

Book Reviews

Willard Bohn, *The Rise of Surrealism: Cubism, Dada, and the Pursuit of the Marvelous*. Albany: SUNY, 2002. 248 pp.

Like his previous books, Williard Bohn's most recent monograph is situated in the context of the close relationship between poetry and the visual arts that characterizes the early twentieth-century avant-garde. Here his purpose is to explain the genesis and foundations of Surrealism, which Bohn considers the most durable and influential of the modern movements, and how it was heavily influenced and modeled by predecessors such as Dada and Cubism.

Divided into nine chapters, including an introduction and a coda, Bohn's study begins by exploring the concept of the fourth dimension as defined by Max Weber and Guillaume Apollinaire—a writer already studied extensively by the author. He also analyzes this intriguing and metaphorical concept in its implications for experimental thinking during the period and its search for non-traditional ways of expression. The discussion opens the way for the third and fourth chapters in which the interaction among revolutionary visual artists and the influence of their aesthetic visions are explored. Abstract portraiture, as practiced by Francis Picabia and Marius de Zayas, serves as a means to trace the origins of Surrealism out from a need to respond to some of the basic problems of the Dada movement. Giorgio de Chirico's enigmatic early work, along with the invention of Metaphysical Art, is described in its inspirational role in the Surrealist exploration of the oneiric and the unconscious. In the remaining chapters, attention is turned to literature. First Bohn looks to Apollinaire again and his influence on Andrew Breton in order to explain Surrealism's debt to Cubism. He then continues with an exploration of the relationship between two other pairs of artists: Breton and Joan Mirò and his poet compatriot, Catalan J.V. Foix. By establishing these connections, Bohn broaches the question of the textual inter-

pretation of Surrealist poetry, basing his argument on the linguistic models of Roman Jakobson and Michael Riffaterre, whose distinction between metaphor and metonymy the author uses in order to investigate Surrealist iconic dimension.

Over the course of seven chapters, the author engages in a systematic analysis of both literary works and paintings. The volume includes many illustrations that provide the necessary support for the comprehension of such a highly descriptive project. Notwithstanding the wealth of detailed and precise information regarding dates, events, gatherings and other data that the scholar supplies to document the connection among the artists, their work, and theories, the study still remains very much within the constraints of a formalist investigation. It is definitely weighted on the side of visual expression and theory despite an apparent design to achieve a symmetric balance between the two fields. A positive aspect that should be underscored is that even though Bohn focuses on major developments and primary figures of the avant-garde scene, he also devotes almost equal space to much less familiar names such as Foix in poetry and de Zayas in art, often excluded from general studies on the topic. He looks beyond European centers of artistic experimentation France, Italy, Germany and Spain—and includes countries in America—United States, Mexico, Chile and Argentina—as participants in the aesthetic renovation process. Broadening his scope in this way, Bohn seems to further substantiate his already interdisciplinary approach. He brings together literary examples and personalities that are frequently considered only within the limits of national and/or linguistic traditions—French, Spanish and Catalan. As an experienced scholar and instructor of foreign languages, this author shows a clear understanding of the pertinence of approaching the international character of the Surrealist revolution in literature by breaking the tendency to limit the scope of its study to a few figures or to separate its production into predetermined geographical areas.

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Jessica A. Folkart, *Angles on Otherness in Post-Franco Spain: The Fiction of Cristina Fernández Cubas*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2002. 254 pp.

The first book-length study of Cristina Fernández Cubas's prose fiction, Jessica Folkart's *Angles on Otherness* is a thorough inquiry into the question of subjectivity as the central recurring preoccupation in two novels and four collections of stories by the Spanish writer. Folkart's argument is that Cubas's works blur the lines between subject and object by insisting on the interdependence of the self and the other and by presenting subjectivity as an ever-going process of repetitions-with-differences. *Angles on Otherness* explores how constructions of power, gender, space, and cultural discourses affect the ways in which both the self and the other are constantly negotiated and (re)defined within Cubas's fiction. It is in the context of this exploration that the expression "angles on otherness" is proposed by Folkart to designate the alterations in the characters' perceptions (and in the readers' perceptions of those characters) that result in constant challenges to the stability of subjects and their others throughout Cubas's narrative.

