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María Mercedes Andrade. *La ciudad fragmentada: una lectura de las novelas del Bogotazo*. Cranston, RI: Ediciones INTI, 2002.

Ask a literary scholar who is not a Latin American specialist to name several Latin American authors, and chances are that they may be able to list Borges and some of the “Boom” writers, including Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, José Donoso, and of course, Gabriel García Márquez. Ask them to name another Colombian author, and chances are that they’d be stumped. (Though to be fair, I doubt that they could name another Argentinian, Peruvian, Mexican, or Chilean writer, either.) Ask them to discuss the above-mentioned writers in any sort of social, political, or historical context, and they would stare blankly. Ask them to discuss these novels as part of or within a national movement, and they would probably turn and walk out the door. Too often, though, this is how novels are discussed. Here, however, María Mercedes Andrade attempts to a) uncover a forgotten, or under-examined, Colombian literary subgenre, and b) analyze the novels of this movement within Colombian social, political and literary history.

In this new study by María Mercedes Andrade, *La ciudad fragmentada: una lectura de las novelas del Bogotazo*, she undertakes an examination of a subgenre of the novel, the Novel of Violence. According to Andrade, the theme of violence in the 20th-century Colombian literature has a long and storied past, and the categorization of the Novel of Violence pertains some 74 novels, written between 1951 and 1972, and which represent the wave of violence in Colombia between 1946 and 1965, which left some 200,000 citizens dead. While many sociological, historical and political examinations of the period have been written, very little has even been written regarding the literary representations of the time. Here, Andrade selects five novels, all of which were written after 1948 (the date of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán’s assassination) in order to arrive at an understanding of Bogotá and its inhabitants during el Bogotazo, the period of violence and upheaval which followed the assassination. The five novels include *El 9 de abril* by Pedro Gómez Corena (1951), *El día del odio* by José Osorio Lizarazo (1952), *Los elegidos; el manuscrito de B. K.* by Alfonso López Michelsen (1953), *Viernes 9* by Ignacio Gómez Dávila (1953), and *La Calle 10* by Manuel Zapata Olivella (1960).

Andrade divides her study into four chapters, which develop a narrative that works from the social and political history toward the literary representations of it. In the first chapter, then, she examines the racial characteristics of the occupants of a static, hierarchical society. According to conventional analyses, the State assumes the role of mother, a metaphorical “social uterus,” and has the function of creating ties among its members. Nevertheless, there is also a separation of members, a division into those who run the State and those who belong to the “anonymous mass” which supports the State bureaucracy. This division can function as long as there is a belief that everyone has access to the common good, perhaps not immediately, but eventually. Once people realize that the promise is a false one, the narrative of the Nation-State enters into a “credibility crisis” (10). The Novels of the Bogotazo examine this crisis from many different angles. While the narrative of the “metaphorical mother” functions when the notion of a common bond exists, which the State would reinforce. However, this is not the case in colonial Colombia, when the country was primarily agrarian, and the many regional differences, the racial heterogeneity, and the lack of nationalist cultural projects all contributed to the fragmentation. The notion of the nation in Colombia – and Latin America, is generally the invention of the wealthy, white elite, and conforms more to their economic and political interests than to any notion of common good. During the War of Independence, one of the fundamental elements was the notion of ethnicity, and division along racial lines became more important, and this division became even more visible during the civil wars of the 19 century, and again during the violence of 1946 and beyond.

Here Andrade turns to the Novels of the Bogotazo, which render visible the clash between the political ideals of the “social uterus,” which reflect the survival of long-standing tensions within the national community. The Novels of the Bogotazo do not necessarily subscribe to the ideological project of a “national consensus and unification” but rather tend to report – and sometimes aid – the collapse of the social matrix (12). Andrade challenges the notions of critics Timothy Brennen and Doris Sommer, who argue that the narratives of novels are linked to the construction of a national identity. Instead, Andrade argues that the Novels of the Bogotazo represent the opposite, the rupture of the unification process (14). The fragmentation of Colombian society, as represented in these novels, can be expressed in two fundamental concepts: race and language.

In the second chapter Andrade examines how, in the Novels of the Bogotazo, the authors represent a particular vision of the city of Bogotá, divided by “unresolved tensions” (23). The division emerge in the novels as tensions between public space and private space. For a long time in Colombian history, public men had the responsibility or role of guiding the generally uneducated public. This paternalistic vision of society perpetuated the division between the two groups.

"To maintain this hierarchical division, they established a clear separation between the public of the plaza, from which they defined the nation's destiny, and the private space, wherein politicians differentiated themselves from the general public they governed" (24).

