

Naomi Lindstrom

*Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction*

Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. Pp. 246

Reviewed by Alfonso Gonzalez

Naomi Lindstrom's work is a welcome addition to the body of literary criticism on Spanish American fiction. This book is helpful not only to its targeted readership, "English language readers," but also to the specialist. It is written in clear, fluent prose devoid of specialized jargon and "buzz words," and the author's grasp of the subject matter is both solid and current. When necessary, the author does not hesitate to expand and reinforce her own critical insights with quotes and commentaries from critics and translators. To facilitate access to these works, Lindstrom provides pertinent information regarding when and where the English translation first appeared. *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction* is innovative in its attempt to give a general review of both the novel and the short story in Spanish America in the twentieth century, while most literary histories focus on either the novel, or the short story, or give an overview of all major genres.

The chapter on Spanish American Modernism, undoubtedly the most impressive, has copious useful insights into the better known authors and works, as well as into lesser known works. Naomi Lindstrom's assertions, such as that most modernist writers wrote fiction as well as poetry, and that the very same "features that cause Modernism to be categorized as detached or escapist can also be cited as evidence of a questioning outlook on society," are appropriate. The author goes on to contextualize the popular assumption that Modernismo is an embracing of current French literary movements and a rejection of Hispanic models, stating that writers did not reject their Hispanic modest, but aspired to be contemporary to their European counterparts. In-depth analysis of some of the main works of Rodó, Pedro Prado, and Díaz Rodríguez are informative and refreshing.

The next three chapters, "Realism and Naturalism, 1900-1930," "Avant-Garde Imaginative and Fantastic Modes, 1920-1950," and "Realism and Beyond, 1930-1960," highlight the appearance of the experimental avant-garde novel inserted between the persistent influence of realism-naturalism. Besides significant studies on some of the better known authors before 1960 like Borges, Arlt, Torres Bodet, and Carpentier, a strength in these chapters is the detailed development of the "avant-garde" and its flourishing in the sixties, as well as of the "indigenista" novel in Spanish America.

Despite all its strengths, the book suffers from an unevenness of representation, both in its temporal and geographical divisions. All decades are not represented "more or less equally" as stated in the introduction. In contrast to the rich, comprehensive studies of the first four chapters, the fifth, "The Boom and Its Antecedents 1950-1970," though thorough and informative, fails to live up to the previous ones. The long study on García Márquez, for instance, focuses only on *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and does not add substantially to criticism available elsewhere. The last chapter, "The Postboom: New Voices and Belated Discoveries, 1968-1990," is perhaps the weakest in the book. The reader wonders why some well-known contemporary novelists receive only a cursory presentation, or are

not mentioned at all. Abel Posse, Fernando del Paso, Cristina Peri Rossi, Diamela Eltit, and Reina Roffé are regretfully missing. Another imbalance is the extensive representation of writers from the "Cono Sur" vis-à-vis the sparse coverage of writers elsewhere. Not to mention or not to recognize the importance of short-story writers such as Tomás Carrasquilla, Juan José Arreola, José Revueltas and Juan Rulfo is a serious omission.

In spite of the shortcomings noted, *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Fiction* is an informative, refreshing, and insightful study, and a worthwhile contribution to the body of Spanish American literary criticism.

Lois Parkinson Zamora

*Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Paperback: 1993. Pp. 233. £13.95

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

Latin American fiction has over the past two decades been recognized as a major, perhaps even the most important, artistic force in international literature. Consequently, authors such as Márquez and Vargas Llosa have received serious attention from critics in many parts of the world.

Lois Parkinson Zamora's study, *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*, combines the study of Latin American and U.S. fictions with a specific thematic interest, "the historical consciousness and the mythic vision of six writers and, more particularly, the relationship of their visions of historical ends to their narrative endings" (2). For that purpose, Zamora discusses in individual but interconnected chapters works by Gabriel García Márquez, Thomas Pynchon, Julio Cortázar, John Barth, Walker Percy, and Carlos Fuentes by "moving between assumptions of basic cultural differences on the one hand, and literary examples of shared apocalyptic historical attitudes and modes of narration on the other" (21). The foundation of her study is her conviction that "apocalyptic texts, whether biblical or contemporary, respond to temporal and psychic alienation by positing the possibility of eventual integration. . . . The apocalyptic imagination aspires . . . to overcome the incongruity between the order it envisions and the world's indifference to that order" (176).

Zamora begins by explaining the imagery of the basis of the apocalyptic tradition—Revelation—and then reads the individual authors' use of this imagery and of the tradition deriving from the Bible. It becomes obvious very soon that the cultural differences between U.S. and Latin American authors are also reflected in their respective use of apocalyptic images and structures. Zamora identifies García Márquez as using "the patterns of apocalypse to structure and direct his temporal fictions, and to relate human time to the time of the universe" (25) and asserts that "Fuentes self-consciously and explicitly invokes the historical patterns of apocalypse" (148), but she has serious problems integrating the texts from the