The book is divided into five chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion—or rather, an (in)conclusion. Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5 are each devoted to a collection of stories, while Chapter 3 concentrates on the two novels. Relying on Foucaultian concepts of power, Chapter 1 analyzes how individuals construct their own identities as they interact and struggle for power throughout the stories of *Mi hermana Elba*. Chapter 2 draws on Judith Butler's theories of gender as performativity in order to show how narrative discourse can construct and change the concept of gender in the four tales of *Los altillos de Brumal*. Using ideas borrowed from Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gianni Vattimo, Chapter 3 studies the role of power in the discursive construction and subversion of subjectivity in the novels *El año de Gracia* and *El columpio*. Particular attention is given to the figure of the excluded other and to the subject's ability to exercise agency even through the repetition of the very discourses that define it. In Chapter 4, the stories of *Con Agatha en Estambul* provide the textual grounds on which Folkart assesses the importance of space in the formation of a subjective perspective; Kristeva, McHale, and Chambers contribute to the theoretical frame. Chapter 5 invokes concepts from Peter Brooks and Bakhtin as it focuses on the collection *El*

ángulo del horror—a title that hints at Folkart's own book's title and from which *Angles on Otherness* derives one of its central notions. Devoted to optical perception and, more specifically, to the convergence of vision and desire, the Chapter considers how shifting gazes and angles of vision construct both subject and object and entangle them in a relationship of mutual dependence.

Folkart's close readings of Cubas's texts are impressive for their perceptiveness, precision, and subtlety. Also worth noting are *Angles on Otherness's* clarity of style and organization: each Chapter has an introduction, a text-by-text analysis, and a conclusion—a layout that reproduces that of the book as a whole. Additional summaries and recapitulations throughout the text further ensure that the focus is never lost—and neither is the reader.

Angles on Otherness brings up a number of theoretical sources and uses them in pertinent, sensible, and often mutually enriching ways. This reviewer only wished that more Spanish voices, as well as other ones coming from the realm of international Hispanism, had been invited to the theoretical conversation. Whether this imbalance was the result of Folkart's personal preferences or the consequence of an actual lack of Spanish thinkers or international Hispanists relevant to the discussion of subjectivity and identity, it might have been appropriate to devote a few paragraphs to reflect about the choices of theoretical interlocutors.

It is because Folkart makes the analysis of identity formation the central question of her book and because of how persuasively she confronts the traditional belief in the cohesiveness and stability of the individual self that her implicit acceptance of Cubas as a cohesive authorial figure might appear as a bit of an inconsistency (not only is the book entirely consecrated to the work of this one writer but most of it is dedicated to show a recurrence of common elements in it, sometimes even relying on Cubas's own declarations as to "authorize" some of the critic's points). Given that postmodern theories such as the very ones with which Folkart dialogues have been implicitly or outwardly critical of the figure of the author as authority, origin, and/or single spirit behind a corpus of writing, it might not have been superfluous to devote some space in this book to reflect on the concept of the author and its postmodern critiques. To Folkart's credit, she is keen to recognize how she, as an author herself, is subject to conflicting perspectives, how her own writing and research have kept changing her own sense of self, how her analysis of Cubas's narrative

is immersed in the same dialogic play of repetitions with differences that she identifies in the texts of the Spanish writer. This awareness of the dynamic, tense, and inherently contradictory condition of her (writing) self is indeed one of the factors that help make Folkart's book not only a work of postmodern criticism—and a very fine one at that—but a model of honesty and a deeply personal work as well.

Any book about a live, active writer is bound to become incomplete as the writer keeps producing new works that may or may not follow along the lines of any of the previous ones and may challenge or contradict fundamental points made by the critic about the writer in question. At the same time, judging by the lucidity, depth, and perspicacity of this initial *Angles on Otherness*—destined to be the obligatory reference work on Cubas for many years to come—this reviewer can only wish that Cubas will keep writing novels and stories and that Jessica Folkart will keep delving into them, perhaps with other books, for the continued benefit of readers and critics alike.

Jorge Marí

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Jorge Marí, *Lecturas espectaculares: El cine en la novela española desde 1970*. Madrid: Libertarias, 2003. 286 pp.

Books that deal with cinema and literature usually study the adaptation of literary works or how literature and literary genres shape movies. Jorge Marí's book is a novelty because it states that cinematography is an art that has already reached a high degree of maturity; in the case of Spain it is 106 years old. These are the reasons why cinema is now influencing the other arts, especially literature.

This monograph studies three areas. The first includes some writers and characters experience movies and the effect these movies have on the way they construct their identities and how it affects the vision of the world they have. The second part analyzes the incorporation of themes, motifs, references, and quotations from cinematographic genres and specific movies in novels. The third part examines how elements of the rhetoric of cinema have been incorporated by literature, such as movements of camera, travelings, angles, kinds of shots, and (cinematographic) editing. The first chapter studies *El día en que murió Marilyn* (1970) by Terenci Moix; *Escenas de cine mudo* (1993) by Julio Llamazares; and *Una vuelta por el Rialto* (1994) by Marcos

Ordóñez. These novels coincide in representing the childhood and adolescent experience of the characters as spectators during the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. Marí analyzes how the characters go to the movie theaters, their physical experience of watching the movies, and their admiration of the pictures of the stars, the pleasure derived from these activities and the prestige of attending determined movie theaters. Because readers and characters share the same star system, the readers can relate to the experiences of the characters.

