

DAN RUSSEK. *Textual Exposures. Photography in Twentieth-Century Spanish American Narrative Fiction*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2015. x + 229 pp.

Much critical work has been produced dealing with the relationship between literature and photography, touching sporadically on Latin American literature. In Spanish, two recent books attest to interest in the subject of visual technologies in literature (Valeria de los Ríos's *Espectros de luz: Tecnologías visuales en la literatura latinoamericana* [2011], and Magdalena Perkowska's *Pliegues visuales: Narrativa y fotografía en la novela latinoamericana contemporánea* [2013]); no single book in English has yet attempted a comprehensive examination of such a topic. *Textual Exposures* by Dan Russek constitutes a major contribution in English devoted to the exploration of the relationship between twentieth-century Latin American narrative fiction and the photographic medium (X-ray, cinema, illustrated journalism, television, and video). The authors and texts analyzed by Russek establish an original comparative corpus ranging from Rubén Darío, Horacio Quiroga, Silvina Ocampo, Virgilio Piñera, Juan Rulfo, Julio Cortázar, and Salvador Elizondo, to Tomás Eloy Martínez. What is more salient in Russek's analysis is how he brings together authors as dissimilar as Julio Cortázar and Tomás Eloy Martínez or Rubén Darío, Julio Cortázar and Salvador Elizondo, organized in eight case studies. Another significant feature of Russek's comparative analysis is the evolution in the treatment of the medium in its *longue durée*, from the fantasies of the technological uncanny in Rubén Darío at the end of the nineteenth century, to the social roles of photographic images in texts by Cortázar and Martínez in the late twentieth. A key concept used by Russek is ekphrasis, allowing links between verbal and visual representations. Ekphrasis, as a rhetorical and literary device, points to a "poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art" (8), according to Leo Spitzer. Russek finds useful the concept of "notional ekphrasis" (9), which consists of imagined photographs acquiring the qualities of real pictures.

*Textual Exposures* is organized into three chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. In chapter one (the longest of all), "Uncanny Visions: Rubén Darío, Julio Cortázar, and Salvador Elizondo," Russek analyzes the diabolic aspects in Darío's "Verónica" (1896), Cortázar's celebrated "Las babas del Diablo" (1959) and "Apocalipsis de Solentiname" (1977), and Elizondo's novel *Farabeuf* (1965). Using Freud's concept of the uncanny in its renewed critical perspectives (far beyond its initial psychoanalytical approach), Darío's "Verónica" is read as inaugural in terms of its treatment of the photographic medium. Needless to say,

Cortázar's "Las babas del Diablo" has been the most studied text by this author since Michelangelo Antonioni's film adaptation in *Blow Up* (1966). In this short story Cortázar explores the relationship between writing and photography through its protagonist Roberto Mitchel who is confronted with a typewriter and a photographic camera trying to dominate both semiotic systems in his unconscious desire to control both. Another Cortázar short story "Apocalipsis de Solentimane" finds its match with "Las babas del Diablo" according to Russek; here the author/narrator is filled with astonishment at the Polaroid camera that he carries, suggesting ironically to Claudine, at the end of the story, her inability to see the same images that he has witnessed, playfully acknowledging that perhaps what he saw was Napoleon riding a horse. This play in time and place not only reveals a disjuncture between places (Paris/Nicaragua), but of history and politics (France in Napoleon's time/Nicaragua in Revolution). The third case of uncanny unconscious forces at work is Elizondo's *Farabeuf* which develops its plot as "photographic delirium" (57). A photograph of Chinese torture and execution, the "Leng Tch'e" or "Death by a Thousand Cuts," taken from Bataille's *Les larmes d'Eros*, reveals Elizondo's conception of the photographic act as a violent one in that the freezing of time, its shrinking or expanding, and fragmented space entails brutality.

Chapter two, "Family Portraits: Horacio Quiroga, Juan Rulfo, Silvina Ocampo, and Virgilio Piñera," highlights the personal dimension of photography by exploring family pictures and photo albums. Russek's analyses of Horacio Quiroga's "La cámara oscura" (1920), Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955), Silvina Ocampo's "Las fotografías" (1959) and "La revelación" (1961), and finally Virgilio Piñera's "El álbum" (1944), show the literary potential and productivity of these personal dimensions of photography. The four writers exemplify different ways of manipulating the conventions of photography. Russek's analyses reveal the ambiguities of memory and the delusive potential of the image as a means of overcoming death in family portraits; for instance, in *Pedro Páramo* where there is mention of a portrait of the protagonist's mother, and in "El álbum" by Virgilio Piñera, where the album is treated as a social critique of ceremonies of remembrance.

In chapter three, "Politics of the Image: Julio Cortázar and Tomás Eloy Martínez," Russek examines the aesthetic and political aspects of photography through Cortázar's *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* (1967), *El último round* (1969), and Tomás Eloy Martínez's *La novela de Perón* (1985). This chapter deals with illustrated journalism and how it is reworked in narrative fiction. In these texts fixed images enter in competition with the emergence of new visual technologies such as video and television.

In sum, Russek is aware of the major transformations that have taken place since the end of the twentieth century in the field of visual technologies, particularly in photography in its digital stage, and illustrates this transformation by referring to contemporary writers. Edmundo Paz-Soldán's *Sueños digitales* (2000) marks a closure and opening in that this author places photography at the centre of his narrative fiction with its referential power and the impact of its images that will continue to be a source of inspiration for experimental writing. *Textual Exposures* is meritorious and novel in its focus on the photographic medium, promoting an interpretation at the heart of the current transformations of visual culture.

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MARÍA DEL CARMEN SILLATO Y PATRICIA VARAS, EDS. *Identidades más allá de las fronteras nacionales. Ensayos en homenaje a Keith Ellis*. New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2011. 286 pp.

Esta colección de ensayos es un homenaje a Keith Ellis, Profesor Emérito de la Universidad de Toronto, en la que se reconocen sus contribuciones en torno a la literatura cubana, su cultura y su arte pero también de toda América Latina. Ellis ha ganado numerosos premios y ha sido galardonado por países como Venezuela, Cuba, Jamaica y los Estados Unidos. Se especializa en poesía y cuentos, y es especialmente reconocido por sus muy distinguidos trabajos académicos sobre Nicolás Guillén. Ha publicado más de veinte libros y más de cien artículos en revistas de prestigio.

Las coordinadoras del volumen, María del Carmen Sillato y Patricia Varas, ofrecen una exhaustiva introducción a la colección. *Identidades americanas más allá de las fronteras nacionales* se compone de catorce ensayos y puede dividirse en tres partes: identidades americanas, literatura y memorias. Cabe también notar que los autores de los ensayos representan un interesante abanico de países que van desde Cuba hasta Canadá, pasando por Chile, Francia, Jamaica y Estados Unidos.

Los cinco primeros ensayos se concentran en los temas del mestizaje, de la discriminación racial y de la identidad nacional que afectan a Cuba y al resto de América Latina. Partiendo de la cuestión del mestizaje en los escritos del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Batista Alberdi, Simón Bolívar, José Martí y Rigoberta Menchú, entre otros, Roberto Fernández Retamar plantea, en "Mestizajes en la América Latina y el Caribe: ¿Fin del racismo?", la problemática de la explotación y del