

## Book Reviews

Fuentes, Carlos. *Christopher Unborn*. Normal: Dalkey Archive, 2005. Pp. 531. ISBN 1564783391

There has not and there isn't still a historical moment or time in modern Western civilization when the polemical, hagiographic or demonized figure of Christopher Columbus or any of the many historical and cultural aspects, myths, legends and realities related to the "Discovery", "Encounter", "Invasion" of the Indies, New World, Utopia, America, or simply 1492 and its Janus-like irreversible consequences have not attracted the cultural imagination of Europe, the United States and Spanish-America. The first decade of the Twenty first century was no exception. Columbus continues to be a popular subject, both in recent scholarly and general studies. The year 2006 inscribed itself as another creative milestone in reliving and critically examining once again the Columbus' saga and the unresolved mystery of the final resting place of his remains. May 20 was the 500th anniversary of his death.

Thus, the timing of the publication of a second edition at the end of 2005 of Carlos Fuentes' novel *Christopher Unborn* could not appear at a better moment. The text, originally printed in Spanish in 1987 with the title *Cristóbal Nonato*, was ably translated by Adam MacAdam and Fuentes himself and published in 1989. Columbus is also at the center of his short story "Las dos Américas" from *El naranjo* (1993), and is a recurrent theme in his novel *Terra Nostra* (1975) and essay collections *Valiente mundo nuevo. Epica, utopía y mito en la novela hispanoamericana* (1990) and *The Buried Mirror* (1992). It forms part of a long list of contemporary Latin American literature centered around the historical and conflicting origins, foundations, motivations and consequences of early colonization and formation of Spanish-American nation-states. The historical and legendary discoverer, the navigator par excellence, the visionary and persevering man, the spreader of the "great European civilization" and Christianity of the past, shares in these contemporary interpretations equally powerful discursive constructions as an incompetent administrator and governor, as a precur-

sor of exploitation and colonization, and as a symbol of the hypocritical ambitious schemer who left a legacy of slavery, and ecological, social and political despoliation as evidenced in the novels by Cuban Alejo Carpentier's *The Harp and the Shadow* (1979; Eng. trans. 1990), Argentinian Abel Possé's *The Dogs of Paradise* (1983; Eng. trans. 1987), Antonio Benítez Arroyo's *Sea of Lentils* (1985; Eng. trans. 1990), Mexican Homero Aridjis's *1492, The Life and Times of Juan Cabezón of Castile* (1989; Eng. trans. 1991), Alicia Freilich's *Colombina descubierta* (1991), Herminio Martínez' *Las puertas del mundo. Una autobiografía hipócrita del Almirante* (1992), Augusto Roa Bastos' *Vigilia del Almirante* (1992), and Alicia Dujovne Ortiz' *El árbol de la gitana* (1997).

Re-reading *Christopher Unborn* after the past 1992 Quincentennial Celebration or mourning, is still a surprisingly pleasant challenge. A voluminous, farcical, parodic, eschatological yet encyclopedical "open" novel, it constantly questions the act of writing itself, a writing which is simultaneously created, altered or completed by the Reader (called in Spanish "Elector", the one who has chosen to read) in the act of reading: "Reader, . . . You know that I haven't narrated / anything alone, because you've been helping me ever since / the first page. Your mediation is my health . . ." (519). This mordant and brilliantly written text also questions language, particularly political and social discourses, and situates itself in opposition and in a contestatarian mode to the idealized and neo-romantic lyric interpretation of Mexico, epitomized in Ramón López Velarde's verses of "The sweet Fatherland" that begins with "The fatherland is impeccable and adamantine." Instead, the fatherland is a "country of sad men," owing millions of dollars, crippled by an asphyxiating smog, poverty and perennially corrupted one-party politics, in fact, a world where there is nothing to celebrate. For example, "Makesico City" is the epicenter of pollution, poverty, thievery and corruption, while Yucatán has been sold to Club Med, and northern Mexico is annexed by the United States. Yet despite the Mexican crises, disasters and catastrophes, the novel celebrates and questions life in a particular space and time. Language is another key element in the construction of this world. It is creative, regenerative, furiously self-mocking, self-reflexive and above all, self-congratulatory and allows Fuentes to sharply and ludicrously deconstruct Mexican history of the past 500 years. But, *Christopher Unborn* is also much more: it furthermore questions its complex and chaotic structure, and engages in a dialogue with literary tradition. Like *Don Quixote* or *Tristram Shandy*, it is a novel within a novel, that also parodies canonical texts from Dickens, Kafka and García Márquez

