as victim with Plenzdorf's evocation of an East German Other unsuited for the redeeming passage from alienation into a state of class consciousness signifying his "arrival" in socialism. Feridun Zaimoglu's texts brashly portray an urban outlaw culture in a manner Fachinger calls "grotesque realism." Zaimoglu targets Wallraff's undercover reportage—the author "cross-dressed" to enter the milieu—about the deplorable working conditions of guest workers by exposing its perceived stereotypical construction of the Turk as helpless, exploitable and linguistically deficient Other. In order to distance himself from this kind of well-meaning social realism, Zaimoglu adopts a strategy of confrontation and hyperbole, exaggerating the media image of Turkish men in order to formulate social criticism. Reminiscent of the street ethnography of Gangsta Rap, Zaimoglu's "Kanakstas" create their own language, a kind of thieves' argot marked by the complex encodings of the urban ghetto, and turn delinquency into a site of empowerment.

Addressing the precarious role of East Germans since unification, Fachinger proceeds from the position that East Germans are viewed as socially and culturally marginal and, as such, excluded in a similar way as foreigners from dominant discourses. From an abundance of material, Fachinger chooses two novels that take issue with unification as a process of colonization and with a GDR (literary) past embodied by the most well-known author of an older generation and embattled proponent of the socialist alternative, Christa Wolf. In *Since the Gods Haven't a Clue* (1994), Kerstin Jentzsch writes back to Wolf's *Kassandra* and the GDR veneration of the classical past. In *Heroes Like Us* (1995), Thomas Brussig rewrites Wolf's controversial *What Remains*, which records in first-person narrative a day in the life of a woman writer under surveillance by the secret service from the perspectives of one of the agents. Jentzsch and Brussig opt for the picaresque as a genre squarely at odds with the GDR's official prescriptions for literary production because of its critical and hedonist tendency and as a vehicle for the articulation of life-affirming anti-heroism. Fachinger usefully points out that the picaresque has had a prominent place in postcolonial societies as a dialogical subversion of the monological utterances of power.

had a prominent place in postcolonial societies as a dialogical subversion of the monological utterances of power.

Fachinger does not consistently sustain a connection between the rather descriptive approach to the texts and the conceptual categories she posits as relevant to her project in general. The book would have benefited from a more thorough engagement with postcolonial theory and with the work of other scholars in the field of *Migrantenliteratur* proper, such as Nina Berman or Iman Khalil. Fachinger's analyses do convey a sense of the heteroglossic complexity of the individual texts, uncovering multiple semantic manipulations and citational levels, and offer a highly refreshing and multi-faceted look at the contemporary German literary scene. One hopes that this still emerging field of migrant writing will soon earn a more prominent place in the discipline of German Studies and its institutional settings.

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Jean Graham-Jones. *Exorcising History: Argentine Theater under Dictatorship*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2000. 259 pp.

Argentina's last military dictatorship (1973-83) and the early years of its redemocratization process have attracted a lot of critical attention both locally and internationally. The central hypothesis has been that studying and valuing literary and cultural production during the period would lead to a better understanding of social repression and the responsibility of individuals and society as a whole. In this sense, *Exorcising History* fills a gap in recent scholarship by documenting and analyzing Buenos Aires theatrical production.

Starting with a reference to the sociopolitical situation in the sixties, the "Introduction" offers a concise but well documented panorama of the political crisis of the seventies, highlighting key phenomena such as the coexistence of different guerrilla movements, the imposition of state repression and, in broader terms, the authoritarianism and militarism that characterized large sectors of Argentine population in recent years. Under these circumstances, and particularly after 1976, censorship became a conditioning factor for all forms of cultural production, which generated an unavoidable need of encoding messages in order to circumvent the censor's gaze.

Argentine theater before the renowned phenomenon of “Teatro Abierto.” Playwrights as Ricardo Halac, Beatriz Mosquera, Carlos Somigliana, and Susana Torres Molina, to name but a few, are some of those who managed to transcend the political and economical constraints imposed by the military government. However, the main sections of the exposition are devoted to the detailed commentary of three major plays: *Visita* (1979) by Ricardo Monti and *La nona* (1977) and *No hay que llorar* (1979), both by Roberto Cossa.

