
Reviews of Books



FERNANDO RIVA, *'Nunca mayor soberbia comidió Lucifer': límites del conocimiento y cultura claustral en el Libro de Alexandre*. Madrid y Frankfurt: Ibero-americana Vervuert. 2019. 234 pp. ISBN 978-3-96456-829-8.

This book marks a significant step towards understanding just what the Castilian *Libro de Alexandre* (ca. 1230) is about and what it actually seeks to accomplish. Far more than an entertaining romance of antiquity or an object of philological and linguistic inquiry, the *Libro* serves as an admonition to those who have political and social ambitions and would seek to exceed morally acceptable limits of knowledge, especially in the quest for power and imperial sovereignty. In this way, Riva's study traces the commanding role played by curiosity and knowledge in the work, placing the latter in its larger contemporary mid-thirteenth-century Castilian-Leonese cultural context.

The desire to know absolutely reflects the intense medieval and early modern preoccupation with the legitimacy of knowledge itself, which, as Riva shows, serves as the principle intellectual and thematic underpinning for the *Libro*. From the Patristic Period until the beginning of the seventeenth century curiosity and the desire to know were generally regarded in Western culture as intellectual vices. Curious individuals were considered unhumble and to be proud and 'puffed up' (*inflatus*, the term applied to them in the Epistles of Paul, 1 Corinthians 4:6). The objects of curiosity were considered illicit, sometimes even an abomination, capable of provoking disputes when they were not unknowable, or they were simply deemed useless. Until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century endeavours for the advancement of learning had to distance themselves from curiosity and its dubious rewards or, alternatively, enhance the moral status of the curious mind. Francis Bacon's proposals for the legitimization of knowledge from 1605 in his *The Advancement of*

Learning were an integral part of this process, and a means by which curiosity underwent a remarkable transformation from vice into virtue over the course of the seventeenth century. From the twelfth century forward, the rehabilitation of curiosity was a crucial element in the objectification of scientific knowledge and eventually led to a gradual shift of focus away from the moral qualities of the curious and the propriety of particular objects of knowledge to specific procedures and methods in the pursuit of knowledge.

For the Church Fathers and Christianity in general, human curiosity was distinguished both by its objects and by its underlying motivations. The curious mind aimed at knowledge that surpassed human capacities or that was forbidden, 'worldly', or ineffectual, and therefore was morally corrupt. Curiosity was prompted by pride, vanity, or the desire to know and be like God. Even when concessions were made to the value of pagan knowledge, curiosity retained a degree of abomination in Christian belief as an intellectual sin of volition well into early modernity. Aquinas, a Dominican and a moderate Realist, while not denouncing the investigation of nature or the achievements of pagan natural philosophers, still assigned curiosity to the list of vices and devoted a complete question to it in his *Summa Theologiae* (2a2ae.167). Subsequently, denunciations of vain curiosity became especially intense in Franciscan Nominalism. The changing fortunes of curiosity and knowledge highlight the morally charged nature of the great medieval debates over the status of knowledge, natural philosophy and the virtues that were required of its practitioners. And they are reflected strikingly in the *Libro de Alexandre* as demonstrated by Fernando Riva in this valuable new analysis of the work's theological background.

Riva interprets the *Libro* as in part an ecclesiastical rejoinder to heterodox Aristotelianism, which flourished in Europe and the Iberian Peninsula, and where it was known as *averroism* (a term evoking Ibn Rushd, or

Averroes in the Latin West, the twelfth-century Andalusí commentator on Aristotle). The severity of the ecclesiastical response was due in part to the reintroduction of Greek philosophy into the West, along with its Islamic and Jewish commentaries and elaborations on it like those undertaken by Averroes. Averroism thrived in European intellectual and clerical circles from the late twelfth through the first half of the fifteenth centuries and is largely responsible for reintroducing Aristotle's Natural Philosophy and Logic to the West. Aristotelianism in the *Libro* is embodied in the character of Alexander the Great, who is moved more by reason and the consuming desire to know than by piety, who incarnates the superiority of reason over revelation, and who is an all-powerful emperor, educated by Aristotle himself, who seeks nothing less than to conquer the world and know all the secrets of Nature and of God.

In the work, Alexander's grave trespass is dramatized when Nature denounces the Macedonian emperor before God for having dared to invade her kingdom and scrutinize her secrets, ascending to the heavens in a basket drawn by griffons, and descending to the bottom of the sea to visit the fishes. Aggrieved by the transgression, God pronounces judgment on Alexander and brands him a 'lunático' (2329), the first recorded testimonial in Castilian for the use of this scientific term. God's emphatic words, spoken with irony and displeasure, underscore the Almighty's contempt for Alexander, a man whose sights fail to transcend the empirical universe and the notion of a self-sufficient Nature (*natura naturans*). God punishes Alexander for his pride (*superbia*) and condemns him to death. All of which points to a crucial conceptual distinction in the *Libro*: one which marks the existing tension between emerging Aristotelian natural philosophy in the thirteenth century and Christian theology, precisely at the moment when the efficacy and utility of both were being debated by the Scholastics in the universities and the *studia generalia* across all Christendom. Through his obsession with the pursuit of forbidden knowledge and his desire to know, Alexandre in the *Libro* thus offends both Nature and the Deity, and pays the consequences through the mediation of Lucifer, who had before the beginning of Time sought to test God's forbearance, and who remains the maximum personification of evil and the sin of pride.

