



The Symbolist Movement by Anna Balakian

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its existence in the National Union Catalog), and at times he adds other notes that are pertinent.

There are two indexes: one of authors, the other of cryptograms and pseudonyms.

Religious writers would seem to be those most translated during this period. It would appear that almost any Spanish author of any importance from 16th and 17th centuries was published in France either in French or in Spanish.

It would have been extremely helpful had Cioranescu indicated the title of the original Spanish or the title of the Spanish work that inspired the French work or that the French author adapted from the Spanish. For example, items 2872-2876, pp. 408-9 are five items by Thomas Corneille. They are all comedies. We can only assume since they are listed under Corneille's name that they either deal in some way with Spain or that they are adapted from plays written by Spaniards.

Item 3222 is Lorenzo Franciosini, *La novissima grammatica delle tre lingue*. Venecia, 1669. One can only assume that this is included because the three languages probably are French, Spanish, and Italian. A brief annotation to this effect would have been helpful.

In view of the fact that Cioranescu sometimes provides the title of the original work when a French translation is involved, it may be assumed that the translation or the adaptation was sufficiently distant from the original as not to be readily recognizable or that the compiler felt under no compulsion to identify the Spanish original for each item where this might have been helpful.

Students of comparative literature and of French and Spanish literature for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should find numerous ways to put this volume to good use. The compiler deserves the thanks of all who have an interest in the spread of and popularity of Spanish literature and culture in France of this period.

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BORBA FILHO, HERMILO. *As Meninas do Sobrado*. Porto Alegre: Editora Globo, 1976. Pp. 127. \$3.75, paper.

———. *Os Ambulantes de Deus*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1976. Pp. 145. \$6.25, paper.

Hermilo Borba Filho, who died in 1976 (*Os Ambulantes* came out posthumously), belongs to that group of regionalist writers whose material is the Brazilian Northeast. Columnist, critic, university teacher, theater historian (*História do Teatro*, 1953), and theoretician (*Teoria do Teatro*, 1958), playwright (*A Donzela Joana*, 1966), his first *romance* came out in 1957: *Os Caminhos da Solidão*. It was followed by the novels *Sol das Almas* (1964), *Margem das Lem-*

branças (1966), *A Porteira do Mundo* (1967), *O Cavalo da Noite* (1968), *Deus no Pasto* (1970), and others.

As Meninas do Sobrado, a rather uneven collection, is the last part of a trilogy, begun with *O General Está Pintando* (1973) and *Sete Dias a Cavalos* (1975), containing *novelas*, as does *As Meninas*. Basically, Borba Filho's fictions can be classified as popular phantastic realism with a generous admixture of eroticism and a pronounced *denúncia social*. His largely lyrical use of language is at times irritatingly mannered. A superb story-teller, the author has a delightful sense of humor. The *novelas* deal mainly with the lives, beliefs, sufferings, and joys of the so-called "little people," whom Borba Filho loves dearly and understands well in their superstitions, weaknesses, routines, small and great tragedies.

Os Ambulantes is a novel, and a fascinating one at that, though the abundance of symbols and allusions to mythology tends to overwhelm the reader. Charonic Cipoal will not carry fewer than five people on his *jangada*. One after the other they come aboard: the prostitute Dulce-Mil-Homens, the *poeta folheteiro* Cachimbinho-de-Coco, the beggar Nô-dos-Cegos who never takes off his sunglasses, Amigo-Urso, a famous *bicheiro*, and Recombelo, the truck-driver. And off they are on their Styx under the guidance of Cipoal who warns them that perhaps "certas coisas aconteçam na viagem" and "saindo amanhã bem cedinho tal vez chegue ontem." The voyage takes five years, each one constituting a sort of station in the participants' lives: a *nuvem* overshadows the first year, a *calda* characterizes the second, a *chuva* the third, a *cheia* and *o sol* (which stops setting towards the end, crossing the sky both ways) the fourth and fifth years, respectively. Countless astounding things happen, but it would be unfair to reveal more details. Remarkable is the political daring of a playlet (pp. 105-121) inserted in the fourth year-chapter. Or consider this statement: "No Chile, Pinochet; e aqui, a cheia" (p. 102) and this one: "QUEM É RICO MORRE INCHADO" (p. 122). All in all, two very entertaining books, *Os Ambulantes de Deus* being of more substance than *As Meninas do Sobrado* (of which one of the texts, "A Enchente," reappears in *Os Ambulantes*).

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BALAKIAN, ANNA. *The Symbolist Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 1977. Pp. viii + 220. \$12.00, cloth; \$5.95, paper.