*Christopher Unborn* is an original novel narrated by the omniscient voice of an unborn fetus, conceived purposely to meet the dateline of October 12, 1992 to win the special award given to the first child born on the 500th commemoration of Columbus' arrival in the New World. Christo-

pher Palomar—like his counterpart Christopher Columbus—has bet on the “truth of his imagination and won.” Both are survivors in a race towards unknown destinies. Christopher Palomar embarks in a voyage that begins with his conception by his parents in which a single sperm defeats millions of others to reach the cervix and from there to the womb, where for nine months he, who through his genes knows his past and present, tells his story, the Mexican history. The text, thus, begins with a prologue (“I am Created”), followed by nine chapters corresponding to the cycle of pregnancy: “The Sweet Fatherland”, “The Holly Family”, “It’s a Wonderful Life”, “Festive Intermezzo”, “Christopher in Limbo”, “Columbus’ Egg”, “Accidents of the Tribe”, “No Man’s Fatherland”, and “The Discovery of America.” Here the journey is the metaphor that relates, connects two characters, one who crossed the Atlantic to unveil a geographical place, an “earthly, unspoiled territory”, and “Christopher Unborn”, who survives the journey towards life, but his geographical locus and time, unlike the beginnings, are blurred by national debt, political corruption, imperialism, pollution and consumerism.

Non-profit Dalkey Archive Press should be commended by issuing a second English edition for the American reader of this exuberant, farcical yet very erudite and serious text that creatively and critically questions not only of the nature of writing, but of the constructive and deconstructive power of language, of philosophical, literary and family genealogy, of Mexican identity, culture, politics and history and of the formation of Latin American nation-states after experiencing conquest, and different types of European and North American colonizations. It is a text which critics have looked at from multiple and different interpretative theories and methodologies without exhausting for the reader or the student the novel’s literary and ideological richness.

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Faber, Sebastiaan. *Exile and Cultural Hegemony: Spanish Intellectuals in Mexico, 1939–1975*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2002. Pp. 322. ISBN 0826514227

This book is a new addition to the studies on Spanish intellectuals’ exile to Mexico as a consequence of the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, and attempts to “develop a more nuanced and critical view of the exiled intellectual’s place and role in the complex constellations of both Spanish and Mexican history” (xi). Therefore, the book tries, on the one hand, to demystify the exile, and on the other, to offer a more analytical and in-depth

study of the phenomenon by combining literary analysis with history and political science.

The book is structured in three parts, each one containing three chapters. The first part, "Exile and Cultural Hegemony," offers a historical and theoretical background on intellectual exile, as well as information about Mexico and Spain during the 1930s. It also introduces Gramscian ideas, mostly around cultural hegemony, which Faber considers fundamental in understanding the ideological dynamics of exile. The three chapters in this section are "Intellectuals in exile," a review of previous studies about the Republican exile after the Civil War; "Mexico and the Spanish Civil War," which offers a historical overview showing how Mexico was not as leftist as some exiles might have believed; and "The Struggle for Cultural Hegemony," which explains the threefold appearance of Gramsci's ideas in the book: (1) as the intellectual father of the Popular Front; (2) as a theoretical reference point to assess the failures and accomplishments of political and cultural practice; and finally (3) through his concept of cultural hegemony as a useful tool to study exile. He also explores in this chapter how both Nationals and Republicans considered a search for a *panhispanismo* on a transnational level, as well as their anti-modernist efforts.

The second part, "Hope, Defeat, and Delirium: The Civil War and the First Years of Exile," deals with the Spanish Second Republic and the Civil War and its immediate consequences after Franco's triumph. The three chapters in this section are "The Popular Front and the Civil War," which analyzes the influential ideas in the formation of the Popular Front, and the contradictions in this coalition before and during the conflict; "Paulino Massip: Nationalism, Moralism, and the Limits of the Popular Front Revolution," which explores the exile rhetoric of Massip's texts between 1937 and 1944, and the evolution from his articles and letters to his novel *El diario de Hamlet García*; and "The Republican Countercannon and the Dream of Pan-Hispanist Unity," which explains the different notions of culture, and how the exiles held that the Republic represented the authentic culture of Spain, liberal and anti-Francoist, and therefore attempted to create a cannon in exile via publishing houses, journals, and a culture of *Hispanismo* to include Spanish America in their struggle.

