

ADAM'S ZEAL AND THE WORLD OF SPANISH AMERICAN LETTERS

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SPANISH AND SPANISH-AMERICAN LITERATURE: AN ANNOTATED GUIDE TO SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHIES. By HENSLEY C. WOODBRIDGE. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1983. Pp. 74. \$12.50 cloth, \$6.50 paper.)

CUBAN LITERATURE: A RESEARCH GUIDE. By DAVID WILLIAM FOSTER. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1984. Pp. 576. \$72.50.)

ALEJO CARPENTIER: BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE / GUIA BIBLIOGRAFICA. By ROBERTO GONZALEZ ECHEVARRIA and KLAUS MÜLLER-BERGH. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983. Pp. 271. \$35.00.)

JORGE LUIS BORGES: AN ANNOTATED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY BIBLIOGRAPHY. By DAVID WILLIAM FOSTER. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984. Pp. 376. \$32.50.)

PUERTO RICAN LITERATURE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SOURCES. Compiled by DAVID WILLIAM FOSTER. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982. Pp. 232. \$35.00.)

El hombre les puso nombre a todos los animales domésticos, a todas las aves y a todos los animales salvajes, y ese nombre se les quedó.

Genesis 2:19

Areas as vast as Spanish and Spanish American literatures have long required "un afán adánico," or the zeal to name and classify their creations. The rich heritage of many generations of poets, essayists, playwrights, short-story writers, and novelists led the venerable nineteenth-century scholar Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo to assert that bibliographical endeavors, gigantic as they must be, had to become an essential part of Spanish literary life.¹ His *Bibliografía hispanolatina clásica* was a most worthy early model. The previous pioneer work of the brothers Rodríguez Mohedano in their exhaustive editions of Spanish literature, followed by the detailed volumes by José Amador de los Ríos, had already opened wide bibliographical paths. George Ticknor's acclaimed *History of Spanish Literature* was also an important forerunner.

The professional bibliography and historiography of Hispanic letters surged forward in the early twentieth century through the efforts

of such figures as Raymond Foulché Delbosc, Julio Cejador y Frauca, James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, Antonio Palau y Dulcet, and Raymond Grismer. The methodical labors of these and other bibliophiles provided direction for the demanding organizational task at hand, establishing patience, selectivity, and responsible annotation as essential criteria for those who would follow their lead. Follow they have, for in recent decades, the field of Hispanic bibliography has increasingly rewarded scholars and general readers with a steady flow of valuable guides to literary texts and concomittant critical studies.

For all purposes, bibliographers and critics have yet to reach a consensus about what constitutes "good bibliography," and they may never be able to do so. Joaquín de Entreambasaguas observed that no compilation can ever be considered complete because no one can be certain that the material has been exhausted. He points out that bibliographers as a rule welcome any new information that others might bring to light.² Because bibliographies can be put to many different uses, each bibliographical approach has validity. It is therefore unlikely that scholars will agree on what either a selective or a comprehensive bibliography should contain.

Since the middle of this century, a number of specialists such as Luis Albert Sánchez, José Simón Díaz, Sturgis E. Leavitt, and Homero Serís have done invaluable "source work," which has been continued more recently by Donald Bleznick, Pablo Jauralde Pou, and David Zubatsky. To this short list should certainly be added the name of David William Foster. In the past few years, he has assiduously produced several country-by-country compilations, including those on Puerto Rico and Cuba considered here. Also of special interest is Hensley Woodbridge's well-annotated guide to selected bibliographies of both Spanish and Spanish American literature.

Roberto González Echevarría and Klaus Müller-Bergh's bibliography on Alejo Carpentier should also be well received. Many experts believed that the late Cuban writer would be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature until his untimely death in April 1980. Another prominent Nobel candidate who may never receive that award either is Jorge Luis Borges, venerated by David William Foster in the most rigorous and detailed inventory of works by and about him yet published. The body of criticism dealing with the special genius of these two influential writers is voluminous.

Today Spanish American letters are unquestionably enjoying more special cultivation and wider acclaim than ever before. Carpentier, Borges, Fuentes, and many other novelists and poets from Latin America have stimulated a proliferation of well-translated editions of their works around the world. Moreover, their increasing influence on English-language writers is gradually being recognized.³ Even after the

highly touted "boom" period of the Latin American novel in the 1960s seemed to be drawing to a close (partly due to increasingly restrictive economic considerations), talented younger writers have continued to join the ranks of more established figures like Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez.⁴

The kind of resurgence that is taking place in Hispanic letters has led to a renewed output of articles and monographs in a number of countries. French, German, and Italian criticism of Spanish-language texts has increased in recent years. The interest long evidenced in the United States and Great Britain has continued to grow. Soviet scholars have founded the Institute of Latin American Studies and are writing about Latin American literature. The production of thorough bibliographies is therefore not only invaluable but timely.

