

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

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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

United States into the pattern. Only Walker Percy, writing from a thoroughly Catholic perspective, uses the apocalypse in the traditional manner, "in order to suggest the necessity of ends and the renewing effects may have in the lives of alienated individuals" (125). John Barth's texts pose a problem in that their concern with narrativity places them rather outside of the thematic concerns emphasized in the apocalyptic tradition. Zamora argues that "the artifact contains the means for its own self-destruction. This is apocalyptic fiction in a recognizably postmodern stylistic and structural sense" (107), but she forgets the emphasis that the apocalyptic tradition puts on destruction *and* recreation. Her treatment of Thomas Pynchon's novels is equally problematic. The entropy that those texts envision precludes recreation by definition.

The two final authors in the study, Walker Percy and Carlos Fuentes, exemplify the two main strands Zamora identifies in the use of the apocalyptic tradition. Walker Percy represents the U.S. concern with the individual and his or her own personal apocalypse, whereas Fuentes "is concerned to portray the historical moment when people were ceasing to think of paradise solely as a divine enterprise, and were beginning to think of it as a political and social one realizable on this earth by human effort as well as God's will" (169). This is a difference not just of fictions but of cultures. According to Zamora, the individualist ahistoricity exemplified by the New Criticism and the linear concept of time that culminates in the American myth of success preclude the kind of integrative world view with a cyclical concept of time characteristic of the magic realism of Latin American literature.

Writing the Apocalypse was originally published in 1989. The decision by Cambridge University Press to release the book in a different format is to be commended since it makes available to a larger audience a study of highly significant contemporary international literature that, because of the scope of its thematic concerns, reveals important truths about the literary modes of cultures where some of today's most relevant fiction is being produced.