The third part, "Left Out in the Cold (War): The Aporia of Exile and Retreat into Liberalism," explores the political reorientation of the intellectual community in exile when Franco's regime became more and more recognized internationally, and the political landscape began to change in Franco's Spain. The first chapter, "A Changed Political Landscape," explores the shift in attitude of the exile intelligentsia due to the failure of exile politics and the emergence of a dissident intelligentsia in Spain in the 1950s. Then, "Ortega's Legacy in Mexico" deals with the change that took place in Mexico through a collaboration of the Mexican and the Spanish exiled in-

tellectuals (especially Ortega's influence on Ramos and Paz), which helped to continue and reinforce the non-democratic rule of the PRI. Finally, "Max Aub: Exile as *Aporia*" explores the figure of this exiled writer as a symbol of the political deadlock of the Republican exile and the uneasy position of the exile writer in general. A brief epilogue, which offers a couple of examples of how the Francoist-rooted Partido Popular used both Aub and Lorca in a depoliticized way, shows Faber's idea of how the exiles had an impact in Mexico but failed in their native homeland.

This book is a remarkable study because it carefully analyzes and explains the exiles' ideological evolution during half a century (1930s–70s), and sets it within the socio-historical context of both Spain and Mexico. Faber seems particularly interested in the irony caused by the exiles' *panhispanismo*, which at times make them use a similar rhetoric as the Francoist regime; and he does a very good job summarizing and applying Gramscian ideas, mostly about cultural hegemony, to the Spanish milieu. This engaging and fascinating study comes in a nice edition, clearly written and easy to read. It will be a great addition to any libraries or students of 20th century Spanish literature, history, or culture in general, or those interested in exile studies.

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Haines, Brigid and Margaret Littler. *Contemporary Women's Writing in German: Changing the Subject*. Oxford Studies in Modern European Culture. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. Pp. 168. ISBN

This slim volume sets itself a number of ambitious goals. Foremost among these is to present theoretically informed (re)readings of six important contemporary texts by women writing in German. Using insights gleaned largely from the Frankfurt School, Marxist-feminist, poststructuralist, and especially new materialist feminist theory, specifically the work of Christine Battersby, Rosi Braidotti, and Elizabeth Grosz, Haines and Littler's discussions of Ingeborg Bachmann's short story cycle *Simultan* (1972), Elfriede Jelinek's novel *Die Liebhabherinnen* (1975), Anne Duden's short story "Übergang" (1982), Christa Wolf's *Kassandra complex* (1983), Herta Müller's novel *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989), and Emine Sevgi Özdamar's companion short stories "Mutter Zunge" and "Großvater Zunge" (1990) focus on issues of gender as they manifest themselves in and intersect with other categories of analysis, such as corporeality, trauma, displacement, and national identity.

The authors describe their own theoretical approach to be a “self-critical, post-structuralist feminist one” (7). They do not, however, arbitrarily impose this approach on the texts under discussion. Rather, by exploring the viability of a variety of different theoretical approaches for a given literary text, they mitigate against the doctrinaire application of any one particular school of theory. Their historically grounded, pluralist readings do justice to the rich complexity of these influential texts by contemporary German-language women writers.

Thus the stories in Bachmann’s *Simultan* cycle are refracted through the lens of Wittgenstein’s language theory, Bakhtin’s dialogism, psychoanalytic theory, as well as Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, while Jelinek’s novel *Die Liebhaberinnen* is illuminated by way of Marxist, feminist, and poststructuralist theory. Haines and Littler map out the commonalities between these two Austrian writers, pointing among other things to the centrality of a critique of ideology in their writings. Yet they also carefully differentiate between the two by laying out their divergent intellectual genealogies.

The discussion of “Der Übergang,” Anne Duden’s unsettling, controversial story of the psychic repercussions of an inexplicable, unprovoked, violent attack on an unnamed female protagonist by two black GIs in West Berlin, invokes trauma theory while juxtaposing a Lacanian with a Kristevian reading of the text. It concludes with a reading based on feminist new materialist theories of embodied subjectivity.