Movies provide a large number of ready-made scenarios perfectly known by the readers who can easily relate to them. This chapter is the study of what the characters learn from watching movies, especially the editing, because the reflection on how the movies are narrated provides the spectators epistemological tools to understand how censorship works within the parameters of the dictatorship, tools with which they can challenge censorship and better understand the nature of the Fascist society of first Francoism. Chapter 2 studies specific movies in novels and short stories by Rubén Caba, Javier Marías, Juan Marsé, Rosa Montero, Antonio Muñoz Molina, José María Riera de Leyva, and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán. These texts presuppose a reader whose cinematographic competence is superior to those of the characters and dominates the expectations of the different genres. It also states the predominance of Hollywood cinema, for instance how the movie *Casablanca* has different functions in different literary texts. The readers can learn, thanks to the parodical inscription of key movies like this one, about their own experience as spectators whose identity is shaped by American movies and the importance of this culture in the formation of their national identity and culture. It should be noted that the Spanish cinema is absent in this literature. There is a more detailed analysis of two key novels of contemporary Spanish literature—*Beltenebros* (1989) by Antonio Muñoz Molina, and *El embrujo de Shanghai* (1993) by Juan Marsé—extremely complex texts that presuppose a very sophisticated knowledge of cinema and literature by the readers. The third chapter studies how novels make the reader see the action using cinematographic techniques. Marí also studies the limitations that both media have and how novelists try to overcome them. Besides revisiting *Beltenebros* and *El embrujo*, Marí analyzes fragments of *Yo maté a Kennedy* (1972) by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, “El fantasma del cine Roxy” (1986), and *El amante bilingüe* (1990) by Juan Marsé. These literary texts imitate at times the movie script, a genre that is almost never pub-

lished and hardly read by the public and that has not achieved yet the status of literature.

Mari does a superb job demonstrating how Hollywood myths have entered contemporary Spanish literature, how writers and readers can translate and decode the transition from one medium to the other. The most interesting part is the tools that Hollywood gave Spanish writers and spectators to deconstruct the dictatorship and its censorship. It is extremely important that Mari reproduces the pleasure spectators feel watching the movies, the pleasure writers enjoyed and reproduced in their novels, and the pleasure the literary critic and the reader of literary criticism get reading about two of their favorite subjects: movies and novels.

This book is highly recommended to those who study and teach literature because it is impossible to have a complete picture of contemporary literary fiction in Spain without having the referent of Hollywood cinema, especially that of the Golden Age.

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James H. Meredith, *Understanding the Literature of World War II: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999. 250 pp.

In the book under review, which is part of Greenwood Press's "Literature in Context" Series, James H. Meredith seeks to provide a broad overview of literary texts about World War II, to situate them in their specific historical contexts, and to offer suggestions for class discussions, research projects, and writing assignments for high school students. The book is divided into five chapters, entitled "The Combatants," "The Home Front," "Occupation, Resistance, and Espionage," "The Holocaust," and "The Atomic Bomb." Each chapter begins with a literary analysis followed by a succinct outline of the historical context. To explore further aspects of each thematic focus, Meredith adds various excerpts of previously published, complementary source material. Texts in these sections include interviews, eyewitness accounts, memoirs, fiction, newspaper and journal articles, and official documents. The chapters conclude with "Topics for written and oral dis-

cussion," which are well conceived and should stimulate the students' interest, as well as suggestions for further reading.

In a brief introduction, Meredith lays out his objectives for writing the book and his general approach to the daunting task of adequately presenting the vast and multi-faceted field of World War II literature in a single volume: "Soon only those will remain whose connection to the war, like mine, will be what they have either heard or read. It is important to get the story right. The lessons of World War II are so great and weighty that we cannot afford to repeat them . . . I choose to personalize the war as much as possible because it affected more people than any other event in human history." Both of these goals, a didactic thrust, and the author's desire to direct his students' attention to "the plight of the individual" in the material have important methodological and ideological ramifications for the subsequent analyses and for what is at stake in Meredith's conception of "understanding" the literature about the war and the war itself.