The 1920s brought great economic prosperity to Colombia, which also brought a great influx of inhabitants to Bogotá. These "rapid economic and social transformations" (25) produced increasing conflicts between the elite and the public.

In examining these conflicts in the Novels of the Bogotazo, Andrade argues that the narrative content represents the spatial ruptures, and that the narrative form recreates the disjunctions and tensions among the inhabitants. Instead of representing the public space, these novels are often preoccupied with interior spaces, enclosed spaces which imprison the characters. For example, *El 9 de abril* deals almost exclusively with interior spaces, employing instead descriptions of banquets and parties, the spaces of the elite. When the masses leer at them as they pass through the public space, it is "an interruption of their privacy" (29). This conflict simultaneously foregrounds the difficulties in forging a national identity, as the costumes of the participants in the "Interamerican Conference" gala ball demonstrate. The elaborate costumes valorize and mythologize the general public, and especially the indigenous elements, but in reality, the politicians disdain the public when it infringes on their space. While Gómez Corena justifies this division in *El 9 de abril*, López Michelsen "denounces it" (31) in *Los elegidos*. By narrating the novel from the perspective of a Lutheran from Germany, López Michelsen assumes the critical distance to call into question social practices. The narrator, B.K., cannot understand why the ruling elite continue to turn their backs on the rest of Colombian society. However, the novel *El día del odio* by Osorio Lizarazo complicates the spatial division of the previous two novels by suggesting that the public space is not the free space wherein the public can move at will, but rather a menacing space which threatens those who enter it. Furthermore, the interior spaces are also dangerous. What the novel argues, then, is that certain "undesirable" elements should be kept from the city. In all three novels, however, it is apparent that "notions of exclusion" are central to the creation of a national identity (40).

The third chapter Andrade uses the Novels of the Bogotazo, along with biographical texts, historical analyses, and public speeches of Gaitán to examine the "figure of Gaitán" (41). Even though he came from such meager life, he did come to hold a number of powerful positions, including Mayor of Bogotá and, eventually, ran as a presidential candidate and emerged as an emblem of change, as someone who would unite the country and "abolish" the "oligarchy" (42). So, while he had the qualifications of being from the people, he also had gained access to power via his studies and accomplishments. However, in *El 9 de abril*, Gómez Corena does not

represent Gaitán as a man of the people, but rather as a member of the bourgeoisie, locked away in the interior of his luxurious study, and his allegiances to the ruling class. And while Gómez Corena acknowledges the merits of Gaitán's rise from humility, López Michelsen is less sympathetic. The image of Gaitán which emerges in this novel is far from "being a true member of the people, and is, on the other hand, one of a social climber intent upon entering high society and mingling with it" (46).

Andrade then turns from the fictional representation of Gaitán, toward the public speeches he made, studying his "vocabulary, pronunciation, tone, and form of his discourse" (50), in order to understand the ways in which his public discourse both separated him from the masses and enabled him to serve as an educator to the masses. He consciously employed the language of the people, filled with slang and vulgarisms, in order to reach them more effectively. In analyzing a June 21, 1946 speech, Andrade demonstrates how Gaitán employed language in a specific way in order to produce a sense of unifying identity among the masses. She suggests that Gaitán's oratory style was well-suited to a largely oral audience, and while literates may have found him simplistic and repetitive, semi-literates recognized him as one of their own. In addition, the relationship between body and language is also important for Gaitán, not just in his manner of speech and intonation, as well as his physical appearance. He always wanted to emphasize his indigenous features and his dark skin, all of which brought home his oratorical point (59).

Finally, the fourth chapter examines the significance of the death of Gaitán and the April 9th rebellion into a reflection of the city and the nation, and in particular how the historical event is represented in four novels. Through careful readings of *Viernes 9*, *El día del odio*, *Calle 10* and *9 de abril*, Andrade demonstrates how the authors of these four novels represent the Bogotazo as "an unfulfilled dram" (73), a calculated political plot to perpetuate the disenfranchisement and repression of the underclass (74), "the promise of the future, revolutionary nation" (79), and attempt by communists to de-stabilize the country and an opportunity to return to a hierarchical and classist rule of law (83).

Andrade's book is an important contribution to the study of Colombian literature, to be sure, but also to literature, in general. While she positions these novels within the context of Colombian history and politics, she sheds light on a body of work too little studied, and also refutes prior models of literary analysis which overlook or collapse fundamental differences (Timothy Brennan and Doris Sommer). For this reason, *La ciudad fragmentada* contributes a careful model of literary analysis which is firmly grounded in the historical, social, political, and literary contexts.

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