The chapter on East German writer Christa Wolf’s *Kassandra* project revisits aesthetic concerns raised by earlier critics. Chief among these are Wolf’s use of myth and the discrepancy between the multivalent, open-ended form of *Conditions of a Narrative*, the four Lectures on Poetics Wolf delivered in Frankfurt, designed to make readers/listeners privy to the genesis and evolution of her project, and the closed form of the *Kassandra* narrative with its indebtedness to Idealist notions of autonomous subjectivity. Haines and Littlers reassessment of the function of myth in Wolf’s text, as both mythography *and* mythopoeia, tackle some of the issues brought up in the critical literature. By allowing the critical reception of *Kassandra* to set the parameters of their discussion, however, they constrain their own interpretative framework. Consequently, this is in some ways the book’s least innovative chapter, with little new critical ground being covered.

Although set in West Germany, Herta Müller’s novel *Reisende auf einem Bein* reiterates the theme in her writing of working through trauma experienced at the hands of a repressive political regime: having been traumatized in her East European homeland, the novel’s protagonist seeks refuge in the West, only to be traumatized anew by the cold reception she encounters there. Both Müller’s novel and Turkish German writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s stories “Mutter Zunge” and “Großvater Zunge” deal with

the experiences of displaced immigrant women living in Germany. Their protagonists' respective search for home takes different trajectories, however. In Müller's novel an East European woman searches for a new home in the West. In Özdamar's stories a young Turkish woman's decision to reconnect with her Turkish heritage by learning Arabic goes against Atatürk's Westernizing reforms. Haines and Littler's employment of theories of trauma, nomadism, and hybridity successfully help explicate Müller's complex text. Their discussion of the gender and identity politics of Özdamar's stories uses psychoanalytic, postcolonial, and new materialist theory to produce what is arguably the most astute extant readings of these texts.

The selection of texts for inclusion in a volume such as this is, of course, always arbitrary. And indeed one might ask why a book about contemporary writing does not deal with texts written after 1990. But this is a minor quibble that ultimately does not detract from what is overall an excellent study that situates its respective literary texts historically, summarizes their critical reception, and presents readers with nuanced, theoretically sophisticated and innovative analyses. The individual chapters stand on their own as exemplars of a highly informed, accessible, jargon-free application of theory to literature, one that enhances our understanding of, rather than doing violence to, the texts. But there is also a thread that weaves the individual chapters together. As Haines and Littler explain, the writings of women in general, and those under discussion in this volume in particular have all contributed, both in terms of content and form, to "changing the subject" of the German literary tradition, a tradition based "universalist notions of the subject" as "unified, stable, and normatively male" (1).

The authors' assiduous avoidance of the term "German literature" throughout also points to another goal that Haines and Littler seem to have set themselves, namely to demonstrate the ways in which the notion of a monolithic national German literature that had for so long dominated the field of German Studies, has been deconstructed by the writings of ethnic Germans like Herta Müller and by Turkish German writers like Emine Sevgi Özdamar.<sup>1</sup> If this seems like a lot to undertake in a relatively short space, it is. Brigid Haines and Margaret Littler are to be commended for having succeeded admirably in fulfilling the goals they set themselves.

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#### Notes

1 In the context it is worth noting that Haines and Littler do not problematize the inclusion of Austrian writers into the German literary canon,

nor do they include German-language Swiss writers, who are often also usurped into the German literary tradition.

Cate-Arries, Francie. *Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire: Memory and Representation of the French Concentration Camps, 1939–1945*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2004. Pp. 347. ISBN 0838755461