Woodbridge's *Spanish and Spanish-American Literature: An Annotated Guide to Selected Bibliographies* is a useful contribution. Because David Zubatsky has already dealt thoroughly with almost four hundred Spanish American authors in a series published in *Chasqui* between 1976 and 1979 and has launched a similar project on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catalonian and Spanish writers, Woodbridge focuses on works published since 1950. Eschewing bibliographies of individual works and authors, he lists compilations of the literatures of particular countries and literary genres.

Woodbridge arranged the available guides by periods in the section on Spanish literature, proceeding from general current bibliographies that deal with each era as a whole (for example, Middle Ages, Renaissance and Golden Age, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries) and shifting to genres and special indexes on post-Franco works, women authors, and translations. The Spanish American section is organized by country, with an overall view of each national literature as well as categorizing its works by genre. Students interested in the burgeoning field of drama will find numerous valuable guides such as those compiled by René Acuña on the "popular theater," by Frank Hebblethwaite on history and criticism of the theater from the colonial period to the present, and by Leon Lyday and George Woodyard on theater criticism since 1940.⁵ An excellent source for book reviews is also provided in the volumes that Antonio Matos based on journals published since 1972.⁶ Woodbridge's 374 entries provide the Hispanophile with a helpful overview of the various bibliographical material produced or reissued in the last thirty years.

The comprehensive guides to Cuban and Puerto Rican literature prepared by David William Foster complement his publications on Argentine, Chilean, Mexican, and Peruvian letters and the twentieth-century Spanish American novel. By his own admission, Foster found the most difficult compilation to be the Cuban bibliography because of the

paucity of major research collections of Cuban literature in the United States (he found the collection at the University of Miami the most useful). Moreover, the growing schism during the last twenty years between writers remaining on the island and those living in exile adds to the thorny issues complicating the present-day definition of Cuban cultural tradition. Foster wisely chose to ignore the antagonistic camps that have swelled since the Cuban Revolution, making his main criteria birthplace and language rather than residence or politics.

Cuban Literature: A Research Guide encompasses Cuba's literary history from the time of the Spanish conquest to the present in an accurate and balanced bibliography. Foster lists items from all types of scholarly journals and the most important cultural periodicals, and all monographic studies readily available in Latin America and the United States. His objective is "to serve the interests, as I understand them, of the academic literary scholar" (p. xi). Brief book reviews (of less than five hundred words) are purposely excluded to keep the guide a manageable size. References are arranged hierarchically, beginning with useful subdivisions of general topics, those of particular interest being Relations with Foreign Literatures, Women Authors, Black Culture, and Studies in Drama. The listings under theater are especially valuable and may be the most extensive available on the topic.

Most of this bibliography is devoted to individual authors, from María Mercedes Santa Cruz from the colonial era to modern-day luminaries such as José Martí, Nicolás Guillén, Alejo Carpentier, José Lezama Lima, and Guillermo Cabrera Infante. The generations of writers from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth, some lesser known, predominate in this section. The list of ninety-eight authors is certainly valuable, although not exhaustive. Conspicuously absent, for example, is Edmundo Desnoes, whose 1965 novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo* was made into an internationally acclaimed movie of the same title. Also unaccounted for are such published poets as Ernesto Díaz Rodríguez, Angel Cuadra, Juana Rosa Pita, and Armando Valladares. Foster's guide to Cuban literature is nevertheless a valuable contribution because of its breadth and organization.

Complementing the bibliography on Cuban literature is the guide on Alejo Carpentier prepared by two specialists on his work. Roberto González Echevarría and Klaus Müller-Bergh have provided scholars with a useful listing of primary and secondary materials in *Alejo Carpentier: Bibliographical Guide / Guía bibliográfica*. Criticism in Western journals is well covered, the compilers having decided to omit information on works about Carpentier published in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They lament the insufficiency of only one visit to the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in Havana, acknowledging this "considerable limitation," given that Carpentier donated all his papers to

this library. This situation should encourage future researchers to mine that particularly rich vein because Carpentier's intellectual, social, and political biography has yet to be written.

Of particular interest is the section on secondary bibliography related to Carpentier. The trajectory of "serious criticism" is revealed by what has been written on the man by other Latin American literary luminaries (for example, Severo Sarduy, Gabriel García Márquez, and Carlos Fuentes). Another valuable section entitled "Letra y Solfa" organizes periodical literature and offers helpful comments about the content of each article.

Since González Echevarría and Müller-Bergh do not consider themselves to be bibliographers in the strict sense, they have developed a format that may seem unorthodox to professional cataloguers. For example, their division of Carpentier's writing according to journals and periods implies not only interpretation on their part but also recognizes the difficulty of presenting facts in a neutral manner. What they provide is coverage of material by and about a writer whose criticism has clearly become as complex as that on César Vallejo, Pablo Neruda, or Borges.

