

The particular merit of *The Myth of Aunt Jemima* lies in the fact that it liberates novels on slavery from their purely historical context: "The literary battle over slavery was actually a battle over bodies—black bodies and women's bodies—and who had the right to control them" (57). This central statement of the study indicates how closely the concerns of the 1850s are linked to those of the 1990s. This modernity becomes evident in the analysis of various, today mostly obscure, texts by women who understood the slave question as a general human issue regarding the images people create of each other, not just as a political issue pertaining only to the American South. The radical solution proposed by Lydia Maria Child, "a mulatto America brought back to its revolutionary roots" (148), was controversial not only in the 1860s but is still so today.

In her closing chapter, Roberts analyzes various novels written after the official liberation of the slaves to show that not all that much has changed in the literary portrait of the restrictive definition of women's roles. Novels such as Edna Ferber's *Show Boat* (1926) or Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936) still construct connections between race and sex, although not necessarily with the same overtones as earlier books. The definition of Scarlett O'Hara as a "red woman" rather than a "white lady" in particular opens up interesting ways of reading this classic.

Roberts concedes in her closing remarks that much work still needs to be done in this field of study, especially if it includes texts produced by those suffering most drastically from the role definitions: black women. But *The Myth of Aunt Jemima* still serves a very important purpose. Black women writers "gather up the white-stamped images of themselves they inherit from the American album and recast them their own way" (194). This book explicates the creation of this album and therefore of an important underlying facet of contemporary American writing. Roberts thus makes an important contribution to American literary historiography.

Federico Campbell

*Tijuana: Stories on the Border*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Pp. 167. \$13.00

Trans. and introduced by Debra A. Castillo

Reviewed by Martín Rodríguez Pérez

Federico Campbell has attained a dignified place in contemporary Mexican letters. His historical novel, *Pretextos* (1979), has already been the subject of several essays. *Tijuana: Stories on the Border* joins the few works in Mexican literature that deal mainly with the lives of *fronterizos*, or border people. Some of the former texts are *Murieron a mitad del río* (1948) by Luis Spota, *Ciudades*

*desiertas* (1986) by José Agustín, and *Gringo viejo* (1983) by Carlos Fuentes. Life on the U.S.-Mexican border is indeed a fascinating subject because of both its proximity to the United States and the distance that separates it from Mexico City, the national financial and cultural center. Thus, Tijuana is so far away from Mexico City that people are Mexican by choice; that is to say, they have decided to remain Catholic and nonutilitarian, and to cling to the past and to tradition.

*Tijuana: Stories on the Border* is made up of "Borderlining: An Introduction," the novella *Everything About Seals* (which makes up the bulk of the book), and four short stories, "Anticipating Incorporation," "Tijuana Times," "Los Brothers," and "Insurgentes Big Sur." Above all, this collection is an autobiographical work, where the outstanding theme is self-discovery as a *tijuanense*, as a man, and as an artist. In addition, we find the motifs of the missing lover, familial conflict, and change. The two most important characters in the book are the narrator (whom we take to be Campbell himself) and Beverly, his American lover.

Besides being a border story, *Everything About Seals* is also a love story. Here the narrator describes his obsession with his lover in an unending monologue, which is an unsuccessful attempt to verbalize her. Through the piece they visit, from the thirties to the present, the Tijuana landmarks. In the end, she remains as mysterious as in the beginning, ever unreachable, ever inside him.

In "Anticipating Incorporation" we discover, among other things, the analogy family/government. On the first level, father, mother, and son never get along well. Quite often, the narrator dwells on his father's weak character and his role as a womanizer and drunkard. On the broader level, the government is represented by the lax and poor Mexican Army. All in all, not a pretty picture. But there is hope: to go to Mexico City to get a life and a university degree—which is what most aspiring Mexican writers need to do in order to become better known on the national scene.

In "Tijuana Times" the narrator yearns for the company of his teenage friends, of whose whereabouts he is unaware, and the Tijuana of the forties and fifties with its 100,000 inhabitants instead of the current 1,000,000. Even though all the stories take place on Mexican soil, the American influence is ever present, whether the setting is Tijuana, Mexico City, or any sizeable town for that matter. The playful title of the last story, "Insurgentes Big Sur," summarizes the situation: the narrator has taken the name of one of Mexico City's main traffic arteries (Insurgentes Sur) and, by adding "Big" right in the middle, has associated it with the California landmark. One of the questions caused by this linguistic mixture is the validity of a geographic border and its location(s). Or, as Fernando García Núñez has pointed out in "Notas sobre la frontera norte en la novela mexicana" (*Cuadernos Americanos* 2.10 [1988]: 159), the concept of border calls also for the consideration of social, cultural, and economic issues. The

translation is good and the typos are negligible. This book is a welcome contribution to the growing number of fiction (and nonfiction) volumes dealing with life on the U.S.-Mexican border.

Ralph Sarkonak

*Les Trajets de l'écriture, Claude Simon*

Toronto: Les Éditions Paratexte, 1994. Pp. 235

Reviewed by Doris Y. Kadish

In *Les Trajets de l'écriture*, Ralph Sarkonak turns his attention to the five main works published by the Nobel Laureate Claude Simon during the 1980s: *Les Géorgiques* (1981), *La Chevelure de Bérénice* (1983), *L'Invitation* (1987), *Album d'un amateur* (1988), and *L'Acacia* (1989). Sarkonak's book will surely constitute a useful and significant addition to the corpus of Simonian scholarship. The author commands his subject thoroughly and situates his observations in relation to existing critical works in a consistently conscientious and rigorous way. He has an admirable sensitivity to Simon's writing, and his analyses are accordingly probing and original.

*Les Trajets de l'écriture* is most successful to my mind in showing the narrative and thematic unity of the works of the 1980s. In one striking summation, Sarkonak observes that Simon's texts are obsessed by the figure of the father, the theme of war, the leitmotif of the curtain, the color pink, the symbol of the tree, the castration complex, the practice of writing, and the theoretical problem of referentiality (14). Elsewhere he observes that the three fundamental constants in Simon's universe are geometry, biology, and mythology. Sarkonak's analyses provide subtle and persuasive demonstrations of how these obsessions and unifying themes are intricately interwoven throughout Simon's writings. Other positive features of Sarkonak's book include a wealth of information about lesser-known works such as *L'Invitation* and *Album d'un amateur*; a willingness to address the implications of Simon's treatment of women; an original reading of *L'Acacia* as hypertext ("a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways," 211). Although not thoroughly developed, the notion of the Simonian hypertext casts familiar ideas about intertextual echoes in a new and intriguing light.

There are, however, a number of features of Sarkonak's book that I find unsatisfying. The five works that he studies are widely disparate with respect to genre and length (two are novels, two are texts accompanying pictorial or photographic material, and one is an account of a trip that Simon made to Russia), and Sarkonak's approach to them varies substantially. The first chapter devoted to *Les Géorgiques* is a concise analysis of the novel whereas the second chapter, almost two and half times longer, presents a line-by-line commentary of