In *Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire* (Bucknell UP, 2004), Francie Cate-Arries has approached the cultural production of Spaniards in exile—imprisoned in French concentration camps after the Spanish Civil War—from the position of moral respect and intellectual rigor required of any study that undertakes to inquire into, and acknowledge, the mutilations of History. Its point of departure is the historical amnesia enveloping the subject of exile from the beginning of the Franco regime. Its objective is the historical recovery of exile as a fundamental (not anecdotic or parallel) constituent of the history of Spain: “In fact, the political history of Spanish exile is, simply stated, the history of Spain” (288). Such objective guides the textual analysis of certain important pieces from the literature of the first exile (1939–45), through a minutious and carefully verified work of historical contextualization. In the opinion of Cate-Arries, this literature deals with the representation of the concentration camp, a discursive axis around which different thematic cores are articulated: the concentration camp as a foundational moment of a new national identity, as a source of moral authority, as a space of resistance and as the object of emigration politics and the struggle for liberation. *Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire* sheds light on the traditionally unknown reality (the silence and contempt imposed by the Franco regime on the issue of exile and the exiled) of the internment of Spanish exiles in French concentration camps. Even though historiography, as well as the different expositions and conferences organized about this topic both in Spain and in the United States in the last few years have contributed significantly to breaking the historical silence in which exile had been wrapped for decades, the different level of attention paid to Spanish concentration camps in comparison to Nazi concentration camps continues to be denounced. Since silence has accompanied and defined the experience of the Spanish exile, this study by Cate-Arries places itself in the area dealing with the recovery of historical memory at a time when Spain is turning its attention to a past which it previously wanted only to forget. In fact, this study symbolically gives their voice back to those who had been stripped of it, helping break the repression and latency (the “pact of silence” of the democratic era) in the traumatic memory of the

Civil War. Thus Cate-Arries transforms literature into a testimonial vehicle, into a space of resistance, a performative act, a cathartic therapy, and an instrument of search for historical truth.

*Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire* explores the relation between literature and History through the analysis of testimonials, memoirs, autobiographies, poetry, drama, fiction, and even through drawings and paintings, thus approaching the complexity of exile from an intentionally wide variety in its object of inquiry. In comparison with the classificatory, thematic and philological approaches of classic studies such as *El exilio español de 1939* by Sanz Villanueva, Cate-Arries brings not only a solid socio-historic contextualization, but also a theoretical approximation that allows it a greater analytical depth in some of its chapters. This study offers also an analysis of works and authors as essential as Max Aub, Manuel Andújar, José Herrera Petere and Remedios Varo, as well as a reflection on such important phenomena as the transformation of Antonio Machado into a mythical figure of the Spanish exile, and the treatment that Spaniards received on French soil. Starting with an analysis of testimonials and memoirs about the exodus through the Pyrenees after the defeat of the Spanish Republican forces, this study, divided in four parts, centers on the process of cultural reconstruction that takes place within the barbed-wire fences of the French concentration camps.

The first part focuses on the textual construction of Collioure (the burial place of Antonio Machado, as well as the location of one of the most brutal prisons for the Spanish exile) as a sacrificial, and therefore mythical, place, but also as a foundational space upon which to build a process of national reconstruction. Hence the connections drawn by Cate-Arries between collective memory (Pierre Nora's theory of the *lieux de mémoire*), historical trauma and national identity. The second part explores the connection between literature and moral discourse through a literature which, in its search for an international dimension to the conflict (the building of a persuasive case to an international audience) juxtaposes the authority and moral legitimacy of the Spanish *people* to the behavior of the French. It is thus a mode of representation that rides midway between idealism and Manichaeism. The third part deals with identity discourses, both on the individual and national level, through the concepts of agency and the *other*. The figurative gives way to the symbolic in the creation of two new entities: the exiled nation and the citizen-in-exile. The former is characterized by its inscription of a new national history, the latter by its defense of a political identity based on social justice. Thus the concentration camp becomes a place of subversion, resistance and political agency (the ability to transform the material limitations of one's environment by manipulating it) which is parallel to the space of creativity, resistance, and agency offered by literature. If in the first part she analyzes the arrival of Spanish exiles in

the concentration camp, in the fourth and last part Cate-Arries traces the intricate framework of their liberation, a representation of both Mexico and Paris (objects of desire) from a utopian perspective, and a representation of the refugees which cannot escape a heroic standpoint.

*Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire* is therefore a solid and creative work of literary criticism, but it is also relevant and necessary in its capacity to educate future generations on the historical trauma of the Civil War, given that these generations must confront, as Geoffrey Hartman has theorized with regard to the Holocaust, a memory that is always inherited as a moral and psychological burden.