To arrive at this interpretation, Riva puts the Castilian *Alexandre* into dialogue with earlier theological Latin texts on the limits of human knowledge, exposing the learned doctrinal foundations of the work which ran counter explicitly to the development of the New Science and Aristotelian Natural Philosophy. While Riva seeks to identify these sources as having expressly Iberian ties to the circle of Lucas de Tuy, who in his *De altera vita* denounces two strands of Aristotelianism which could lead to intellectual trespass and were identified with pride and heresy, the latter is, I think, but one of many possible sources of anti-averroism for the *Alexandre* poet. It is just as likely, in fact perhaps even more so, that knowledge of the debate concerning the efficacy of reason or revelation reached the poet through broader clerical circles along the Camino de Santiago, and university contacts with the trans-Pyrenean clerical intelligentsia, especially because negative judgments of curiosity formed such a significant part of the backdrop of university culture and for the prohibitions against the teaching of Aristotle at the University of Paris starting in 1210, continuing until 1240 when the polemic had become broadly public, and culminating in 1270 and 1277 with Bishop Étienne Tempier's famous Condemnations. The presence of Aristotle and Natural Philosophy in León, Castile and Galicia, which had arrived there via the University of Palencia and the diffusion of scholastic learning by means of the books that travelled along the Camino de Santiago during the first part of the thirteenth century. Research on the *studia* of Santiago, on both the Franciscans of Val de Deus and the Dominicans of Bonaval, each aligned with Oxonian methodical scholasticism as practised by Robert Grosseteste, utilized between the years 1222 and 1230 a large collection of scientific books that belonged to the bishop's library. This collection of books was assembled under the patronage of two noteworthy archbishops, Pedro Muñoz, significantly called the Necromancer because of his pursuit of science (+1224) and Bernardo II (+1240), which attests to an intense intellectual activity, and a small community of masters and disciples that were part of the respective schools, who studied the *libri Aristotelis de naturali philosophia* [Aristotle's Books on Natural Philosophy], the same books scrutinized by the physician-philosopher David Dinant in his *Quaternuli*

[Little Notebooks] which resulted in the first condemnation of the teachings of Aristotle at Paris in 1210.

Despite this one quibble, Riva's book stands as an important new examination of the *Libro's* clerical foundations, and indeed the *mester de clerecía* as a whole, and its place in the social and intellectual matrices of Castilian-Leonese culture of the first half of the thirteenth century. His views on the *Libro* and the *cuaderna vía* clerical tradition to which it belongs show it to be a critical conjunction of different strands of medieval culture and to be something far more worthy of interest than an object for the narrow lens of philology. Riva's study will be of beneficial interest to medievalists of every sort, but especially to those who seek to focus Iberian medieval literature and intellectual history in a larger cosmopolitan frame.

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TERENCE O'REILLY, COLIN THOMPSON and LESLEY TWOMEY (eds), *St Teresa of Ávila: Her Writings and Life*. Cambridge: MHRA Legenda. 2018. 274 pp. ISBN 978-1-78188-501-7.

Growing out of a celebration of the quinquenary of the birth of Teresa de Ávila held in Oxford in 2015, Terence O'Reilly, Colin P. Thompson, and Lesley Twomey's *St. Teresa de Ávila: Her Writings and Life* brings together essays on the saint from some of the leading anglophone scholars of early modern Spain and Christian mysticism. Thompson prefaces the collection with a brief introduction to Teresa's life and work, highlighting the ways in which her fierce determination to pursue a rich spiritual life, despite the opposition of powerful men, remains a pertinent example for spiritual and political endeavour today. The essays are then divided into three main sections, the first of which, 'St Teresa and her Times', places the saint within her historical context.

Patrick Mullins begins this section with an exploration of Teresa's understanding of earlier Carmelite traditions. Mullins shows how Teresa accepted the Carmelite claim of Elijan succession as put forward by Felippo Ribot in his *Ten Books* (Saint Albert's Press, 2005), but that she was also influenced by the style of poverty of the Franciscan tradition, and

closely followed the austere Rule of María de Jesús in formulating her Constitutions of 1567. In the second chapter of this section, Edward Howells discusses Teresa's understanding of the relationship between individual action and divine initiative as revealed in the saint's second conversion. A highlight from this first section is the chapter of the late Trevor Dadson, who, with characteristic wit and brio, rescues from ignominy the figure of Ana Mendoza y de la Cerda, a benefactor of Teresa who has traditionally been taken to represent a vulgar aristocratic instrumentalization of the religious, as opposed to Teresa's saintly asceticism. Dadson provides a fascinating insight into the social and political context of the two women's relationship, showing how Teresa's dream of a reformed Church based on the practice of private prayer is made possible by her capacity to negotiate the shifting power dynamics of Spain's most influential families. Following on from Dadson, Jeremy Roe recovers the figure of the Italian-born painter Vicente Carducho, who served at the Madrid court of Philip III and Philip IV, and who made Teresa the subject of many of his paintings and drawings. Roe shows how Carducho not only depicted the saint in his work but also took the centrality of vision in her writings as evidence for a defence of art based on the idea that the greatest artistic creations are uniquely capable of inspiring piety and devotion.