Foster's *Jorge Luis Borges: An Annotated Primary and Secondary Bibliography* is a more ambitious and successful project than the guide on Carpentier. His stated objective was "to rewrite, in conformance with the protocols—the text grammar—of modern literary bibliography, the inventory of Borges's own collected texts and the mass of criticism on them" (p. x). Indeed, criticism on this prolific Argentine writer abounds as early as the 1920s and 1930s. Foster does not repeat Norman Thomas di Giovanni's solid work on the evolution of Borges's early poetry. Foster concentrates instead on the continuing critical reception given to Borges's short fiction and essays over the last four decades.

As a result of Foster's meticulous efforts, Borges scholars now have at their fingertips a bibliography of some fifteen hundred items described and evaluated in the helpful annotations. The material is classified by dividing Borges's books and essays under broad subject headings, with appropriate cross-references provided where necessary. Of unusual interest are such sections as Literary Theory in Borges's Writings, Philosophical Themes and Issues, Stylistic Considerations, Borges and Other Writers and Literatures, Negative Criticism on Borges, and Interviews. An inventory of the many translations of Borges's texts includes titles in Norwegian, Japanese, and Estonian.

The last bibliography under consideration is Foster's unannotated compilation, *Puerto Rican Literature: A Bibliography of Secondary Sources*. Until now, no comprehensive bibliography of this major Caribbean literature had been attempted. Although bibliographies of individual authors like René Marqués, Luis Palés Matos, and Francisco

Arriví had appeared, no attempt had been made to survey representative criticism. This situation may in part reflect the fact that literary attention within Puerto Rico has been extensive over the years but foreign scholarship has been modest. Clearly, that situation is changing now, and Foster's work fills an important gap.

Puerto Rican Literature focuses on academic and "cultural" criticism while excluding "journalistic" presentations. Walter Rela's and Angel Flores's guides,⁷ as well as UNESCO's *Bibliografía general de la literatura latinoamericana*, aided Foster in gathering initial references.⁸ Divisions by topics and periods are followed by a section on eighty individual authors, from poet Bernardo de Balbuena (1568–1627) to novelist Luis Rafael Sánchez (b. 1936). Well-known essayist Eugenio María de Hostos commanded most attention, having 277 entries under his name. With a few exceptions, this bibliography documents the challenge faced by the most recent generations of Puerto Ricans either to follow the lead provided by older masters or to blaze new trails on their own. Attention is being given gradually to "Neoyorrican" poetry and its mythical vision of the island from the vantage point of New York City.

Clearly, modern researchers are being greatly aided in their tasks by the disciplined labor of bibliographers and other scholars who have identified, categorized, and described enormous amounts of literary and critical material related to Spanish America. Nevertheless, a great deal remains to be done in the bibliographical field. Foster points out the need for a well-organized bibliography that provides headings distinguishing between general treatises on Latin American literature and monographs on particular genres and movements. Still, much progress has been made in recent years in mapping the world of Spanish American letters. Just as Latin American writers have been fruitful, so it is with those who analyze and categorize their works and the criticism they stimulate.

NOTES

1. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, "De re bibliographia," *Revista Europea* (Madrid) 7 (1876):132–40.
2. Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, preface to José Simón Díaz's *Bibliografía de la literatura hispánica* 1 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1950), xii.
3. Some examples that come to mind are Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, John Irving's *The World According to Garp*, John Barth's *The Sotweed Factor*, Isaac Goldemberg's *The Fragmented Life of Don Jacobo Lerner* (published in English two years before the Spanish version appeared in 1978), Harriet Doerr's *Stones for Ibarra*, Alice Hoffman's *White Horses*, Tony Morrison's *Tar Baby* and *Song of Solomon*, and Michael Cunningham's *Golden States*.
4. For example, one can now speak of Alejo Carpentier and fellow Cuban Reinaldo Arenas, of Carlos Fuentes and his compatriot Gustavo Sainz, of José Donoso and Antonio Skármeta of Chile, or of Colombia's Gabriel García Márquez and Rafael Humberto Moreno Durán, to mention just a few of the relatively newer associations.

5. René Acuña, *El teatro popular en Hispanoamérica: una bibliografía anotada* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1979); Frank S. Hebblethwaite, *A Bibliographical Guide to the Spanish American Theater* (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1969); and Leon Lyday and George W. Woodyard, *A Bibliography of Latin American Theater Criticism, 1940–1974* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, 1976).
6. See the separate volumes for the years 1972 through 1980 of the *Guide to Reviews of Books from and about Hispanic America: Guía a las reseñas de letras de y sobre Hispanoamérica*, edited by Antonio Matos (Detroit: Blaine Ethridge, 1976–1982).
7. Walter Rela, *Guía bibliográfica de la literatura hispanoamericana desde el siglo xix hasta 1970* (Buenos Aires: Casa Pardo, 1971); and Angel Flores, *Bibliografía de los escritores hispanoamericanos, 1609–1974*.
8. *Bibliografía general de la literatura hispanoamericana* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972).