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Tremblay, Roseline. *L'Écrivain imaginaire, Essai sur le roman québécois 1960–1995*. Montréal: Hurtubise, 2004. Pp. 608. ISBN 2894287062

The questions addressed by Roseline Tremblay in her monolithic work, *L'Écrivain imaginaire, Essai sur le roman québécois 1960–1995* (Éditions Hurtubise, 2004) ask the reader to reconsider the writer as creator of self-representations and discourse, to ponder the sense of reconstituted belonging writing endows to its author, and to re-evaluate the difficulty of distinguishing an original vision of the world from within the undefined nonhierarchical morass of undefined discourse and voice where one lives in the uncertainty of finding a home, place, vision, or identity. Tremblay endeavors to respond to these concerns in her study, originally her doctoral thesis, on the fictional representation of the Québécois novelist. She chooses between two methods—one, a sociological study of the Québécois writer and the history of her/his development—the other, an objective non-biographical approach, beyond even the tradition of Proust's *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, looking into writing as its own deconstruction, the novelist having become the poet who spiritually brings word of her/his own death through complex layers of self-representation. Tremblay's attention focuses on the great number of Québécois novels containing the character of a writer published during the thirty year period of 1960 and 1995, the evident exploration of the penetration of autobiography into fiction. She draws particularly on the complex strata of "mise-en-abyme" and questions this 'false transparency', asserting that the streams and layers of self-representation in the novel genre of this period are illusions, not key referents to a problematical reality, that the repeated textualizations of writing

and fictitious writers' self-representations are symptomatic of the crisis of the genre itself and therefore in need of a theoretical study of the fictitious novelist writer that responds to the depth and complexity of her/his 'life' as the poet of our time.

In the first part of her book, Tremblay reviews the works on this subject, presents a history of the term "writer" in the two francophone societies of France and Québec in the modern era, advances to the recent period of the 1960s and discusses the manners in which literature was present in Québec's social discourse and the subsequent changes, perversions, or denial of literature's essential elements in contemporary prose. In the second part of her study, Tremblay presents her typology of the writer character in about thirty novels and divides all the writer representations into five categories: the loser, the adventurer, the spokesperson, the iconoclast, and the neurotic. Tremblay presents in depth, in separate chapters, discussion of a number of texts analyzed both chronologically, and historically. By the end of the second part, she has created a sociogram or grid diagram marking the sociological influences—movements, events, ideological transitions—which determined the various types of works by the Québécois novelist since 1960. As Tremblay points out, her study is the first systematic application of the sociogram method established by Claude Duchet, primarily graphs and accompanying commentary. The sociogram illustrates the representation of the writer novelist who becomes the essence of artistic and spiritual value and mentorship in the role of 'poet', and yet is bound by the obligations and limitations of institutionalization of her/his profession; thus tensions between the opposing values of each role lead to continual recreation, diminishment, or denial of the valued elements and referents of discourse. The writer in this oppositional changing mode creates texts which ally with other genres, different types of novels, each a response or reaction to the problems of modern Québécois society. Tremblay thus conceives the representations of the writer as 'loser,' representing the problematic hero as a writer who contests her/his disempowerment, as the 'adventurer' who encourages and incarnates innovation and risk, the 'spokesperson' as visionary who validates transition and has the lucidity to refuse the immobilizing traditional values and conventions of the past, the 'iconoclast' who disbelieves and contests social stereotypes, and the 'neurotic' who is anguished by the inevitable limits and failures of her/his aesthetic aspirations as writer and who must reconcile herself/himself to her/his own nature and condition. As Tremblay brings us to her conclusion, she rightfully notes that this study is an attempt to apply the sociocritical method and a progressive definition of the sociogram of the writer.

The reader must indeed find this attempt admirable. Despite certain heaviness of style that at times diminishes text effectiveness as arcane and diffuse, Tremblay's sociocritical reading eloquently reminds us of the un-

certainty that is the very essence and meaning of the fictional project; each of these manifestations or types of the writer character reveals another opening to the world, another relationship to alterity, an expansion of the potential of meaning, in perpetual transformation.

Still the dramatic pessimism of the crisis or 'death' of the novel as a genre described by Tremblay as she draws us in, initially used as justification for this project, does not seem entirely sustained by the end of her study.