The second section of the collection is dedicated to Teresa's life as a mystic. In a beautifully written opening chapter, Rowan Williams argues that Teresa's readings of the Gospels form part not only of a defence of the female contemplative life but also an ecclesiology and theology that emphasize a radical fidelity to Christ, a fidelity that exceeds any ties to social status or identity. Peter Tyler, for his part, examines Teresa's 'Picture of the Soul', arguing that Teresa's thought in this regard constitutes a highly original blend of Augustinian and Neoplatonic traditions. In the following chapter, Terence O'Reilly shows the importance of Teresa's first Jesuit confessors and their understanding of the *Ejercicios Espirituales* in resolving the spiritual crises that defined her early years. For O'Reilly, the Jesuits' guidance reflects the fact that the Exercises were at the time seen as relating to mystical prayer, a contemplative aspect that would be overshadowed in later ascetic

readings of Loyola's writings. The prayer of offering is the focus of Iain Matthew's contribution, in which he argues for the centrality of the Trinity in Teresa's approach to the divine. Completing this section, Gillian T. W. Ahlgren describes Teresa's 'theological-spiritual synthesis', framing this within ten theses that emphasize the continuing relevance of Teresa's work in inspiring a socially engaged spirituality.

The third and final section of the collection is devoted to Teresa as writer. Here, Elena Carrera explores the quality of courage, as depicted in Teresa's writings, which is taken up by her hagiographers as a capacity to overcome fear and endure suffering that allows for spiritual development. Hilary Pearson gives an account of the range of reading, both religious and secular, to which Teresa would have been exposed, arguing that the capacity of her work to speak to us today is partly a result of the richness, but also the limits, of her intellectual life. The place within Teresa's writing of vision and imagination is the subject of Lesley K. Twomey's chapter, which places Teresa's work within wider early modern and mystical discursive formations having to do with sight. Finally, Christopher J. Pountain applies the tools of empirical discourse analysis to consider the supposed proximity of Teresa's writing to spoken language. Pountain concludes that it is clearly not the case that Teresa's work is that of a naïve or spontaneous writer – it is emphatically not a *llano* style – but also that she takes care to avoid certain ostentatious markers of 'sophisticated' writing. As Pountain notes, this partial survey suggests intriguing possibilities for further study.

St. Teresa of Ávila: Her Writings and Life is a fascinating collection of essays. It contains elements that will interest the general reader seeking an introduction to the figure of Teresa, as well as specialists, who will appreciate the subtle recalibrations of our understanding of the saint and her world suggested by the essays of Mullins, Dadson, Roe, O'Reilly and Pountain. Given that the volume claims to be a 'fresh assessment' of Teresa's work, room might have been given to approaches to Teresa from theoretical perspectives – phenomenology, gender studies, theory of emotions, discourses influenced by the spatial turn – that have in recent years produced suggestive readings of the saint. Neverthe-

less, this is a valuable addition to the ever-increasing bibliography on Teresa de Ávila that evokes the complex world within which she wrote and lived, as well as her inspiring spiritual and intellectual vision.

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SANDER BERG, *The Marvellous and the Miraculous in María de Zayas*. Cambridge: Legenda. 2019. 186 pp. ISBN 978-1-78188-827-8.

Sander Berg presents in this volume an excellent study of María de Zayas's use of magic and the marvellous in her novellas. He rightly points out that this is an understudied topic despite the current popularity of her work. Berg notes in his Introduction that Zayas includes scenes that could be classed as marvellous, miraculous or fantastic in twelve of her twenty novellas. He characterizes Zayas as pro-woman while questioning the abundant critical descriptions of her as an early modern feminist, which are now better balanced by viewing her as an author of baroque style and sensibilities who plays clever games with readers. He also provides a useful chart of the original story titles and their translations by H. Patsy Boyer, John Sturrock, Margaret Greer and Elizabeth Rhodes, although he omitted two of those included in the Greer/Rhodes anthology (*Exemplary Tales of Love and Tales of Disillusion*, Oxford University Press, 2009), which does include the 'Fifth Tale of Disillusion' and the 'Tenth Tale', without the titles added by editors in 1734.

In Chapter I, 'The Ghostly Sybil from Madrid', Berg notes what we do and do not know of her life and death and her literary activity. His summary should be complemented by new evidence in Elizabeth Treviño's forthcoming study and edition of Zayas's *Desengaños*, and in Alicia Yllera's new version of her classic edition. While cautioning against filling gaps by biographical reading of her works, Berg adds more evidence for her stay in Italy. He also justly qualifies claims that she was the most popular author of her day after Cervantes and Mateo Alemán, and provides an overview of previous work focused on magic in Zayas.

