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Review Of "Cobro Revertido" By J. L. Urbina

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Recommended Citation

John J. Hassett. (1994). "Review Of "Cobro Revertido" By J. L. Urbina". *Chasqui*. Volume 23, Issue 1. 124-125. DOI: 10.2307/29741084

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confidence as it encloses its reader within a highly ambiguous world where time and space of the living are continually usurped by the spirits of the dead. While family politics constitute the foreground of this text, we cannot help but perceive between the lines a commentary on the madness of political ideologies in general and their impact on the individuals that they attract. The novel leaves us with the sense that the del Pino family and, by extension, Cuba's family, will never be reunited nor whole again, if indeed, they ever were. But one thing is for certain: Pilar, its youngest member and hope for the future, recognizes now where she belongs and, unlike her elders, is no longer torn between her present and dreams of the past.

John J. Hassett
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José Leandro Urbina. *Cobro revertido*. Santiago, Chile: Editorial Planeta, 1992. 200p.

In his first book, a collection of short stories entitled *Las malas juntas*, published in Canada in 1978, Urbina depicted the repression and violence endured by his fellow Chileans following the military coup of September 1973. What stood out in these stories was the author's total mastery of narrative technique, his success in treating a highly politicized subject without succumbing to propaganda and his ability to paint an unforgettable picture of what State terror does to people on both sides of the political fence. Almost fifteen years went by between publications but the reader of his new novel, *Cobro revertido*, will find that the long wait was certainly worth it.

Montreal, a city well-known to thousands of Chilean exiles, is the setting of Urbina's novel in which the life of one of these exiles known only as "The Sociologist" is suddenly interrupted by a phone call from Santiago informing him of his mother's death. The year is 1979, a period in which the military's reign of terror is at its peak. The twenty-four hours following the phone call constitute the novel's present

in which Urbina offers us a moving and often satirical account of life in exile that culminates in a grotesque act of violence during the city's Caribbean Festival.

Far from the country of his birth, his mother's unexpected death unleashes in the unnamed protagonist a chain reaction of memories that have been placed on the cognitive backburner for the previous five years of his life. The deceased becomes his direct link with Chile once again, the bridge to all memory. To a great extent, the dead mother is Chile, that physical space which has left an indelible and contradictory imprint on the psyche of her sons and daughters. She is the nurturing, maternal figure that saves her son from drowning as a young child and the domineering, repressive presence that strangles his every attempt at personal independence. She is the Chile that can be both charming and alluring as well as the Chile that denounces her neighbors to the military gestapo. She is the mother whose fury, when aroused, punishes her children severely for any perceived transgressions against the established order, casting them from her bosom to the unknown.

And it is into the unknown that the novel's protagonist has been hurled. In the twenty-four hours that constitute his turbulent present and his recollection of a distant past, Urbina immerses us in the vacuous world of the political exile, a world of endless political discussions interrupted only by the consumption of an equally infinite number of bottles of wine. As the author takes us through the streets, bars and smoke-filled nightclubs of Montreal, we come to understand the existential paralysis of "The Sociologist" and his friends. Curiously, his doctoral thesis in sociology, of which he has not written a word, takes as its principal theme the integration and assimilation of exiled groups into a dominant culture. His inability to write reflects his inability to find his niche in a world that will never be his entirely, a world that he will always be looking at from the outside.

We follow this protagonist into the depths of a present that will link up with a no less tragic past. Structurally Urbina

creates a tension-filled counterpoint between the two temporal levels of his story. Through the use of two distinct narrators he underscores how events of the remote and immediate past are fundamental to our understanding of "the Sociologist's" tragic present. The novel's crisp and laconic prose takes us on a whirlwind journey into the dark regions of political exile, confirming our original suspicion that the protagonist will never return to Chile and that, given the nightmarish events at the end of the novel, his homeland, perhaps has come to him in all of its violent and irrational behavior.

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Leonor Calvera. *Mujeres y feminismo en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1990. 151p.

A fines del otoño del año 1990 Leonor Calvera dió punto final al libro que nos ocupa. Éste se terminó de imprimir en el mes de septiembre y ya estaba en venta para las Navidades. Es interesante notar que el *Grupo Editor Latinoamericano* haya incluido este libro en su colección Controversia.

En la introducción se anuncia el tema a desarrollar: la historia de UFA, o sea la Unión Feminista Argentina, que fue fundada a fines del '60. "Procurábamos encontrar explicaciones al cercenamiento que la sociedad hacía de nuestras ansias..." (Introducción).

Leonor Calvera conoce a fondo los problemas y dificultades sobrellevados, desde el momento que fue partícipe del grupo de fundadoras de la UFA. Esta asociación sería una especie de segunda ola feminista, porque como veremos más adelante reconoce como de gran importancia la obra de las mujeres del siglo XIX quienes marcaron definitivamente el comienzo de una nueva manera de pensar. Ya en 1850 la maestra argentina Juana Manso inculcaba la presencia indispensable de la mujer para la educación del pueblo. "Ella, junto con Juana Manuela Gorriti, insistieron en la necesidad de la educación obligatoria para la mujer.... En 1889 juró la primera

médica argentina Cecilia Grierson, y unos años después recibió el primer título de abogada María Angélica Barrera"...(18). Nueva manera de pensar tallada sobre el replanteo que se buscaba ya en diversos lugares del mundo, y finalmente vino su repercusión en la Argentina y, más adelante, la repercusión que el movimiento en la Argentina tendría en otros lugares.

Es innegable que la influencia más determinante en el movimiento feminista de la Argentina hay que buscarlo en el feminismo radical norteamericano.

El capítulo III es uno de los mejor logrados, ya que al ser tan detallada su información, permite al lector ampliar su conocimiento sobre el tema. Es además este capítulo, una especie de recapitulación del primer libro sobre el feminismo de Leonor Calvera—que le llevara cinco años de trabajo—titulado: *Género mujer*, que apareciera en 1982 publicado en Buenos Aires por la *Editorial Belgrano*.

En este libro, *Género mujer*, Calvera establece, crea, la denominación género mujer, en contraposición al género femenino, por lo que tiene de relación con su opuesto masculino. Esta "invención" tiene un error gramatical, que la autora reconoce, pero le sirve para proponer "...formas alternativas para que el género varón reconociera al yo femenino como sujeto, y juntos resucitaran en una humanidad mejor" (66).

Es importante notar la detallada relación de hechos, personas y lugares. Calvera, además, nos hace partícipes de todo ese conocimiento por su activa función como miembro de tal asociación feminista que aunque abogue por los derechos de la mujer como individuo no se circunscribe a un "ismo" en decadencia.

Es innegable que el feminismo debe aspirar a que haya un cambio en una sociedad en vías de destrucción moral. Algunos derechos proclamados en ciertos sectores como "de valor innegable en las luchas feministas", en realidad no lo son.

El derecho de ir a la guerra no es una conquista. "La mujer conseguirá su