

N.º 5 junio 2017

POÉTICAS

Revista de Estudios Literarios



ESTUDIOS

Daniel Herrera Cepero
1925-1929: LA GRAN CIUDAD
EN LA PROBETA
PRE-NEOYORQUINA DE LORCA

ENTREVISTA

Alí Calderón
ENTREVISTA A
MARJORIE PERLOFF

ARTÍCULOS

Sergio García García
EL PASEO BAJO «LUNAS
EBRIAS» Y LA CONSTRUCCIÓN
POÉTICA DE UNA CIUDAD

POESÍA

Duo Duo
DOS POEMAS
INÉDITOS

POÉTICAS

Revista de Estudios Literarios

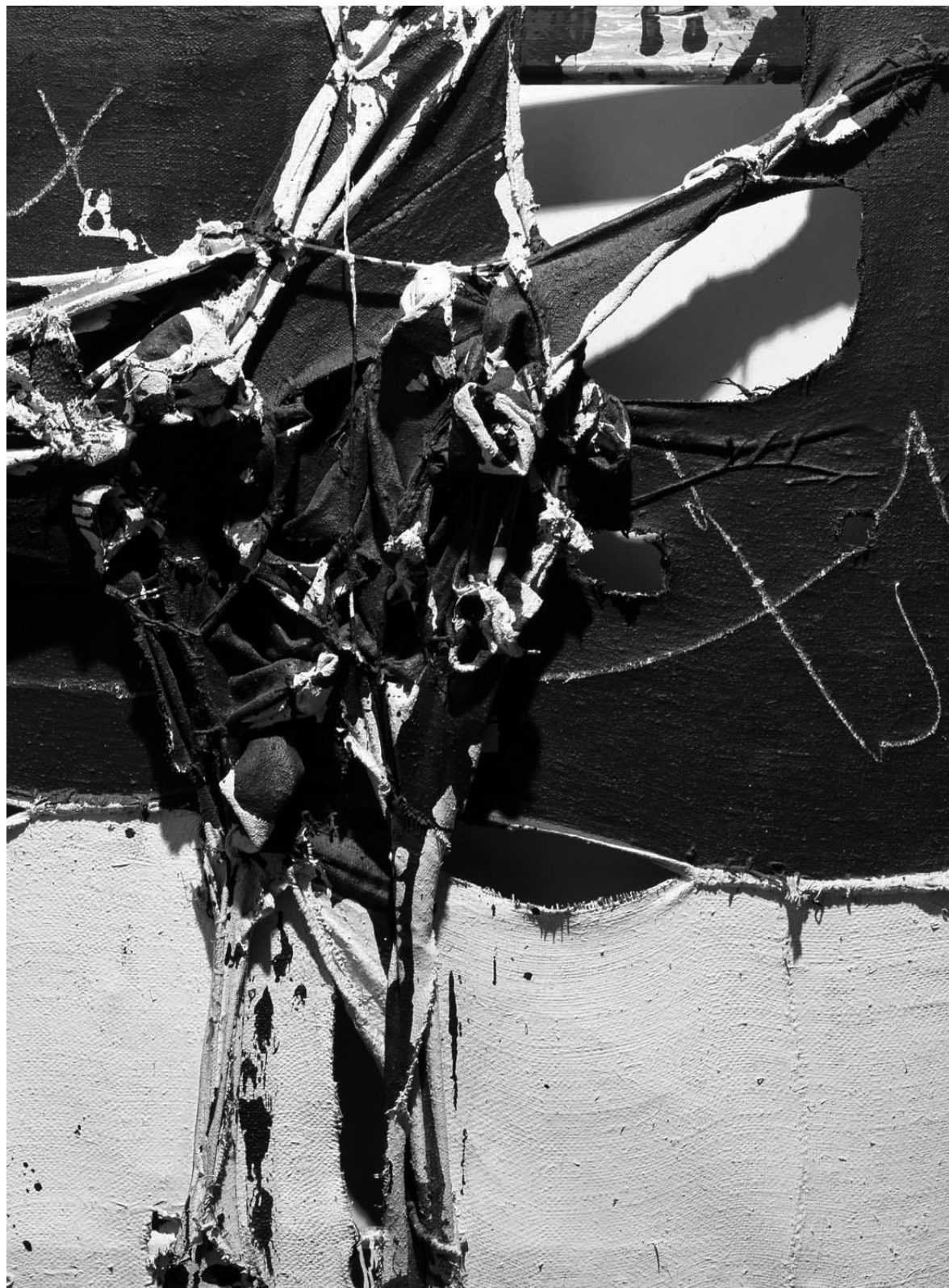


ÍNDICE

Págs.