Chapter 2, 'Witches and Watermelons: The Supernatural in Early Modern Spain', contextualizes Zayas's treatment within a well-docu-

mented review of learned and popular views of the supernatural in early modern Spain and characterizes changes in those views as part of a larger epistemological shift in the seventeenth century, at least on the part of the cultured elite. He separates the preternatural order – marvels and wonders and the Devil’s theatre of operations – from the strictly supernatural, the domain of God. He cites humanists, churchmen, lexicographers and outstanding writers Cervantes and Calderón de la Barca and analyses the role of sceptics in the Inquisition in avoiding widespread persecution of those accused of witchcraft.

In Chapter 3, ‘Slippery Sorcery’, Berg says Zayas ‘sits on the epistemological fence’ (70) between doubts and belief in the efficacy of magic and sorcery. He analyses her varied approach to the preternatural order in four novellas, ‘El castigo de la miseria’, ‘La fuerza del amor’ and ‘El desengaño amando’, showing sorcery as lighthearted or harrowing, magic as efficacious or fraudulent. Continuing that theme in Chapter 4, ‘Baroque Games with the Devil’, Berg finds that fallen angel the clear inspiration of evil in ‘Estragos que causa el vicio’ but less certainly so in other novellas. Her linkage of Blacks and the Devil in ‘El prevenido engañado’ and ‘Tarde llega el desengaño’, however unacceptable today, supplies a baroque chiaroscuro with key white characters. As übermagician in ‘La perseguida triunfante’, the Devil is defeated by the Virgin and yields implausibly to human generosity in ‘El jardín engañoso’.

Chapter 5, ‘The Miraculous, the Fantastic and the Fatalistic’ centres on Zayas’s treatment of the strictly supernatural in ‘El imposible vencido’, ‘El verdugo de su esposa’, and other tales, including the role of mysterious voices and premonitory dreams and their kinship with the fantastic and uncanny. Berg locates Zayas’s possibly subversive treatment not in her treatment of hagiography, but in her pessimistic view of women’s powerlessness to overrule the stars, despite her occasional acknowledgement of the existence of free will, or to alter their social subjection. In drawing these conclusions, he does not differentiate between her first and second volumes. Throughout his chapters and conclusion, Berg cites an array of sources for her tales and compares her treatments with relevant versions by dramatists and other novella authors. His appendix points out the

likely two-way traffic between her novellas and the *relaciones de sucesos* of pamphleteers like Barrionuevo.

Berg’s study contains a great deal more than it is possible to treat in this brief review. It is unquestionably an important addition to the ever-growing body of Zayas criticism.

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ROBERTO VILLA GARCÍA, *Alejandro Lerroxx and the Failure of Spanish Republican Democracy: A Political Biography (1864–1949)*. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press. 2021. 264 pp. ISBN 978-1-78976-048-4 (hbk), 978-1-78976-053-8 (pbk).

Scholars with a passing interest in the political history of modern Spain will recognize Alejandro Lerroxx’s name – sometimes in association with his fiery populism of the early 1900s, sometimes with his ill-fated republican centrism of the 1930s, frequently with scandal, but rarely as a political visionary. Roberto Villa García’s concise political biography of the Radical politician is therefore a welcome contribution. Against a prevailing tendency to identify Lerroxx with cynicism and corruption, Villa’s portrait emphasizes a sincere lifelong commitment to establishing a durable republic capable of holding the nation together while democratizing its politics. Lerroxx is neither an ideologue nor a puritan, and his pragmatic instincts explain his willingness to shift his positions. His democratizing impulse explains his willingness to extend older ‘clientelist practices [...] to those previously excluded from politics’ (148).

Lerroxx, the son of an army veterinarian, was raised in a large household and his formative years were marked by precarity, tragedy, and frequent changes of address. Villa shows that as a youth Lerroxx was exposed to a wide variety of experiences and perspectives, from gambling with his dissolute brother to Bible study with his priest uncle, and understood early on that he would need to make his own way. After a quixotic attempt to enter the Toledo military academy failed due to lack of funds, Lerroxx found himself in his early twenties nearly destitute, but with a burgeoning interest in politics that became anchored to the republican movement. He participated in progressive social clubs

and began writing for the republican press. Arriving in Barcelona in 1899, he attracted attention as an exponent of working-class politics and national unity in a city dominated by bourgeois Catalanism.

Although Lerrooux's political ascent was attributable to skilful demagogy, Villa emphasizes the pragmatism underlying his activities. Observing the ideological purity, factionalism and weak party organization of republicanism, Lerrooux sought ways to build a mass movement capable of consistently motivating voters. Aware that reasoned argument does not move a crowd, Lerrooux espoused a vivid anticlericalism and amplified accounts of torture in Montjuich prison, aiming to bring anarchists and other disaffected citizens into the republican fold. Yet Lerrooux became increasingly sceptical of appeals to emotion and insurrectionism, a belief reinforced when he faced prosecution for alleged slander in 1907 and then witnessed the destructive effects of insurrection during the Tragic Week of 1909.