Covering 1980-1982, Chapter 2 deals with *Un trabajo fabuloso* (1980) by Halac, *y a otra cosa mariposa* (1981) by Torres Molina, both focusing on the “macho porteño” myth; *El viejo criado* (1980) by Cossa and *Marathón* (1980) by Monti, two plays intended to demythologize different fictions of national identity. Finally, the author points out “a growing awareness of the opaque nature of the censor sign, coupled with increasingly open criticism to the authoritarian state” (88).

Purposefully excluded from the previous chapter, “Teatro Abierto,” probably the most significant movement of Argentine theatrical history, deserves a whole independent exposition that recontextualizes the phenomenon aesthetically and historically, from its origins through its full development (1981-1985). To illustrate the thematic and aesthetic transformations of this movement, Graham-Jones chooses plays by four playwrights: Mauricio Kartún, Aída Bornik, Cossa, and Eugenio Griffero. The analysis sets up that one of the principal contributions of the group was the promotion of experimentation with new dramatic structures and the development of individual and collective self-critical voices.

Finally, Chapter 4 is devoted to the study of the first three years of the redemocratization process, which rapidly moved from euphoria to disenchantment. In terms of theatrical practices, this period corresponds to a project of processing recent history considering the analysis of the individual’s role within society and a discussion of the issue of social responsibility. However, this critical project was promptly abandoned, while theater production moved toward a critical distancing through satire and parody.

Besides the painstaking effort of collecting and organizing data – Appendix I constitutes a very significant contribution for enumerating “selected plays staged in Buenos Aires, 1976-1985)—*Exorcising History* is a remarkable book for two reasons. On the one hand, instead of the usual literary readings of dramatic texts, Graham-Jones

concentrates on a theatrical account of productions that includes the analysis of the reception process. On the other, although not necessarily belonging to the so-called “political theater,” she proposes a political reading of the plays under discussion, considering them as products of the experiences and imagination of their creators, and thus conditioned and influenced by the sociopolitical structures in place at the moment of creation.

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Kenneth J. Wishnia. *Twentieth-Century Ecuadorian Narrative*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1999. 202 pp.

Equipped with a solid background in critical as well as literary studies, Kenneth Wishnia embarks on an adventure few people have attempted: to place contemporary Ecuadorian narrative within the international context of the Latin American literatures that achieved worldwide recognition during the “boom” of the 1960s. Wishnia easily fulfills his explicitly stated purpose to bring some landmarks of Ecuadorian narrative to the attention of non-Ecuadorian specialists and non-Spanish speaking readers.

The texts Wishnia chooses to study mark the evolution of the Ecuadorian novel throughout the 20th century. He pinpoints their common peculiarities that make it possible to refer to them as a national corps of literature while also highlighting the links they exhibit with well-known works of fiction from other Latin American countries. Thus, Wishnia analyzes the interrelations of history and myth, of social realism and magic realism, and the problems of using orality and dialogism to actively undermine authoritative discourse, as expressions of that one fundamental characteristic of Ecuadorian culture: the mixture of races, ethnicities, languages, traditions, often identified as “mestizaje.”

Kenneth Wishnia displays a profound knowledge of Ecuador as a socio-political and cultural entity. He is quite familiar not only with the official Ecuadorian history found in scholarly books but also with the idiosyncracies at the root of popular beliefs and practices. This, combined with the experience he obviously has in deciphering literary narratives, accounts for his clear understanding of the texts he dis-

cusses. Aware that he is dealing with a relatively unknown subject matter, Wishnia helps his readers by wisely providing some useful tools: his book contains an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, and five appendixes, aided by 294 notes, a bibliography, and an index of names.

In his introduction, Wishnia explains the wide variety of perspectives from which he approaches the works selected for his study. He is supported in his endeavor by the theories of Erich Auerbach, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Mikhail Bakhtin, George Luckács, Leon Trotsky, Angel Rama, Norman Whitten, Alejo Carpentier, Jan Knott, Humberto Robles, Seymour Chatman, Terry Eagleton, Sigmund Freud, and others.