Meredith approaches the literary texts primarily as human-interest stories and employs a vocabulary that remains too generalized and lacks descriptive and critical sharpness. Timeless and undifferentiated terms such as "humanity," "the human spirit," "world," "chaos," "good," and "evil" are repeated throughout the book and undermine the author's attempts at contextualization. His readings remain almost entirely on the level of plot and only occasionally address formal features such as narrative structure, genre, or style. The "literary analysis" consists primarily of synopses of the texts followed by a brief commentary. These summarizing formulations often have an epigrammatic quality that reveals itself to be too flippant for the topic and that reduces the works to a formula instead of providing insights into different layers of meaning and into possible interpretive strategies. For example, Meredith's final verdict on Joseph Heller's famous war satire reads: "*Catch-22* is a wholly satisfying novel about a wholly unsatisfying situation." In the Holocaust chapter, Meredith compares William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* and Elie Wiesel's *Night*, which he erroneously defines as a novel, in the following manner: "Whereas Styron's complex novel relies on art to convey its story, Wiesel's novel relies on the story to convey the art."

Similarly problematic is the notion of historical context laid out in the book. No distinction is made between the context in which a text is written and the referential frame of its textual world. Although Meredith discusses literature spanning 54 years, from Martha

Gellhorn's *A Stricken Land* (1940) and John Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1946) to Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1968) and David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1996), he locates the relevant "context" for this diverse group of texts exclusively in the 1940s. By extension, there is a tendency to examine and to evaluate the fictional texts by measuring their closeness to "history." Yet "history" appears to reside only in the personal. The literary texts are validated through the biography of their authors and the supporting material through the unquestioned "reality" contained in the memoirs, autobiographies, testimonials, and "stories" of combatants, survivors, and those personally involved in any way. Meredith's most openly critical comments are therefore directed at Jack Higgins's *The Eagle Has Landed* for promulgating "an illusion of authenticity and for being entertaining rather than historically accurate." Conversely, an interview Meredith conducted with a second-generation Lithuanian immigrant in 1998 is put forth as the main evidence in "a historical case study" of the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry.

Meredith's predilection for the personal perspectives of oral history prevents him from communicating to his student readership that the writing on war is an intensely contested field that encompasses a multiplicity of voices and realities and that is all-too-often characterized by a self-interested and exclusionary appropriation of "history." The book neither articulates nor reflects on its own position but rather claims to represent the "right" approach. The chapter on the atomic bomb in particular conveys a one-sided view of the issues, one that is firmly embedded in the author's own institutional framework. To address the dangers of the atomic bomb and of nuclear testing, he offers an interview with brigadier general Jesse Gatlin who jests about his involvement in several test blasts: "And I still don't glow in the dark." Another veteran is given space for a sarcastic rant on the controversy surrounding the Smithsonian's exhibit of the *Enola Gay* ("Nothing can compete with its awesomeness. Unlike a routine mission, the *Enola Gay* was History from the start"). Both of these selections are reprints from *War, Literature, & the Arts: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the Humanities* for which Meredith serves as editor, and which is published by his own department, the English Department at the United States Air Force Academy. Much of the material assembled in the other chapters is, on the other hand, both moving and evocative, constituting a more balanced representation of such painful and divisive issues as the military's Jim Crow policies or the

incarceration of Japanese-Americans. Taken as a whole, the book offers a useful overview for students but will require considerable elaboration on the part of teachers to foster a more complete and balanced understanding of World War II literature and of its continued relevance.

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Michael G. Moran and Michelle Ballif, eds. *Twentieth-Century Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources*. Westport: Greenwood, 2000. 423 pp.

This is a very interesting book on a major subject. It should prove of use to a wide range of readers: scholars, teachers, students, and even the general educated reader. The editors and contributors are to be praised.

The book includes an introduction that discusses various approaches to rhetoric in the United States in the twentieth century. This is followed by 40 essays of varying lengths, some no more than four pages long, others covering nine pages, on individual figures whom the editors consider to have been important in the field of rhetoric in the twentieth century. Each essay has an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary texts by and about its subject. An extensive bibliographical essay and an ample bibliography take up some 35 pages toward the end of the book, which concludes with a useful index.

In the introduction the editors able set out the aims of the book. They rightly stress that many areas of human intellectual activity in the twentieth century took "the linguistic turn," whereby language has come to be seen as no mere tool of description, but as the constitutive force and element in human experience. They point to speech-act theory, hermeneutics, philosophy, literary studies, law, and even the exact sciences, as illustrating their argument for rhetoric's centrality in the twentieth century. The editors refuse to define rhetoric too closely, opting instead for the inclusion of a wide range of writers and theorists whose work can in some measure and by some commentators be included within rhetoric.