It was in these years that Lerrooux turned away from seedy populism and groped for what Villa calls 'respectability'. In 1908, Lerrooux formed his Radical Republican party, which renounced insurrection, adhering to principles of freedom, order and national unity while supporting the right of labour to organize. These principles would lead him to support the Spanish colonial mission in Morocco, forging a relationship with *Africanista* officers that would endure into the years of Second Republic, and to consider working with monarchists to combat the wave of revolutionary tumult after 1917.

As his narrative enters the critical years of the Second Republic, Villa contends that Lerrooux alone had a feasible vision of stabilizing the new regime, but faced too many enemies and jealous rivals to succeed. Rejecting the leftist thesis that only committed republicans should be allowed in government, Lerrooux turned rightward and sought voters and coalition partners among Catholics and monarchists – a step he regarded as crucial both to his party's electoral prospects and to the goal of forging true democracy. Lerrooux's long political career culminated with two corruption scandals in 1935 that Villa regards as unremarkable – especially in the context of Spanish politics – but which presented a golden opportunity for his political enemies on the left to exact vengeance for

the severe repression he ordered against the socialist insurrection of October 1934. Now a convinced opponent of revolution, Lerrooux supported the military rebellion of 1936, interpreting it as a defence of constitutionalism. Despite his political support for and personal friendship with officers in the African Army, he was forced to flee, returning to Spain only in 1947, two years before his death.

Villa largely succeeds in his goal: 'to shift the negative paradigm on Lerrooux' (2). Despite manifest admiration for his subject, Villa is not blind to Lerrooux's shortcomings, which mainly come across as errors of political strategy rather than moral failings. Although he dedicates a good portion of his introduction to criticizing the historiographical emphasis on Lerrooux's corruption, a much longer book would be needed to provide a full refutation of this view. Villa's portrait nevertheless offers a persuasive corrective, replacing the cynical politician with a man of pragmatism, principle, and patriotism.

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MAX AUB, *Obras Completas*. Volumen X, *Ensayos I*, edición de Antonio Martín Ezpeleta, Eva Soler Sasera, Miguel Corella Lacasa y Juan María Calles. Madrid and Frankfurt: Iberoamericana Vervuert. 2020. 1,168 pp. ISBN 978-8-49192-110-3.

Este volumen X de las *Obras Completas* de Max Aub, dirigidas por Joan Oleza, continúa lo sólida línea que se estableció hace ya casi veinte años y que, al parecer, fue interrumpida por distintos cambios en las instituciones políticas valencianas que apoyan el proyecto. Resulta ya a estas alturas innecesario subrayar la necesidad de esta publicación porque, entre otras razones, las aportaciones al estudio de Aub han seguido aumentando y sin duda le sitúan como un autor clave del exilio español o, sin más, del siglo XX.

Las distintas circunstancias que rodean las obras de los exiliados con frecuencia suelen hacer difícil el rastreo y la consulta de ediciones y qué decir de los manuscritos y el recorrido que han podido seguir. En el caso de Max Aub son conocidas las circunstancias que no facilitaban la elaboración de unas obras completas: además de las que comparte con otros exiliados en México, hay que contar con

la gran extensión de su obra y la reutilización de materiales a lo largo de su trayectoria, que por fortuna llegó hasta los años setenta. Ahora bien, a su favor está la Fundación Max Aub y, si echamos un vistazo al equipo que ha participado junto a Oleza, veremos que era de esperar el brillante resultado conseguido.

En esta afirmación hay que incluir las ediciones críticas de este volumen X pues sus autores dan sobrada prueba de su capacidad y conocimientos filológicos. Tienen en cuenta las versiones de los ensayos que se conocen, y la información que han podido rastrear durante años sobre unas obras que, al no alcanzar el relieve de sus novelas y su teatro, resultan más difíciles de documentar. Los que se publican en este volumen son seis y aparecieron entre 1945 y 1969: *Discurso de la novela española contemporánea*; *Antología de la prosa española del siglo XIX (1952–1962)*; *Heine*; *Pruebas*; *Hablo como hombre*; y *Poesía española contemporánea*.

Todos ellos resultan relevantes en la obra del autor, y en la literatura del exilio, pero quizá si tenemos que destacar alguno, no solo por su relevancia en la historiografía literaria, serían el *Discurso* y *Hablo como hombre*. El primero, su *Discurso sobre la novela española* (1945), ya contaba con estudios y ediciones del editor, Antonio Martín Ezpeleta, y del ensayista Francisco Caudet, y esta atención no es casual si pensamos que expone la poética del autor en un momento intermedio de la redacción de los 'Campos'. Hay que comenzar por señalar que la periodización que propone (generación de 1868, generación del 98, 'confusa' del año 14, generación del 31 en lugar del 27, y 'hacia un nuevo realismo') plantea alguno de los problemas que mantiene la historiografía hasta nuestros días y también contribuye a sustentar sus concepciones sobre la novela, que Aub plantea como un 'nuevo realismo', una idea social y comprometida de la novela, que le sirve de eje para las distintas valoraciones. No sentirse ni crítico ni historiador supone para él una libertad que le permite descartar o valorar de manera contundente, y mostrar antipatías y simpatías que a veces tienen hondas raíces personales.

