



VÍCTOR ESCUDERO PRIETO, *Salir al mundo: la novela de formación en las trayectorias de la Modernidad hispanoamericana*. Madrid: Iberoamericana/Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert. 2022. 360 pp.

It is easy to see how Víctor Escudero Prieto has won the II Premio de Ensayo Hispánico Klaus D. Vervuert. His study on the development of Hispanic-American versions of the European *Bildungsroman* or *novela de formación* includes three sections of thorough and well-argued analysis. The first relates to the definition of the *Bildungsroman* and its articulation and importance in Europe. The second explores iterations of narrations of Modernity in Hispanic America with novels spanning the twentieth century such as *Don Segundo Sombra* (Ricardo Güiraldes [1926]), *Ifigenia* (Teresa de la Parra [1924]), *Hijos de ladrón* (Manuel Rojas [1951]), *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (Manuel Puig [1968]), and *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* (Reinaldo Arenas [1975]). The third presents examples of variations on the *Bildungsroman* and how these stylistic and thematic departures from the conventional *novela de formación* relate to their interaction with particular aspects of Hispanic American Modernity.

Early in the study, Escudero Prieto recognizes the problem of merely saying that novels such as *Ifigenia* are an example of a '*Bildungsroman* fracasado' (18). Instead, he looks for the implementation of aspects of the *Bildungsroman* in the Hispanic American novel, identifying the shared, as well as the divergent, characteristics in both genres, using the *Bildungsroman* as a point of inflection. He explains how the lack of finite thinking and the disappearance of the concept of *telos* that characterizes Modernity problematize the ability of the modern Hispanic American novel to fit neatly into the *Bildungsroman* paradigm of experiencing the strangeness of the world while simultaneously confronting one's own strangeness and thereby reaching a state of transcendence.

In Part 1, 'Del *Bildungsroman* a la novela de formación', Escudero Prieto describes many European examples of the conventional *Bildungsroman* such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–1796) and Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (1835) and how these typical *Bildungsromane* feature characters who complete a journey to adulthood marked by a prolonged negotiation with their social surroundings and their inner selves. The study then turns to an analysis of how *Ifigenia* and *Don Segundo Sombra* are symptoms of a cultural crisis and seriously question whether it is possible to reconstruct a collective

narrative through the development of the individual. Escudero Prieto refers to Doris Sommers' groundbreaking study *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990) to contrast her idea of mid nineteenth-century Hispanic-American novels such as the role played by José Mármol's *Amalia* (1851) and Jorge Isaacs' *María* (1864–1867) in providing a platform to articulate a positive and bourgeois national discourse with the idea that later novels such as *El juguete rabioso* (Roberto Arlt [1926]) wrestle with the crisis of Modernity and the need to renegotiate and rewrite the nation instead of invent it.

Part 2, 'Ejes, genealogías, tramas', identifies the social complexity of novels such as *Hijos de ladrón*, *Los ríos profundos* (José María Arguedas [1958]) and *La ciudad y los perros* (Mario Vargas Llosa [1963]) that differentiate the twentieth-century Hispanic-American situation from nineteenth-century foundational fictions and the European *Bildungsroman*. *La traición de Rita Hayworth* and *El palacio de las blanquísimas moquetas* are used to illustrate destabilized subjectivity and its contribution to the distinctive and elusive Hispanic American *novelas de formación*.

Chapter 7, 'Espacios de la novela de formación hispanoamericana' of Part 3 ('Variaciones hispanoamericanas de la novela de formación') offers illuminating maps of the trajectory of the European *Bildungsroman* as well as the capitals and residence of *novelas de formación* in Hispanic America. This last part of the book pinpoints the unique uses of space, especially the house and school as microcosms of society, as well as the concept of mythic temporality and the extent of the existence of allegories of the nation. This part reiterates well the premise of the book to problematize the transposition of the Hispanic-American novel to the European *Bildungsroman*.

In our era of waning respect and interest for comparative literature and literary criticism, *Salir al mundo: la novela de formación en las trayectorias de la Modernidad hispanoamericana* is a welcome feat of exhaustive literary analysis of the Hispanic-American novel in light of the influences of the *Bildungsroman* and the complexities of non-European Modernity.

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