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Marketta Laurila sobre Raymond Souza: La historia en la novela hispanoamericana

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Raymond Souza. *La historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1988, 199 pp.

Raymond Souza reveals a meticulous study not only of the seven novels analyzed but also of the development of historical imagination in Latin America since the conquest. Souza has isolated two themes that permeate the chronicles and historical/philosophical texts of Latin America and that, in turn, inform the contemporary "historical" novels analyzed in Souza's book: 1) power; how it is acquired and used by individuals and institutions and 2) ambiguity with respect to history either within the work of a single writer or as revealed by two or more interpretations of the same events.

Souza begins his extended introduction with a chronological survey of historical investigation by Latin American writers. While some self-interests as in the case of Cortés's and del Castillo's emplotment of the conquest as heroic epic or ideology as in Shagún's and de las Casas' emplotment of the same events as tragedy, others reflect the writer's own ambiguity toward the material. Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, culturally and racially caught between two worlds and aware of the watchful eye of Spanish authorities, presents an ambivalent emplotment of the fall of the Inca empire. Sarmiento's work reflects a similar ambiguity with respect to the figure of the gaucho, a figure he admires but which does not, in his own estimation, embody the appropriate characteristics for leadership.

The focus of Souza's study is the internal structure of historical imagination as it appears in the latin American novel between 1961 and 1984. Souza explains: *Estoy particularmente interesado en determinar cómo utilizan los escritores contemporáneos los acontecimientos históricos o los patrones culturales del pasado, como inspiración para escribir sus*

obras, pero pongo marcado interés en los aspectos literarios de este proceso (25). The works that Souza has selected to analyze in eight separate chapters are: *El siglo de las luces* (1962), *El mundo alucinante* (1969), *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1981), *Sobre héroes y tumbas* (1965), *la muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962), *Pepe Botellas* (1984), *El guerrillero* (1976), and *La historia de Mayta* (1984). The first two chapters refer to the Independence movement, the third and fourth to events immediately following independence, and the last four to 20th century revolutionary experience. Each chapter includes information on the writer's motive for focusing on the particular historical event, a brief historical sketch, and an analysis of the epistemological and tropological strategies of the novel in question. Souza explains that, *...los tropos son considerados como manifestaciones de la lógica lingüística o de la estructura profunda que subyace en un texto dado* (31).

Hayden White's *Metahistory* forms the theoretical basis of Souza's study. White postulates two levels on which any prose discourse unfolds: the deep level, which reveals the conceptual strategies that the writer has used to prefigure his field as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, or irony, and the manifest level, which reveals his strategies for explanation by emplotment, formal argument, and ideological implication. Each of these strategies for explanation on the manifest level has four possible modes as follows: 1) emplotment: romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire. 2) Formal argument: formalism, organicism, mechanism, and contextualism. 3) Ideological implication: anarchism, conservatism, radicalism, and liberalism. A specific combination of these three forms of argument determine the style, which can be analyzed to discover how the writer has reached his specific conclusions. Souza focuses his analysis on the tropes and formal argument of the novels. His definitions for the four categories of formal argument are elaborated from both White and Stephen Pepper's work (*World Hypotheses*). Perhaps Souza's greatest contribution is adapting White's methodology, formulated to analyze historical discourse, to the analysis of literary discourse in which aesthetics plays a more prominent role. Souza uses the Rice and Schofer's (*Rhetorical Poetics*) definitions of the four tropes, since they more precisely address concerns of literary analysis. Rice and Schofer combine semiotics and reader response theory to explain how troping can be incorporated into the process of figuration (a syntagmatic process) and symbolization (a paradigmatic process) in a text. Souza's methodology is further enriched by Thomas K. Sueng's theory that each text belongs to a particular universe of reasoning and context, and that these characteristics become incorporated into the literary work during the process of writing. Souza uses Sueng's theory to address the cultural patterns that underlie a literary text.

By combining the concept of troping and formal argument (White, Rice and Schofer, Pepper) and the concept of context (Seung) Souza elaborates a methodology that addresses both historical events and cultural patterns that Latin American writers examine in their fiction. Souza points out how the ambiguity in the texts studied results from the different perspectives of individual characters or from changes in the perspective of the same character. These multiple or changing perspectives reveal the tension between different epistemological and tropological strategies within the same text. It is this dialectical tension which reveals the obstacles to cultural unity and viable political alternatives. It also points to the subjectivity of any — historical or literary — interpretation.

In his analysis of *El siglo de las luces* and *Sobre héroes y tumbas*, Souza examines the opposition between the organicist and contextualist explanations, with their attendant linguistic protocol of synecdoche and irony. While Esteban of *El siglo* fluctuates between different explanations, he finally adopts a contextualist approach only to be confronted by Sofia's formalist explanation and the overall organicist explanation of the text. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, on the other hand, presents a mechanistic view which tends to dissolve into either formalism or contextualism. Tension in *El mundo alucinante* results from the dialectical relationship between historical sources and fictionalization and from the epistemological and ideological differences between Fray Servando and the narrator. *La guerra del fin del mundo* contains some static characters: Galileo and Gall with their mechanistic perspective and metonymical apprehension and the Consejero with his formalist and metaphorical explanations. Others however, change perspectives only to be overwhelmed by doubt. While *Pepe Botellas* and *La historia de Mayta* present the most ironic view, *El guerrillero* is the most optimistic with a clearly formalist and metaphorical view.

Raymond Souza's book should be of interest to scholars of literature because of its careful formalist analysis of the chosen novels and to those interested in understanding how the burden of history is affecting Latin America's present. As Souza has clearly pointed out, the boundary between fiction and history is permeable. *Todas estas obras son signos de un diálogo cultural dinámico que incluye la acción recíproca entre la historia y la literatura*, writes Souza (190). And this dialogue represents hope for Latin America.

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