En el terreno más lejano veremos su inteligente revisión de la novela del siglo XIX al comprobar que las dos primeras autoridades que cita son Pardo Bazán y Menéndez Pelayo, y especialmente este último será el fundamental en el libro, llegando, como señala el editor, al plagio en distintos lugares. Cada

época tiene su forma de expresión y lo primero que valora de Galdós, y le sitúa por encima de otros autores, es su lenguaje, la relación de los lenguajes que recoge (polifonía, diría Bajtín) con la sociedad de su tiempo, un 'estilo' que había sido criticado en distintos momentos. Merece la pena también señalar los reparos que pone a Pereda o a Blasco Ibáñez, como ocurrirá también en otros ensayos, pero no podemos extendernos en ellos.

Lo que hoy quizá llama la atención es el ninguneo persistente de Ortega y su círculo, incluyendo en este casi todo lo que hoy se venera como generación del 27. Llega hasta el extremo de decir que, frente a lo que afirmaba el filósofo, en ningún país habían influido tanto los pensadores como en la España anterior al 36. Como señala el editor, habla con 'rencor y rabia', hasta el punto de excluir a Ortega de la generación del 14, situarle en la siguiente e incluir en el epígrafe 'Los nova novorum o la cagarrita literaria', a la vanguardia, de la que apenas excluye a Lorca.

Recordemos que cuando escribe este ensayo solo ha publicado dos volúmenes de los 'Campos', y que, como han señalado la crítica, tanto en la novela como en el teatro reflexiona sobre la mimesis y señala que la representación no es un simple reflejo. Busca lo que puede denominarse 'realismo trascendente', que se basa en el perspectivismo y presenta una realidad fragmentada, no un modelo realista decimonónico. Su evaluación de la literatura española en la península, hacia 1945, cuando terminaba la II Guerra Mundial, es tajante: nada de valor se había producido en el territorio nacional, dedicándose los escritores amordazados a reeditarse o firmar productos de escaso valor.

En la sección introductoria de la *Antología de La prosa española del siglo XIX (1952–1962)* amplía la visión que de la época da en el *Discurso* y se remonta hasta los mercedados tiempos de Fernando VII. Se trataría, como señala Ezpeleta, de una obra de encargo en la que como en todo lo que empieza Aub no se echa atrás. No cabe duda de que no tendría a su alcance un buen número de obras y que tuvo que utilizar bibliotecas de sus amigos. También, como no puede ser de otra manera, el canon que establece se basa en la relación que los autores mantienen con su contexto histórico, prestando gran atención a la biografía de los autores y poca a cuestiones estéticas.

Hablo como hombre (1967) es un título que procede de san Pablo y que hoy puede connotar cosas muy distintas de las que se proponía Aub: señalar desde dónde habla, desde donde se produce la enunciación de su discurso. Aquí recoge textos inéditos, artículos y conferencias que van de 1937 a 1964, es decir, que recorren desde el final de la guerra hasta casi los últimos años de su largo exilio. Ya desde su dedicatoria ('A las policías, a las que tanto debo') vemos la ironía y el dolor, pues probablemente se refiere a sus experiencias hacia 1940 cuando vivía exiliado en Francia y fue detenido y posteriormente internado en un campo. Los temas que tratan resultan diversos (la guerra fría, el dilema USA-Unión Soviética, la guerra civil, la película Sierra de Teruel (André Malraux y Boris Peskine, 1945), el socialismo real); la geopolítica que analiza desde su punto de vista en el exilio se sitúa al lado de sus experiencias personales, como la película que rueda con Malraux. Como señala acertadamente la editora, Aub se muestra como un polemista que defiende un humanismo moral que en política sería un socialismo en un sistema democrático, que se distanciara de los dos bloques existentes. La guerra será para él hecho decisivo en su vida y desde su perspectiva verá con distancia no solo el panorama nacional sino lo que José Luis Pardo denomina el 'malestar en la cultura' occidental, que para Aub solo en el humanismo podía encontrar una salida.

Como señala la editora de *Heine* (1957) no se trata de un texto meramente de compromiso, por el centenario de la muerte del poeta, sino que hay en él un análisis que tiene en cuenta tanto los paralelismos biográficos, el exilio, las raíces judías, como otros aspectos que les relacionan: la visión social, la crítica, la ironía, una posición desde la que valora más al Heine político y satírico que al lírico. Hay que señalar también que este es uno de los pocos ensayos sobre germanística que escribe, siendo el alemán una lengua que hablaba en casa. Si pensamos Hermann Broch o Robert Musil, es muy probable que la circunstancia histórica influyese en ello.