[ESTUDIOS]		[POEMAS]	
Braulio Fernández Biggs		83	DUO DUO
LA ANAGNÓRISIS EN «HAMLET»	5		
Daniel Herrera Cepero			[RESEÑAS]
1925-1929: LA GRAN CIUDAD EN			Stacey E. Mitchell
LA PROBETA PRE-NEOYORQUINA			«MENSAJEROS DE UN TIEMPO
DE LORCA	17		NUEVO: MODERNIDAD Y
			NIHILISMO EN LA LITERATURA DE
		89	VANGUARDIA» (1918-1936)
[ARTÍCULOS]			Rossella Michienzi
Sergio García García			«NATURALEZA DE LO
EL PASEO BAJO «LUNAS EBRIAS» Y LA			INVISIBLE. LA POESÍA DE
CONSTRUCCIÓN POÉTICA DE UNA		95	RAFAEL GUILLÉN»
CIUDAD: «AQUELARRE EN MADRID»,			María del Carmen Jiménez Ariza
DE FERNANDO BELTRÁN	43		PARA UNA TEORÍA DE LA
			LITERATURA (40 AÑOS DE
Marta López Luaces			HISTORIA)
LA TRADUCCIÓN COMO		99	
PROCESO CREATIVO	63		Normas de publicación /
			Publication guidelines
[ENTREVISTA]		103	
Alí Calderón			111
ENTREVISTA A			Orden de suscripción
MARJORIE PERLOFF	75		

[RESEÑAS]



Manolo Millares., Detalle: *Cuadro 173*.

Herrero-Senés, Juan

*Mensajeros de un tiempo nuevo: Modernidad y nihilismo
en la literatura de vanguardia (1918-1936).*

Anthopos: Barcelona, 2014.

«MENSAJEROS DE UN TIEMPO
NUEVO: MODERNIDAD Y NIHILISMO
EN LA LITERATURA DE VANGUARDIA
(1918-1936)»

Stacey E. Mitchell
Pennsylvania State University

sxm629@psu.edu

In *Mensajeros de un tiempo nuevo: Modernidad y nihilismo en la literatura de vanguardia (1918-1936)*, Juan Herrero Senés illustrates the spiritual and sociopolitical landscape of Spain during the first decades of the twentieth century, a period of profound ideological and moral crises that gave rise to the iconic Spanish avant-garde. The author details the causes, traits, and challenges of interwar literature, using as a point of departure the common, modern experiences of nihilism faced by its young writers. In addition to standing alone as a

monograph, this book occupies a meaningful place in Anthopos's collection "Autores, textos, y temas: Literatura," which features non-doctrinal approaches to Hispanic cultural traditions and diverse literary movements through objective and global scholarly practices.

Herrero Senés's scholarship stands out for its extensive yet focused archival research, utilizing articles, essays, manifestos, and other critical resources to delimit the ideological and cultural climates of interwar Spain. The work of *vanguar-*

Fecha de recepción: 20/02/2017 Fecha de aceptación: 23/5/2017

dia writers like Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Benjamín Jarnés, and others (including international authors) is meticulously documented and analyzed with commentaries from the time's foremost literary critics in periodical journals, newspapers, and similar sources (Antonio Marichalar, Eugeni d'Ors, José Díaz Fernández, Serrano Plaja, etc.). This prolific research, however, occasionally crosses the line from well-supported argumentation to excessive and fleetingly elaborated quotation. Moreover, abundant citation and redundancy overwhelm and exhaust the reader at times, though this can be overlooked in light of the novelty and merit of the work overall.

Perspective, in its various interpretations, is a principle topic of interest in this book. Herrero Senés discusses the attempts to understand, reinvent, and take ownership of so-called reality from the standpoint of *young* avant-garde intellectuals. More broadly, examinations of the evolving roles of art, artist, critic, and audience in society, individually and in relation to one another, likewise pervade the book. By tracing the interactions among these entities, and by contrasting the dehumanized New Art of the 1920s with the call for political and social responsibility in the art of the following decade, the reader is enticed to critically reflect on these tensions:

What function should art have? Must it have a function to be art? Should art be ethical and/or political? Are authors obligated to make stands on sociopolitical in their art?

Following an informative introduction, Chapter 1, "Vectores," examines the ideological, historical, and sociological contexts of interwar Spain, which together engendered an atmosphere of nihilistic attitudes and fueled the radically new artistic production of the *vanguardia*. The author identifies dismantled traditional values, the aftereffects of war, and the influences of foreign and local philosophical thought on Spain's intellectual cohort as the defining features of this transitional period. Herrero Senés designates unfathomable vastness, temporality, and irrationality as the three main traits of interwar vitalism—the study, questioning, and interpretation of life in its various forms—which simultaneously distressed and inspired Spain's avant-garde intellectuals. This chapter also highlights José Ortega y Gasset's challenges to Oswald Spengler's fatalistic conclusions in *The Decline of the West*, a work that played a substantial role in the debate on decadence and crisis in modern Western culture at large. In Ortega's thinking, it was not the crisis of war or moral chaos that could destroy a culture, but rather the failure to produce new ideas.

