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John C. Wilcox. *Self and Image In Juan Ramón Jiménez.* Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1987, 207 pages.

In this thorough and insightful study John Wilcox applies critical techniques derived from Barthes, Culler, Derrida, Greimas, Iser, Lacan, and Hills Miller, among others, and more frequently used in the analysis of prose, to the poetry of the Nobel laureate Juan Ramón Jiménez.

Wilcox offers critical "readings" of five "poetic texts" representative of the three phases or periods into which he divides Jiménez' work: the *modernista-simbolista* (1900-1913); the Modern (1914-1936), and the post-Modern (from 1936 on). The texts all have in common the enigma of *desdoblamiento*, "the multiplicity of poetic selves" and vary in length and complexity from the fourteen verse "Yo y Yo" from *Piedra y cielo* (1910) to the eight-hundred line prose-poem *Espacio* (1954), although only the last one hundred lines are pertinent to the analysis of the poet's enigmatic *otredad*. Others included are: "Soy yo quien anda esta noche...", "Golfo," and selections from poems of Jiménez' first literary period. Each reading begins with the structure and syntax of the text, moves on to figures of speech, and then to the "semanticization" of the features that analysis uncovers.

Professor Wilcox correctly observes that traditional Juan Ramón Criticism has dwelled on the well-known and frequently anthologized Jiménez of the second period, the "poet of light," to the detriment of his darker early poetry. He remedies this imbalance by "re-reading" the early poetry with an emphasis on its negative symbols, the "dark" nouns that make up a *lunar cluster of imagery*. Among others are: *perro*, *pájaro*

agorero, *cuervo*, *corneja*, *sapo*, *troncos*, *hombre enlutado*, *fantasma*, *sombra*, and *mendigo*. In the second period of Jiménez' work these nouns are either absent or positive in connotation; but they reappear in the third phase with negative meaning once again.

Wilcox's critical readings reveal the alternation of a "Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde" personality in Jiménez' work: the *solar* poet of 1914-1936, "Dr. Jekyll," one with himself, confident of his *Obra* and his ideals, is flanked by "Mr. Hyde," the melancholic, languid and decadent *lunar* poet of the first phase who returns to haunt Jiménez, the *animal de fondo*, in his third period.

The chapters of analysis are preceded by an introduction to the reader's role and relationship to Jiménez' poetry. Wilcox subjects each text to three readings, ***modern***, ***post-modern***, **and** ***specialist*** (xi). The *modern* reader, as Wilcox defines him, has been schooled by the insights of Anglo and American Formalists critics and by European structuralists. The *post-modern* reader is more the product of post-structural reading strategies developed over the last fifteen years (semiotic, psychoanalytic, deconstructionist); and the *specialist* responds principally to Juan Ramón's *Obra* and the criticism it has inspired (xi). Accordingly, this triad of readers *amounts to a formalization of a reading "competence"* (16). Citing Culler, he states that the application of three reading strategies attempts *to advance [an] understanding of the conventions of* [...] *a mode of discourse* (16).

Wilcox also uses "modern" to describe certain literary texts that are distinguished by their air of perfection, *faith and idealism* and tight control of the intensity of feeling (19). Jiménez is aldo described as having a "modern" voice in his second phase. 1910 to the 1930's is a period of "high Modernism" in Western Culture. Jiménez is "modern" and "post-modern." There is also a "moderm aesthetics." While Professor Wilcox's desire to liberate *the text from tradition and authorial domination* is understood, the multiple uses of the word "modern" creates confusion. Is it the reader or Juan Ramón who is "modern"? Does "modern" refer to a period in the history of literature or to a period in the history of the criticism of literature? And what does one say about literary *modernismo*, the movement in which Jiménez had a prominent role?

In a footnote to his opening chapter, Wilcox states that he purposefully avoids the term *modernista* because it *connotes only a "fin de siècle" style of writing* (173), which is characterized as *mournful, decadent, and sentimental* (ix). While this may well be the case with Juan Ramón's turn-of-the-century poetry, such a narrow view is hard to reconcile with Jiménez' later role in the evolution of *modernismo*, with his own writings on the subject, and even more so with the growing corpus of critical literature that is modernity.

There are a few minor annoyances in this otherwise excellent reading of Juan Ramón Jiménez. It could do without such frequent intrusion of Professor Wilcox's "I": *I shall argue, I would argue, I argued in the last chapter..., I am therefore arguing..., I proposed, I argue* (65-73). It can also do without the cryptic jargon such as, *figure on figure figured is writing's game* (Hills Miller and de Mann), and *Nothing.* [...] *is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces* (Derrida), that does little to enhance the solid critical readings. And, God forbid that any reader, specialist, modern o post-modern should become *enthralled by the commas* (120). The poem "Yo y Yo" does not specify that a ***vertical*** [emphasis mine] *jet of water is reflected in a horizontal pool* (114). This spatial relationship is the "reader's" interpretation. Finally, why postulate Juan Ramón's *otredad* through Jacques Lacan when there already exists a rich Hispanic tradition for this theme that dates from Octavio Paz and Antonio Machado back to San Juan de la Cruz?

Near the end of his book John Wilcox wonders aloud *How might a* ***specialist*** *reader of the Jiménez* ***Obra*** *assess the* ***modern*** *and the* ***post-modern*** *reader's insights into language and self-hood?* (170). As a *specialist* reader of Jiménez' *Obra*, I find the rigor of his analysis admirable. I hope that other critics will follow his lead and devote more attention to the *essential heterogeneity* of Juan Ramón's early poetry, to the poetic manifestations of "Mr. Hyde." I am not convinced, though, that one need rely so much on the current fads in literary criticism to do so effectively.

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