Pruebas (1967) es un ensayo misceláneo que sirve para matizar el canon personal del escritor, que parte de una lectura regeneracionista de Cervantes en la que, compartiendo algunas interpretaciones con Américo Castro, subraya los valores morales, el escepticismo y la heterodoxia cervantinas. Eva Soler señala

las conexiones que presenta esta interpretación también con Azaña y Casaldueño. El realismo cervantino residiría en el ambiente que refleja, en espacios y gentes, y la tradición literaria es considerada como una muestra del espíritu nacional (*volksgeist*) que conectará con Galdós siglos después y que llegaría hasta el presente, en la que Aub se siente partícipe. No se trata de reflejar, de una mera copia, sino de exponer las 'causas ocultas' de la realidad.

En *Poesía española contemporánea* (1969) reúne una antología poética y las interpretaciones que en distintos textos Aub había elaborado desde 1949 y que percibe como territorio incierto. Señala el editor que parte de un ajuste de cuentas con Gerardo Diego y Dámaso Alonso, que se habían olvidado de su obra y la de otros exiliados, pero su punto de vista personal, las concepciones que ya se han señalado, le llevan más allá, a proponer un canon y una valoración que muestra un detenido conocimiento de la poesía de su tiempo. Y quizá, con la publicación de este y los demás ensayos, la figura de Max Aub se acerca al lugar que le corresponde y que durante tanto tiempo le había sido esca-moteado.

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PEDRO SALINAS, *El desnudo impecable y otras narraciones*. Editado por Natalia Vara Ferrero. Sevilla: Renacimiento. 2020. 224 pp. ISBN 978-8-41795-053-8.

Con esta edición de *El desnudo impecable y otras narraciones*, Natalia Vara Ferrero nos presenta la última obra publicada en la vida de su autor. Esta nueva edición exenta de una de las obras narrativas de Pedro Salinas se complementa con la que también elaboró en 2013 esta investigadora de *Víspera del gozo* en 2013, y con la que realizó en 2009 Paulino Ayuso de su novela inacabada *El valor de la vida*.

El libro abre con una introducción en la que se perfila de forma concisa pero íntegra la trayectoria tanto vital como literaria de Pedro Salinas. Consideramos que este planteamiento es especialmente explicativo, ya que la autora de la edición aún de manera satisfactoria sendas facetas del escritor madrileño con la variedad genérica y temática de su escritura, desarrollando la evolución de su literatura poética, teatral, narrativa y ensayís-

tica, y contextualizando su vida como poeta y catedrático universitario en la España de preguerra, hasta la desazón y los infortunios de su exilio norteamericano y las consecuencias que esta situación propició a su escritura.

Tras ello, se presenta un análisis evolutivo de la faceta narrativa del escritor madrileño desde los primeros cuentos de *Vispera del gozo*, que abren la veda de una narrativa de carácter *antimimético* donde se reflejan las tendencias novedosas de los años veinte y treinta del siglo XX. Aunque, como justifica la responsable del volumen, los temas y los problemas que se plantean en su literatura (la realidad y lo que existe más allá de lo que se encuentra a plena vista, el amor como la unión que complementa al ser humano y que sirve de ayuda para comprender mejor el mundo) se mantienen a lo largo del tiempo que separa esta primera obra del resto de su narrativa, escrita en su exilio norteamericano. Su estancia en un entorno ajeno al español y las consecuencias de la Guerra Civil y la Segunda Guerra Mundial afectan a la escritura de un Pedro Salinas crítico con la sociedad moderna americana. Asimismo, Natalia Vara Ferrero reconstruye, mediante el amplio epistolario saliniano –en especial sus cartas con Jorge Guillén–, el proceso de escritura de estas cinco novelas cortas y se ocupa de relatar los miedos y la desazón en el proceso de publicación del libro en una editorial hispanoamericana, además de los elogios de la recepción tras su publicación en México.

Finalmente, se encuentran unas ‘claves de lectura’ donde la editora desarrolla la versatilidad de temas y de modalidades de escritura de las cinco novelas cortas que se sustentan en los temas particulares de la literatura saliniana. Resulta interesante la explicación sobre el hecho de que Pedro Salinas tratase de mostrar en cada novela corta un mundo oculto, a través de diferentes fuerzas que entremezclan realidad con ficción, como base también de gran parte de su producción literaria. Es el caso del carácter metaliterario de algunas de estas narraciones, donde realidad y literatura se avienen siendo una única materia. O el uso del motivo del amor, explicado como raíz cognoscitiva y como creación de un mundo nuevo. La editora no se limita, por lo tanto, a nombrar y catalogar los temas de estas narraciones, sino que contextualiza *El desnudo impecable y otras narraciones* con el resto de su producción y muestra la cosmo-

visión temática de la obra, engarzada con la versatilidad de su estilo.

