

Apart] may be interrogated for what it contains, conceals, and depends on" (105). In this section, for instance, Rhonda Cobham reprimands Achebe for his "selective use of those aspects of Igbo traditional society that best coincide with Western-Christian social Values . . . [so as] to establish a worldview, both modern and traditional, of which he can be a part" and for his failure to pay "closer attention to women's political structures within Igbo society" (98).

In an interesting note on the political and cultural fortunes of *Things Fall Apart*, Cobham writes that "Like the institutions it helped debunk, Achebe's text has itself become the object of deconstructive exercises in the work of more recent Nigerian writers. . . . Indeed, for the modern woman writer in Africa, Achebe's authority must seem as compelling and as difficult to challenge as the district commissioner's voice must have seemed to Achebe in his time" (98-99). Unfortunately, in an otherwise diverse and comprehensive collection, there is no essay in which the deconstruction of Achebe's authority by other Nigerian writers is examined. Nevertheless, Bernth Lindfors has put together a perceptive collection of essays, one which raises important political and theoretical issues while never losing sight of its pedagogical focus. It is a welcomed addition to the MLA series and, in the end, it helps us to further appreciate one of the most important novels of our time.

John B. Margenot III

Zonas Y Sombras: Aproximaciones a Región de Juan Benet

Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1991. Pp. 201

Reviewed by Jorge Marbán

The title of this book is inspired by Benet's reference to the "shadowy areas" present in literary theory as well as in works of fiction. Part I deals with what Margenot calls "areas" in Benet's novels of the *Región* cycle. Margenot studies in detail the use of maps in these works, their self-referential value and ideological associations. He points out the discrepancies between textual and cartographical data as a means to show the illusory nature of reality and the contradictory and enigmatic characteristics of mythical space. Errors and inconsistencies also mock the customary scientific accuracy of such documents.

Demonic archetypes in Benet's novels are also analyzed in Part I. These elements contribute to the creation of a "locus horribilis" in his world of fiction. They have no religious significance but reflect the view of a world, isolated and without hope, which serves as a symbol of the tragic period of Spanish history following the Civil War.

In Part I's final chapter Margenot studies a common element in Benet's *Región* novels: the journey towards *Región* of most of the main characters and the quest to reconstruct a personal identity. He demonstrates the relationship between the disjointed narrative style and the fragmentary nature of the characters' memory.

The process of remembering has an ironic effect: self-realization leads ultimately to death.

In Part II Margenot traces the function of two elements he has identified as "shadows" (cloisters and darkness) in the novels of the *Región* cycle preceding *Herrumbrosas Lanzas*. Margenot shows the relationship between houses or cloistered spaces and the Mantua forest where Numa, the mythical guard, has his abode. He also sees a pattern of concentric narrative circles in all these novels with Mantua as their axis and explores in each novel the connection between time and memory, and reason and passion.

In the preface to his work Margenot points out that his is one of only a few critical works on Benet which have been published in Spanish. A few errors in his book show a less than perfect command of what is not obviously the author's native language ("minimaliza"; "en vez que"; "consiste de"; "marginalia"; "por recurso a"; etc.). His style is at times somewhat dense, partly attributable to his formalistic critical approach. Although some of the points advanced in this book have been made by David Herzberger, Vicente Cabrera, Malcolm Compitello and other critics, Margenot's original approach is frequently evident as in his treatment of demonic elements and his recourse to historiography in Part I. He also offers a panoramic view of Benet's novelistic work and concentrates on the most important locale in his fictional world. This book's 28-page bibliography is very useful and includes doctoral dissertations and a substantial number of critical works published after 1984, the year in which the previous bibliography on Benet was compiled.

Victor Terras

A History of Russian Literature

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991. Pp. 654. \$45.00

Reviewed by Allan Reid

It now appears that Victor Terras's excellent *Handbook of Russian Literature* (1985) was, in a manner of speaking, just the prelude to this grand work which will certainly be welcomed by all scholars and students of Russian literature. Previously, frustrated by the limitations of available histories such as Mirsky's or Chyzhevskij's, most had to turn to period histories or works in other languages. I usually found myself consulting the very scholarly, though occasionally wordy, two-volume *Historia literatury rosyjskiej* (ed. Marian Jakóbowiec) in Polish, but still always felt the need for a complete yet sufficiently compact one-volume work in English. *A History of Russian Literature* admirably fits the order.

It is thorough, clearly written, well laid out, and very usable. Appropriate attention is paid to all major literary genres, including drama, prose, and poetry, as well as popular traditions in the chapters devoted to pre-Petrine literature. As well, the context is expanded considerably with discussion of trends and shifts in literary theory, aesthetics, and social processes, although the latter is not overly