In Chapter 1 Wishnia examines the Ecuadorian vanguard of the 1920s and its controversy created by two divergent stances: on the one hand, resistance to European Surrealism coupled with glamorizing of native ideals, and on the other, those bend on synthesizing both. Within this context, Wishnia argues, credibly, that many of the characteristics found in so called magic or marvelous realist texts, can already be found in the works of Ecuadorian writers thirty or so years before the boom.

In Chapter 2 readers find a discussion of social and magical realism as practiced by three Ecuadorean writers in the 1930's and 40's: Demetrio Aguilera Malta, Jorge Icaza, and Enrique Gil Gilbert. Their works are examined vis à vis the production of internationally acclaimed authors with an agenda of political engagement such as that of John Steinbeck. Wishnia really sheds light on the issue when he says that Icaza's *Huasipungo* could be defined for Americans as the Ecuadorian *The Grapes of Wrath* while *The Grapes of Wrath* could be explained to Ecuadorians as the North American *Huasipungo*.

Chapter 3 presents José de la Cuadra's novel *Los Sangurimas* (1934) qualifying as a magical realist text that prefigures García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), in terms of thematic content as a foundational patriarchy's story, of fantastic elements as communication and communion with the dead, and of narrative style as a sum of mutually contradictory versions of events. Chapter 4 ponders the decade of the 1950s as a transitional period in which Aguilera Malta's play *El tigre* (1955) is seen as a form of expressionist storytelling that holds its own in front of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*.

Jorge Enrique Adoum and his internationally celebrated novel *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* provide the subject matter for Chapter 5. Wishnia takes the major ideas presented by Adoum in his 1972 essay "El realismo de la otra realidad" to reinforce his own postulates of Ecuadorean culture as a hybrid where writers find themselves in a perpetual state of "betweenness," torn between historical junctures such as modernization and underdevelopment or the demand for social justice and consumerism. Wishnia adds one more "between" to the list proposed by Adoum, the "between" of ethnicity in a multiethnic society, and places this writer at the core of it: Adoum is a first-generation Ecuadorian born to Lebanese immigrant parents who has successfully created a national identity for himself. His novel is discussed within the context of other Latin American ethnic and immigrant writers like Chilean poet Mahfud Massís, Argentinean novelist Alicia Steimberg, Isaac Goldemberg, and others.

The final chapter is devoted to two novels by writers from the Andean highlands, one from the north, and the other from the south of the country. Wishnia explores feminist and ethnic issues in *Bruna, soroche y los tíos* by the leading female Ecuadorian writer, Quito-born and based Alicia Yáñez Cossío whose fiction he examines under the theoretical premisses of Josefina Ludmer who contends that popular culture can be considered both conservative and rebellious because it always depicts a struggle against a socially unjust situation. He then proceeds to study Eliécer Cárdenas's deconstruction of history through the use of multiple narrative voices and a montage-type of structural fragmentation in the novel *Polvo y ceniza*, where presentation of events does not follow a chronological sequence.

After his insightful analyses of the novels he has chosen in order to trace the evolution of Ecuadorian fiction in the twentieth century, Wishnia concludes that even the most socially committed texts take on attributes of magical realism because they cannot shed off the mythical dimension of native oral narratives that inevitably inform these writings.

Aware of the limited access international readers have to Ecuadorian literature, Wishnia wisely includes appendixes with accurate English translations of some significant texts such as Pablo Palacio's "Un hombre Muerto a puntapiés" ("The Man Who Was Kicked to Death"), José de la Cuadra's *Los Sangurimas*, Alicia Yáñez Cossío's *Bruna, soroche y los tíos* (*Bruna and Her Family*), and Eliécer Cárdenas's *Polvo y ceniza* (*Dust and Ashes*). In the nearly 300 notes at

the end of the book there is enough information about the land, the people, and the political history of Ecuador to provide the context needed to understand its culture and its literature. This information includes a map of Ecuador and a replica of the National Seal as it appears in the center of the flag.

I commend Kenneth Wishnia for the excellence of his critical study *Twentieth-Century Ecuadorian Narrative*. This book is a solid piece of scholarship, well researched and clearly written, which begins to do justice to a literary tradition that gives us a glimpse into that magical world set in the Andean mountains, between the Pacific Ocean and the Amazon River, known as the Republic of Ecuador.

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