The introduction includes the editors' discussion of seven "schools of rhetorical theory" in the twentieth century. These are: current-traditional rhetoric (the "dominant teaching rhetoric" of the twentieth century, emphasizing clear organization of ideas and mechanical correctness); expressive rhetoric (in which student writers are encouraged to personalize their writing and in which there is less emphasis, at least initially, on grammatical correctness, and more on finding real reasons for learners to write); cognitive rhetoric (much less intuitive and uncontrolled than expressive approaches, this attempts to establish what are the actual steps that real writers go through when writing and then to have learners apply them); neo-classical rhetoric (which aims to make relevant once more the classical tradition of rhetoric found in Aristotle and Cicero); social-epistemic rhetoric (represented by theorists who stress writing as a social and political act, often collaborative, the purpose of which is to negotiate the truth and also to disentangle dubious rhetorical constructions of the world); poststructuralist and postmodern rhetorics (which stress the arbitrariness and inconclusiveness of all linguistic accounts of things, but some of which also try to suggest the possibility of establishing valid, ad hoc versions of the truth); and electronic and computer-assisted rhetorics (which argue, somewhat speculatively, that new technologies have influenced or will reshape the way in which humans communicate and express themselves). This introduction is marked by lucidity and good sense.

The 40 essays that follow provide biographical information about their subjects and details of their careers. They then discuss aspects of their subjects' contributions toward various types of rhetoric, either in a chronological, developmental manner, or via a synthesis of their work. The theorists of whom the contributors write fall into two main groups. These are: major European theorists of literature, culture, or communication, such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Chaïm Perelman, and others; and teachers and theorists of composition (almost) within the U.S. university and college system. Figures like Wayne C. Booth, Kenneth Burke, and Paul de Man do not fit into either group entirely. Their interests are much broader than the composition classroom and they are figures of international standing, yet they are associated closely with U.S. rather than with European scholarship.

The entries on major, international theorists are, within their limit of a few pages, illuminating and sensible. They provide able syntheses of the thinking of some substantial thinkers about language and social discourse. The problem that they all face is that they are syntheses and summaries of complex arguments and thinking, and the reader must at times be aware of the simplification that is inevitable in such a format. However, there are many enlightening (and very quotable) quotations given, and the excellent bibliographies that conclude each entry provide the reader who is interested with the tools for further study. Among the U.S. figures with international reputations, Booth and Burke are fortunate in the lucid explanations of their thinking, thinking that is probably not as well known in its entirety in Europe or, indeed, in the USA as it deserves to be.

For the European reader, the essays on U.S. composition theorists open up a vast, fascinating, and largely alien world, that of the U.S. composition classroom and its disputes and problems. The essays on historical figures like Frank Aydelotte and Gertrude Buck who fought bitter battles to humanize and improve writing instruction in universities and colleges in the early twentieth-century USA are riveting intellectual and personal dramas. Those on more recent (and, in many cases, still active) figures like James A. Berlin, Robert J. Connors, Richard A. Lanham, Donald M. Murray, and Victor J. Vitanza provide impressive accounts of an area of intellectual concern that predominantly belongs to the United States. These teachers and scholars have devoted their lives to try to get their students to write better, think more clearly, and to play their role in the republic and in society at large. One is struck by their intelligence and good will, by their humanity. European universities have not traditionally had the problems that their U.S. counterparts do. Polish universities, for example, are so brutally selective that the one thing you can assume about your students is that they can write fairly lucidly and accurately, at least in their own language, and sometimes in a foreign one as well. Something similar was the case in British universities right up to the huge expansion of university education in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. British and Polish (and German and French) academics, visiting the USA are frequently struck by the problems that students have with writing academic essays, or indeed, anything at all. The U.S. theorists of composition have clearly struggled long and hard to improve this situation, in a wholly admirable attempt to make the resources of human culture available to as many as possible, as a liberating social strategy. How successful they have been remains open to question.

One can have reservations about some aspects of *Twentieth-Century Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*. Above all, it is difficult to see quite what Bakhtin's thinking about dialogue and community really has to do with teaching freshman composition at eight a.m. on a winter's morning at a college in rural South Central Michigan. The same goes for the discussions of Barthes's and Burke's writings, not to mention that of Perelman and Habermas. Also the focus of the entire book is on the USA and its educational problems and solutions. This is a strength, but also a limitation. Has no useful work been done by European scholars, apart from the ones (long domesticated in U.S. academic discourse) on whom there are entries? One wonders. However, these reservations should not detract from what is a lucid, very interesting, useful, and inspiring collection of essays.

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