More significantly the author gives us extensive illustration of Duchet's sociogram through a skillful application of authoritative voices from the history of western literary critical tradition, through a review of intertextuality in the Québécois novel and by means of in-depth exploration of the typology or categories of the fictitious writer. As one moves through the latter parts of this work, technical mastery displayed in the textual illustration of this typology and sociogram seems to dominate the narrative and becomes the end in itself, rather than leading to a strong statement on the crisis of the genre. A stronger, more encompassing summary or conclusion which resolves, reconciles, or disturbs is needed to conclude this complex and profound work, one that is as dramatically overpowering as the introduction, one that suitably captures its depth and purpose.

Roseline Tremblay reviews, in the course of her narrative, classic works by the major figures of contemporary Québécois literature, such as Bessette, Major, Blais, Beaulieu, Poulin, Lalonde, Ducharme and Villenaire. Particularly enjoyable and pertinent to scholars and teachers of Québécois literature are her textual illustrations of the writer type "the aventurer" in Hubert Aquin's *Prochain épisode*, in Jacques Godbout's *D'Amour, P.Q.*, in the vast layers of self representation in the theater and novels of Michel Tremblay vital to the revolutionary transitions of theme and language in Québec during and after the years of the Quiet Revolution, and the illustrations of the writer as 'the iconoclast' most particularly in the feminist work of Yolande Villenaire and in the immigrant narratives of Régine Robin.

It is unfortunate that Tremblay did not choose, in addition to the white French writer Régine Robin, one or more of the works of Québécois immigrant writers to illustrate the sociogram of Claude Duchet and to portray the complexity of writers' voices and fictional self representation in modern Québécois literature. In fact Québécois feminist scholars were the first of their francophone contemporaries to recognize immigrant writing and novels as a major movement revitalizing their own culture and national literature. In the typology presented by Tremblay, there are voices of social, economic, and sexual diversity: the fictionalized authorial voices of the dispossessed and working class particularly dominant in the writings of Marie-Claire Blais, the feminist authorial voice of Yolande Villenaire, the fictionalized gay male authorial voice of Michel Tremblay so extensively discussed and analyzed. But there is no racial or cultural di-

versity in the authorial self representation explored by Tremblay, despite the recognition earned by numerous immigrant francophone writers of fictional and non-fictional autobiography in Québec, bringing to North American francophonie diverse cultural perceptions of the authorial other which would have contributed dramatically to Rosaline Tremblay's own perspective in her work on the crisis of the Québécois novel. This racial and cultural diversity would have given Ying Chen's reflections on the self represented Asian immigrant writer, Dany Laferrière's rebuilding of self as a Haitian immigrant worker and writer, Naïm Kattan's self-examination and portrayal as an Iraqi in Canada—a Semitic authorial voice in exile, the many voices of Arab Canadian immigrant writers. The inclusion of one or more of such authors universally recognized by Québécois academics and the reading public could have, in addition to Régine Robin the author's representative of the immigrant writer's voice, brought even more balance, depth, resolution or reconciliation to the crisis of the Québécois novel, so powerfully evoked and perceptively presented in this very fine study by Roseline Tremblay.

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Ponomareff, Constantin V. *One Less Hope: Essays on Twentieth-Century Russian Poets*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. Pp. 196. ISBN 9042019794.

In a time of closely specialized studies of Russia's modernist poets, Constantin Ponomareff's book, "*One Less Hope: Essays on Twentieth-Century Russian Poets*," comes as a pleasant surprise as it embraces a collection of essays that were composed over several decades and devoted to different subjects. The volume addresses the works of such diverse poets as Osip Mandelstam, Sergei Esenin, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Nikolai Gumilev, Boris Pasternak, Boris Poplavsky, Marina Tsvetaeva, and others. The essays vary in their themes and scopes, and, as the author suggests, are organized by "metaphorical and psychological approach" to lyrical poetry (8). The concluding chapters of the book offer a sketch of Russia's intellectual history and clarify several premises of Ponomareff's approach—most importantly, the long-standing tension between the liberal western-oriented intelligentsia and oppressive political regimes, be it tsarist or Soviet.

