

MARÍA ROSA LOJO. *Free Women in the Pampas. A Novel about Victoria Ocampo*. Ed. and trans. Norman Cheadle. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP. 2021. 238 pp.

*Free Women in the Pampas. A Novel about Victoria Ocampo* (2021) is an annotated rendering of the novel *Las libres del sur: una novela sobre Victoria Ocampo* (2004) by the Argentinean creative writer and scholarly researcher, María Rosa Lojo, edited and translated by Norman Cheadle, a prominent figure of Canadian Hispanism. Lojo's text can be described as a biographical novel about Victoria Ocampo (1890-1979) and her coming of age as a writer and a leading Argentinean intellectual, best known as the founder and the main backer of the highly influential literary magazine *Sur* (1931-92). The novel was published during times marked by social demand for historical understanding that characterized the decades following the fall of the last dictatorship in Argentina (1976-83). Indeed, historical fiction dealing with the recent and more distant past constituted an important part of the literary production in the 1990s and early 2000s. Lojo, both as an academic and a novelist, actively participated in this discussion. Together with *La pasión de los nómades* (1994), *Una mujer de fin de siglo* (1999), *Finisterre* (2005), and *Todos éramos hijos* (2014), *Las libres del sur* constitutes yet another contribution by Lojo to the debate on the representation of Argentina's national past.

Since the historiographical dimension of Lojo's creative writing may elude the non-specialized reader, Cheadle's role in the rendering of *Free Women in the Pampas* did not consist solely in translating the novel, but also providing a context in light of which Lojo's historical reflection can be understood by the English-speaking public. Ocampo was without a doubt a catalyst of intellectual life of her times, but she is also a historical figure whose image has been repeatedly appropriated in a similar fashion as another Argentinean female icon, Eva Perón. As Cheadle notes in the *Introduction* to the novel, Eva and Victoria are "opposing icons on either side of *la grieta*, as Argentines call the abysmal crack that yawns between two antagonistic visions for the nation: the popular-national and the (neo)liberal-patrician" (xix). In her portrayal of Ocampo, who was associated with the latter, Lojo refused "to succumb to the pull of powerful ideological hatreds, to either endorse or condemn in its entirety one hegemonic formation or another" (xxii). She attempted instead to escape extremist views, and paints Ocampo as "a zealous believer in excellence in the arts, literature, architecture and design" (xx), while maintaining the paradoxical and contradictory characteristics of a figure "whose alliances were constantly divided between her sex and her class" (xx). Lojo's representation of the protagonist at the centre of the novel depended

therefore not only on historical facts but also on intertextual relationships that created the image that shaped Ocampo. Cheadle highlights these connections and guides the English-speaking reader through the complexities of the text.

Considering the limited familiarity with the subject matter outside of Argentina, Cheadle organized the English edition of the novel in a way that provides the reader with the wider visual and textual cultural context. *Free Women in the Pampas* includes a photograph of María Rosa Lojo (ii), Cheadle's acknowledgements (vii-viii), a note to the reader (ix), an introduction (xi-xxx), accompanied with archival photographs of Ocampo and her entourage (xxxi-vii), the body of Lojo's text (1-181), a glossary of Argentinean terms (183-86), and endnotes (187-227). The volume concludes with a bibliography on María Rosa Lojo's creative fiction and scholarly work, a bibliography on Victoria Ocampo, and a general list of work cited in the introduction and notes (229-38). All these components enrich the original text and provide a crucial background from which the reader can interpret the novel.

