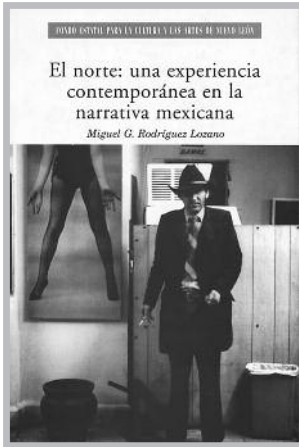


Reviews



El norte: una experiencia contemporánea en la narrativa mexicana

(The North: A Contemporary Experience in Mexican Narrative)
Miguel G. Rodríguez Lozano

Consejo para la Cultura y las Artes de Nuevo León
Monterrey, 2002, 151 pp.

In distant but frank correspondence with Gabriel Josipovici,¹ Mexican researcher and literary critic Miguel G. Rodríguez Lozano mentions in the introduction to this volume of articles and reviews that his interest and enthusiasm for contemporary narrative of the North, to a certain degree relegated or forgotten, despite its offering novel, interesting proposals, is due, as he pointed out elsewhere, to the fact that “one writes what one likes; if not, there’s no point.”² That is, one writes not out of discipline, but also out of pure pleasure.

This view, based on a personal taste for this literary spectrum, underlies the essays about two women and four men border writers (three of whom live in Monterrey, Nuevo León; one in Tijuana, Baja California; and the two women live in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and Reynosa, Tamaulipas, respectively). The essays are:

*“Desde el norte de México: los cuentos de Eduardo Antonio Parra” (From the North of Mexico: The Stories of Eduardo Antonio Parra),

*“Desde la frontera: la narrativa de Luis Humberto Crosthwaite” (From the Border: The Narrative of Luis Humberto Crosthwaite),

*“Entre fronteras: el espacio narrativo en *Callejón Sucre y otros relatos* de Rosario Sanmiguel” (Between Borders: The Narrative Space in *Sucre Alley and Other Stories* by Rosario Sanmiguel),

*“La otra experiencia del norte: aproximación a la narrativa de David Toscana” (The Other Experience of the North: Approach to the Narrative of David Toscana),

*“La diversidad escritural: *Distancias de jabón* de Olga Fresnillo” (Writing Diversity: *Soap Distances* by Olga Fresnillo)

*“Joaquín Hurtado: el lado marginal de la literatura” (Joaquín Hurtado: The Marginal Side of Literature).

In addition, Rodríguez Lozano offers three more articles:

*“Yoremito: el caso de una editorial del norte de México” (Yoremito: The Case of a Publishing House in Mexico’s North)

*“Nuevos narradores del norte de Tamaulipas” (New Writers from the North of Tamaulipas),

*“El desierto como espacio literario y cultural” (The Desert as a Literary, Cultural Space).

These three articles deal with other aspects of Mexican end-of-century narrative, which the researcher classifies as a new aesthetic, literary experience in which the border (as a social, geographic, literary and cultural space) is prefigured, configured and reconfigured from very different perspectives, as can be seen by the different fruit of the literary orchard of the northern border, that vast strip of Mexican territory

[that is] 798,729 square kilometers in size. It is not only where people eat *machaca*,³ goat or grilled steak, dance *norteño*, drug kingpins surface and the *Almadás*’ movies⁴ take place. No. Beyond this reductionist vision that simply repeats cardboard cut-out models, culturally, the states of the northern border have become a substantial part of our understanding of Mexico, closing one century and beginning another. (p.8)

This volume aims to disseminate a double discourse both among specialized academics and the general reading public: the discourse of criticism —this book in itself is one of the numerous examples— and that of creation, those other voices or literary talents that are not included in the centralist cannon of Mexico’s literary tradition.

In addition, this is a book in which explicit or alternative visions of problems coincide: poverty, marginality in all its splendor, violence, death —though it is strange that there is no mention⁵ of the murdered women of Ciudad Juárez as a literary topic⁵— sexuality in general and homosexuality in

particular, racism, discrimination, among the very diverse literary issues that these writers deal with.

In fact, this geographical, political, economic, social and cultural space that the borders represent has a particular meaning in the case of Mexico's northern border: it is a symbol of the door or the preamble to access to U.S. soil, where the fugitives from poverty want to experience and enjoy the American dream. It is also the inherent scene of the stories shared by actors and authors who have turned this area not into "a laboratory of post-modernity," as Tijuana has crazily been called, but into a place where life expectations fall apart and the human condition is brutally and atrociously revealed, or is imaginatively, fictionally and artistically recreated.

This territory with no face or owner, whose defining characteristic is being the limit, the border, the edge, the margin, in many senses, is equally, figuratively, the ends of the earth of two spheres: the first world and that of the uprooted of underdevelopment, the ones who want to accede to development and well-being. They also find on their arduous migratory pilgrimage, a hope of entering through this geographical paradigm, seen from the south and from left to right, made up of Tijuana, Mexicali, Nogales, Agua Prieta, Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Acuña, Piedras Negras, Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa and Matamoros —just to name the most important— cities that are worlds with bordering but not equal landscapes, close and at the same time distant, before which passersby and spectators succumb, with nostalgia, with puzzlement or with pain, and perchance with certain pride, like in the words of a character from "Tijuana para principiantes" (Tijuana for Beginners) by Rafael Saavedra, "We're very proud to live here in la city fronteriza más visitada del mundo. Do you understand that, ese? Si no, fuck off," but never with joy or full satisfaction. The environment will not allow it.

Readers of *El norte: una experiencia contemporánea en la narrativa mexicana* will discover all of this and much more.

Hugo Espinoza

Editor and Mexican essayist

breathe; and, on the other hand, with feeling that it is no longer possible to deal with writing as a craft, and therefore [you are] often [resigned] to feeling it as a small luxury, as a gratification."

² Miguel G. Rodríguez Lozano, *Desde afuera: narrativa mexicana contemporánea* (Mexico City: Abraxas, 1998).

³ *Machaca* is dried, shredded meat used to make different dishes in the North. [Translator's Note.]

⁴ Movies about drug traffickers and border life in general. [Editor's Note.]

⁵ Almost three hundred women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez over the last ten years, with similar *modus operandi*, but local and state authorities have made scant progress in their investigation. This has sparked a nationwide demand for an end to impunity. [Editor's Note.]

NOTES

¹ Gabriel Josipovici, in his book *Confianza or sospecha. Una pregunta sobre el oficio de escribir* (José Adrián Vitier, trans. [Madrid: Turner-FCE, 2002], p. 15), says about writing, "In simple terms, it has to do, on the one hand, with the need to write being a physical need, like the need to