Vladislav Khodasevich, one of the poets featured in the book, once observed that "the history of Russian poetry is the history of the extermination of Russian poets" (Khodasevich, II: 9). Constantin

Ponomareff's collection is akin to a martyrologue of Russia's modernist poets. The very title of the book, a quotation from Anna Akhmatova's 1915 poem "I've Ceased Smiling . . ." ("Ia ulybat'sia perestala . . .") suggests the moral and ethical emphasis of the volume. The articles included in the collection underscore tragic biographical facts, and explore the themes of suffering, loneliness, and spiritual search in the works of different poets. Thus, the essay on Anna Akhmatova views guilt and conscience as key motifs of Akhmatova's *Poem without a Hero* and traces these ethical notions back to earlier works, such as the poetic cycle *Potshards (Cherepki)* and the still earlier long poem *By the Sea (U moria)*. The reading of Marina Tsvetaeva's oeuvre, on the contrary, tends to go beyond the biographical context and concentrates on the notions of mysticism and spirituality that penetrate Tsvetaeva's work.

A poetics of alienation is emphasized in the reading of Esenin's poetry, as it ranges from the disappearance of mythologized rural world to themes of parting in the *Persian motifs* cycle and bitter late works, such as *The Dark Man (Chernyi chelovek)*. However, the view of Osip Mandelshtam as "the poet of loneliness" raises some questions. Biographical isolation and tragic life circumstances, so profound in Mandelstam's case, can hardly be read as poetic loneliness. In fact, many contemporary studies, such as Clare Cavanagh's recent monograph on Mandelshtam, underscore the overcoming of personal and literary loneliness in the creation of literary lineage in Mandelshtam's poetics.

Isolation and personal suffering are the underlying motifs in the studies of émigré authors: Vladislav Khodasevich and Boris Poplavsky, who resided in Paris in the late 1920–30s. Ponomareff takes the grotesque imagery and intensely ironic tone of Khodasevich's final collection, *The European Night (Evropeiskaia noch')*, to be indicative of the poet's worldview and suggests inner doubts and insecurity as the ultimate causes of Khodasevich's final poetic silence. Psychological conflicts and their possible psychoanalytic subtext are the focal points in the study of Boris Poplavsky's works and his tragic suicide. In both of the essays Ponomareff analyzes the problem of creative crisis that each poet encounters while in emigration. Similarly, the essay on Joseph Brodsky's creative evolution takes on the metaphor of the ebb and flow of water as a sign of creative distress in Brodsky's poetry.

Most of the articles included in the book are close readings that concentrate on episodes of the poets' biographies in connection with the dominant themes of their works. In contrast, a comparative chapter, "The Search for the Cosmic Connection in Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry," presents an intriguing reading of poets seldom discussed together: Vyacheslav Ivanov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Sergei Esenin, and Boris Pasternak. All of these poets, Ponomareff contends, inherit the "upward,

humanizing” trend and base the poetic self in the notion of the sacred (115). The author also makes interesting comments about “problematic presence” of heaven in Esenin and Mayakovsky (130).

Notions of spirituality, freedom, and conscience are carried through to the concluding chapters, which attempt to cover a broad spectrum of literary and cultural phenomena. The chapter entitled “A Cultural Perspective—Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature as a Mirror of Society” discusses the development of liberal views in literature from Gogol to Chekhov. The focus of the following chapter, “Twentieth-Century Russian Underground Fiction: A Nation’s Conscience,” is the preservation of personal dignity and spiritual freedom in the works of Evgenii Zamyatin, Mikhail Bulgakov, and others. The epilogue of the book reestablishes the aesthetic views that unite the essays of *One Less Hope* and posits a vital link between the tradition of nineteenth-century prose and the modernist poetry.

The essays are written in a lucid style and the only stylistic drawback is occasional use of calques in the translations from the German, the language of the original. The thematic scope of the collection would certainly benefit readers outside academia or beginning students of Russian literature, who will find an overview of major modernist authors and enjoy ample textual material. Specialists in the field might disagree with particular points, for example, the characterization of Khlebnikov’s transe-sense language as a “meaningless sequence of words” (116), or lament the absence of several major authors whose lives were, perhaps, less tragic, from the pantheon of the poets. Aside from these objections, the collection raises such profound questions as, is the spirituality of Russian poetry a reaction to political regime, or does it lay deeper, in the very origins of Russian poetic culture? How productive is the “martyr” paradigm in conceptualizing the history of Russian twentieth-century poetry? Although the answers offered in *One Less Hope* often tend to take one side of the issue, they certainly invite the reader to reflect about the dependence of literary judgment on ethical and political categories.

#### Works Cited

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Harvard University

*Roses? Check. Room to knit? Check. Now, if only her copy of **Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature** would arrive...*



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