La presentación de las cinco novelas se acompaña de una anotación que facilita la lectura sin caer en la prolijidad o en la repetición de asuntos ya abordados con detenimiento en el estudio introductorio. Todas las notas a pie de página son de naturaleza explicativa y añaden información específica de cada una de las novelas cortas: versan sobre referencias y citas, sobre aspectos intrínsecos de la escritura o acerca de motivos recurrentes de la obra saliniana y vivencias que ayudan a una mejor comprensión del texto.

En definitiva, la responsable de este volumen nos presenta una edición cuidada y completa de *El desnudo impecable y otras narraciones*, además de clara en su presentación y grata en su lectura, que muestra la importancia de la obra completa de un autor reconocido por su creación lírica, pero de una versatilidad literaria que interesa hasta nuestros días.

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NIAMH THORNTON, **Tastemakers and Tastemaking: Mexico and Curated Screen Violence**. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 2020. 226 pp. ISBN 978-1-4384-8113-5.

In *Tastemakers and Tastemaking: Mexico and Curated Screen Violence*, cinema studies scholar Niamh Thornton makes the case that critical assessments of the representation of violence are shaped by questions of taste. This provocation intervenes in ongoing debates within the field of Mexican cultural studies about how Mexican cultural production ought to depict violence in ways that are ethical and do not reinforce its spectacularization yet do not minimize its traumatic impact. The role of violence in organizing life in Mexico has been richly treated by theorists like Sayak Valencia (*Gore Capitalism* (2010)), Cristina Rivera Garza (the concept of the ‘visceraless state’ in *Grieving* (2020)), and Oswaldo Zavala (*Los cárteles no existen* (2018)). Numerous scholars have also taken up this question, from Rielle Navitzski’s 2017 study of early twentieth-century cinema to Oswaldo Estrada’s multifaceted volume *Fronteras de violencia* (2021). Thornton intervenes in these conversations to foreground the role of taste in shaping these assessments.

As she notes in the Introduction, taste 'is implicit in much of the writing [about the representation of violence] because of the inherently excessive nature of violence as spectacle... Violence bears comparison with the realm of kitsch, where knowing what is a "good" or "bad" spectacle is a marker of taste. Tastemaking as a paradigm, and as an analysis of an enactment of taste, sidesteps binary conclusions' (18). This sets the stakes of Thornton's book, which aims to make the role of taste explicit in order to interrogate it. She does so by following different tastemakers over the course of five chapters in both 'high' and 'low' film culture.

By foregrounding taste, Thornton sheds light on why certain representations of violence are dismissed for their supposed excess, such as the telenovela *La reina del sur* (Chapter Five), at the same time that similarly excessive enactments in Amat Escalante's *Los bastardos* and *Heli* (Chapter Two), have been critically acclaimed. Underlying this discrepancy, Thornton posits, is the subjective question of taste, in turn defined by structural forces like prestige and gender. Thus, the tastemaking prestige associated with international film festivals legitimizes Escalante's treatment of violence (buttressed by his robust network with other celebrated male directors). By contrast, Kate del Castillo's groundbreaking performance in *La reina* is misread 'as a being not a doing', an interpretation attributable to Castillo's gender and to the telenovela's low status as a medium that purportedly requires less rigorous craft, which in turn reflects sexist beliefs because of its mass appeal with female audiences (178).

In unpacking the question of taste and the tastemakers who define it, Thornton relies on Pierre Bourdieu's landmark consideration of taste as reflexive and relational. This theoretical underpinning is overlaid with a variety of methodologies. Industry studies shed light on the construction of film cycles (Chapter One); adaptation studies elucidate the value

afforded to films based on literary originals (Chapter Three); star studies help understand the raced distinction between Jennifer López's and Maya Zapata's characters in *Bordertown* (Chapter Four). These nimble approaches afford a nuanced look at which representations of violence are canonized (like the films curated by Nelson Carro for the bicentenary of the Mexican Revolution, discussed in Chapter One) and those dismissed on the basis of extra-textual information (like the mixed reception of Servando González's oeuvre due to his complicity filming the Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City, treated in Chapter Three).

In addition, Thornton uses videographic criticism to parse the cinematic construction of violent scenes with precision. Videographic criticism is helpful, Thornton explains, in performing split-screen comparisons of montage in adaptations of *Los de abajo*, or deconstructing Escalante's editing techniques. Yet it must be said that the specificity of this method feels a bit lost in the static format of the bound book. Without the benefit of Thornton's videographic essays (available online through distinct sources, but not as a readily accessible digital companion), the description of the import of videography does not quite come through, leading one to wonder what centring this method accomplishes in the context of a traditional academic book that close reading cannot. This is less a problem with Thornton's analysis than with the customary format of academic monographs; one hopes that ebooks can become more agile so as to include such edifying digital materials.

Overall, *Tastemakers and Tastemaking*, published in the SUNY Series in Latin American Cinema, is a compelling addition to studies of violence in Mexican cultural production. It is sure to prompt scholars and students alike to pause and consider the ways in which structural forces like gender and prestige mould our assessments of violence on screen.

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