In Chapter 2 titled “Dominantes,” discussion turns to questions of aesthetics, specifically the characteristics of *vanguardia* literature and its authors. The chapter details the primary traits of the *Arte Nuevo*, which was predominant throughout the 1920s, including sincerity in expression, anti-mimetic attitudes, alternative interpretations of life, and a paradoxical yet essential synthesis of destruction and creation. After this exposition of characteristics, follows a discussion of the “nuevo tipo de humano” that necessarily emerged alongside *Arte Nuevo*. This *tipo* strove to express the essence of the modern world in its multiplicity, intensity, brevity, and obliquity through self-reflexive representation, presentness, and dynamic experimentalism in literature. References to authors and works associated with the Dadaist, Ultraist, and Surrealist movements permeate the chapter and bolster claims about the aesthetics of Spain’s avant-garde artists who heeded Ezra Pound’s iconic plea to “Make it new.”

Chapter 3, “Polaridades,” offers insight into the early interwar intellectuals’ struggle to find legitimate footing in their incomprehensible and unstable reality. To that end, Herrero Senés puts forth a series of contrasting forces at play in this reality that simultaneously complicated

and facilitated modern artistic expression. Among others, the author examines oppositional forces of *vital/antivital*, *autonomía/compromiso*, *razón/ilogismo*, and *ultracivilización/primitivismo*. Common among these dichotomies are two conditions: first, no one term of any pair was unequivocal or superior to the other, and second, each force existed in relation to, and because of, its opposite. The last polarity, *humorismo/seriedad*, investigates young avant-garde artists’ attraction to “alegría nihilista,” which is evidenced, in part, by their use of laughter and wit to stifle widespread feelings of melancholia and uncertainty. Unburdened by the imperatives of truth or responsibility, these writers audaciously pushed the boundaries of art, thriving in their resistance to the typical anxieties that come with the type of senselessness that pervaded their reality.

Chapter 4, “Cambios,” defines the historical circumstances of 1930s Spain that ushered in important changes in sensibility toward the dehumanized *Arte Nuevo* of the twenties, and examines some of the many attacks that avant-gardist art and artists suffered as a result. Among the key factors for this collective turn against *Arte Nuevo* were the growing disillusion with apolitical and unintelligible art forms, the decline of Primo de Rivera’s dicta-

torship, a more engaged mass public, and deepening disenchantment of modernization. *Arte Nuevo* faced on-going allegations of destructiveness, falsity, and even nihilism, while critics pressured its creators to feel the anguish of their time, to emulate political posture, and to sympathize with the public. Herrero Senés demonstrates how newly emerging demands for the rehumanization of art transformed the enthusiasm for the once celebrated hermeneutic, personal, and automatic elements of avant-garde aesthetics into pointed disdain for these same qualities.

The fifth and final chapter, “Desafíos” examines the most pressing sociopolitical issues of the early years of the Second Republic, and the ideological challenges avant-garde literature faced throughout the thirties. The shifts in Spain’s sociopolitical culture (examined in Chapter 3) reflect the demeanor of those young intellectuals then eager to distance themselves from outmoded traditional liberalism, and to discover a new, concrete set of ideals to believe in. For these authors – who, rather than apolitical artists, came to represent the national spirit and revolutionary fervor of the people –fascism and bolshevism emerged as viable alternatives to the crisis of European nihilism and decadence. Herrero Senés

ends with a short conclusion that provides a clear summary of the book and leaves the reader with the ambivalent, yet somehow satisfying suggestion that writers of the *vanguardia* tell us as much of their successes as of their failures.

Following the main contents of the book is an extensive bibliography divided in two parts: “Fuentes” and “Bibliografía secundaria.” While this organization speaks to the exceptional quality of Herrero Senés’s research, the inclusion of a more user-friendly bibliography would have made a more streamlined referencing process between text and source for the reader. The lack of a comprehensive index of terms and names is one of the book’s major weakness, especially considering the numerous references to critics, periodicals, works, and so forth used throughout. Aside from the index question and occasional typographical errors, this book is sleek and organized, complete with attractive cover graphics.

While *Mensajeros de un tiempo nuevo* never claims to be a study in avant-garde literature in the practical or traditional sense, the near absence of textual analysis and close readings of poems, novels, or other primary texts from the period, renders this book inappropriate for a novice. All in all, how-

ever, this is an invaluable resource for any scholar in the field of Peninsular modernist studies, and provides significant insight and unique primary source criticism of the multivalent Spanish avant-garde. Herrero Senés's bold engagement with European and global modernism(s) is one of the book's greatest strengths as it situates the

authors and critics he features not only in the Spanish context, but alongside and at the same level of international figures and literary currents. This work insists on Spain's inclusion in conversations on cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and global modernities from which it has too often been excluded.