The different elements of the English annotated edition captivate the reader, as they are brilliantly interconnected, complement each other, and constitute an engaging source of information about María Rosa Lojo, Victoria Ocampo, her times, and Argentinean culture in general. In the *Introduction*, Cheadle presents Lojo both as a novelist and researcher whose artistic and academic endeavours shaped the portrayal of the protagonist. He also sketches a basic profile of Ocampo, making references and critical comments about her biographies published in English and Spanish, translations of her texts, and scholarly work about her. The degree of sophistication with which Cheadle makes connections and provides additional information throughout the text is exceptional and reflects his many years of research in the field. For example, to provide the context for understanding the situation of women intellectuals in the South, he traces the association between Victoria Ocampo and Gabriela Mistral, the Chilean poet and Noble Prize Laureate (xxvi). He presents the different visions of Latin America drawn from their correspondence translated into English by Horan and Meyer and published under the title *This America of Ours* (2003), listed in the bibliography. The curiosity of the reader about this relationship is augmented by the comment Cheadle makes that the introduction to *This America of Ours* could be considered a sequel to *Free Women in the Pampas*. And then, in the endnotes, he points the reader to the upcoming academic research project on women's collaboration in the literary magazine *Sur* including Ocampo's work with Mistral. This last piece of information is remarkable and stems from Cheadle's personal correspondence with Lojo,

who, at the time of the publication of *Free Women in the Pampas*, was just about to embark on a collaboration with Marina Guidotti on that topic (191).

The insights into the complexities of Argentinean and Latin American cultures provided to the reader in the *Introduction* are consistently supported by endnotes which document the original sources of materials used in the novel, present contextual information, and offer additional commentary. Although, as Cheadle notices, the novel can be read without them (ix), the annotations open a fascinating world of intertextual connections: they provide details about the importance of people and places whose relevance brings further complexity to the text and invites the reader to learn more about Argentina and Ocampo. Indeed, the times between 1924 and 1931 described in the novel were a period when, ideologically and politically, everything seemed still possible in Argentina. A period when Jorge Luis Borges, who eventually supported conservative political options, and Leopoldo Marechal, who associated himself with the Peronist movement, were still friends (xxii). The tension in the novel relies, therefore, on the inevitability of the historical consequences of the 1931 military coup. Without Cheadle's assistance, this element could be lost to the English-speaking public. The reader discovers therefore the historical backdrop and the importance of literary and historical figures, such as Alfonsina Storni (51), Ricardo Rojas (59), Leopoldo Lugones (59) or Roberto Arlt (67), to name a few. Cheadle explains the significance of these figures in the broader historical and literary contexts. A good example of the enriching effect of the annotations are the comments related to Borges and Marechal when they appear as characters in the novel. Cheadle not only acquaints the reader with the two giants of Argentine literature, but also suggests the reasons to relegate them in *Free Women in the Pampas* to the role of mere incidentals. Obviously, the novel is about the free women of the pampas, not the men, but Cheadle's comments also encourage the reader to consider the period described in the novel not only as a key moment in the life of Victoria Ocampo, but to imagine her career as "a vital link between succeeding generations of talented women writers in the South" (xxix) starting with Eduarda Mansilla (1834-92), Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938), and María Rosa Oliver (1898-1977) and ending with María Rosa Lojo herself. Women writers are presented unmistakably to the English-speaking reader not as outsiders but rather co-founders of the Argentinean literary tradition.

Despite the elitist vision of the arts promoted by Ocampo, Cheadle stresses that, while representing and exalting Victoria, Lojo proposes a more inclusive idea of the South. This vision, prevailing in her other creative writing and scholarly work, is gradually introduced throughout the novel, perhaps most clearly, as Cheadle notices (xxviii-xxix), when a completely fictional character of a friend of Ocampo, Carmen Bray, finds herself greeted

by a voice addressing her in the Mapuche language as *lamnguen* (sister). Bray's character came to Argentina from Galicia and was an avid reader of her compatriot Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885). Introducing her ethnic background, her affinity for Galician literature (216), and her openness towards aboriginal peoples, Cheadle emphasises Lojo's Galician ancestry, literary fascinations, and her own contributions to the recognition of Indigenous peoples linking the multicultural and inclusive world represented in the novel with Argentina's present. The annotations, therefore, help the reader to understand that the multilayered portrait of Ocampo offers a nuanced picture not only of the historical figure, but also of the times she lived. Consequently, Cheadle introduces the reader to visual and textual aspects of the epoch through photographs, commentary about popular culture such as Soiza Reilly's pulp fiction in vogue at the time (220), information about women's magazines like *El hogar* and *Para ti* (214), and presentation of iconic places like *Café Tortoni*, *Richmond*, and *El Molino* (207-209). And when additional information is needed, he directs the reader to specialized literature such as *Argentina: Stories for the Nation* (2008) by Amy Kaminsky or *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires* (1991) by Donna J. Guy.

Translators usually bring foreign texts as close as possible to the culture of the target reader, but in Cheadle's case this familiarity is carefully negotiated to reveal a culture that shows differences that may not be anticipated without his intervention. The novel appears to flow seamlessly, creating the illusion that the translated text is, in fact, the original. Nevertheless, Cheadle deliberately breaks the conventions of English to preserve the Argentine meaning and originality. He maintains some of the vocabulary in Spanish (explained in the glossary), like *estancia* or *gran aldea* (24), and translates literally some of the Argentine expressions, like "taking oranges to Paraguay" (10) or "drowning in a glass of water" (151) (explained in the endnotes). This strategy serves not only to introduce a local feel into the text but also to point to the subtle yet important idiosyncrasies that define Argentina. The novel ends just before the publication of the first issue of *Sur* in 1931, which, in the novel, is the result of Ocampo's encounters with leading intellectuals of the time: Rabindranath Tagore, José Ortega y Gasset, Pierre Drieu de la Rochelle, Hermann von Keyserling, and Waldo Frank. They all fascinated Ocampo to the point she was instrumental in bringing them to Buenos Aires, but they also projected expectations on her and on Argentina which she resisted. Thanks to Cheadle's annotations, the reader understands her position and discards any simplifications that could arise from the perception of Ocampo as merely Eurocentric and, consequently, make similar assumptions about the apparent similarities between Argentinean and European cultures. Instead, when the novel culminates with the imminent creation of the literary magazine *Sur*, it is clear that

Ocampo's involvement in it should be perceived as an act of defiance. Although not without its flaws and limitations, it created a platform that allowed an authentic Argentinean expression.

*Free Women in the Pampas* is a delight to read and an important contribution to the dissemination and understanding of Argentinean literature and culture. Cheadle not only brings closer Lojo's prose to the English-speaking public through his flawless translation, but also provides a wealth of information about the broader context of the novel.

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N. MICHELLE MURRAY. *Home Away from Home: Immigrant Narratives, Domesticity, and Coloniality in Contemporary Spanish Culture*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2018. 226 pp.

The domestic sphere serves as the microcosm through which to understand Spanish conceptualizations of race, ethnicity, and immigration in Michelle Murray's excellent monograph. *Home Away from Home* explores how the home "operates as a contact zone" in which the dynamics of race, immigration, and gender collide (40). Through the analysis of plays, novels, short stories, and films, Murray carefully outlines the importance of domesticity as a lens through which to dissect contemporary Spain's representations of immigrant women, who in many respects maintain not only the Spanish home, but also the Spanish nation. This book is a brilliant addition to the scholarship on the representation of immigration in Spanish literature and film. Murray's focus on domesticity sets this book apart in ways that make it apt for scholarly and pedagogical purposes. By centering the experiences of immigrant women often relegated to the private sphere, and thus more susceptible to abuses, Murray skillfully articulates their critical role in the formation of contemporary Spain.

The introduction displays how "exploring democratic Spain from the perspective of immigrant women reveals the powerful, yet understudied dynamics of nationalism and coloniality as Spain transformed from an insular, patriarchal, national-Catholic dictatorship to a cosmopolitan, globalized nation" (43-44). Using the 1985 *Ley de Extranjería* as a launchpad from which to theorize the place of domestic workers in Spain, Murray demonstrates the ways in which their status has been made purposely ambiguous because of their work in the private sphere, creating the conditions for them to be "in precarious, risky work environments in Spanish homes" (18). Murray argues that these conditions stem from