Originally a volume published in 1967 at Random House, Balakian's revision of her earlier work is most welcome. Books in French on the Symbolist movement have appeared since; but nothing has, in English, matched the elegance and the tasteful wisdom of Professor Balakian's succinct history and appraisal of

that poetical and aesthetic revolution. The several meanings of the word "Symbolism" and the relations of French Symbolism with the earlier Romantic movement (in France and even more in Germany) are discussed in the first two chapters. Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé are, as is natural, treated in the central chapters. Rimbaud appears relatively less essential to the Symbolist movement as the author envisages it—while Verlaine, who has lately been rehabilitated by critical opinion, is magnified. The minor symbolists are more cursorily treated. They should, some day—Laforgue in particular—be reappraised independently from Mallarmé—who, after so many exegeses, might for ten or even twenty years perhaps, be left "tel qu'en lui-même," immune from theses and over-subtle academic interpretations.

Balakian devotes an excellent chapter to the Symbolist theater, which has often been misunderstood and maligned. It should, the author remarks, be seen as a form of poetry, and not judged according to the traditional criteria espoused by critics—so inclined, as they are, to blame that theater for lacking action, dramatic conflicts, and for avoiding "le réel, parce que vil."

Balakian is, by vocation and through her familiarity with several European languages and literatures, a comparatist. Not being French by birth, she is able, more elegantly than others might be, to eschew all nationalist bias that occasionally have been "le péché mignon" of French comparative scholars. In fact, she tends to emphasize somewhat the fascination with, or influence of, Swedenborg on the French predecessors of Symbolism. And one may voice a little surprise, or respectful dissent, when she views García Lorca and St. John Perse as Symbolists or inheritors of Symbolism (pp. 184, 191). It may be also a trifle questionable whether T. S. Eliot can indeed be called a "Symbolist critic" (p. 179). Wisely, Professor Balakian sees in French Symbolism a catalyst which enabled poets of Britain, Germany, Hispanic lands and the most original of all, those of Russia, to discover and assert their own inspirations.

This is a clearly written book, free from pedantry, devoid of jargon and all pretentiousness. There are many felicitous formulas to be found in the lucid prose, and very few flaws. One may balk at reading that Balzac's *Recherche de l'Absolu* is his version of the *Divine Comedy* (p. 17), and quibble over the statement that Baudelaire seldom uses the word "esprit" in its spiritual sense (p. 36). "Je veux illuminer les choses avec mon esprit," proclaims the poet's creator in Section IV of the 1859 *Salon*! There are only minor errors in the printing, such as Cazalis and Mme Moreno both misspelt on p. 121 and p. 127—or Sir Maurice Bowra being called simply "Sir Bowra" (p. 73). New York University Press has done an artistic job with a sensitive as well as learned book.

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LAWSON, CAROLINA DONADIO. *Dieci uomini e donne illustri: Profiles of Famous Men and Women for Beginning Students*. Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1976. Pp. 100. \$2.81, paper.

Once beginning language students have acquired a certain proficiency they often find that the stories presented in their grammar texts are too easy and boring. A supplementary reader is an excellent way of keeping their interest, and of presenting new vocabulary and grammatical structures. The goal of a supplementary reader then is twofold: it must be instructive and interesting. Carolina Donadio Lawson fulfills this double purpose in her reader for beginning Italian students and also adds another one, readily seen in the book's title. Fulfilling this third purpose results in greater appreciation of some of Italy's historical personalities whose names do not usually appear in beginners' texts. Thus the author excludes from her book such renowned figures as Dante, Columbus, and others. Instead she chooses from diverse and divergent fields spanning seven centuries and focuses on, among others, Marco Polo, Garibaldi, and Pope John XXIII. She also turns her attention to three Italo-Americans: Francesca Saverio Cabrini, Toscanini, and Enrico Fermi. Each of the ten biographical profiles is divided into small sections which allow students to become familiar with the vocabulary and the content of the chapters more slowly but more thoroughly. Indeed, questions following each section are geared toward such an end. Unfortunately, most belie the title of "Conversazione" under which they are found because they concentrate only on the content of one single section. Thus it is easy for the students to merely quote from the book in answering them. As a result a teacher could not test for reading comprehension by using only these questions. Much more effective are the four "Ripetizioni" which consist of vocabulary and content exercises.

The vocabulary of this textbook is a pleasant surprise: not too difficult for beginners in Italian to understand and yet not just another repetition of the basic vocabulary of a grammar text. In Ginevra de' Benci's profile, for example, the author uses numerous adjectives in describing La Bencina's portrait. None of these must be used specifically for paintings, and thus students can incorporate them into a working vocabulary. Each section of each profile has a glossary where words are arranged alphabetically but not divided into grammatical categories. Italics indicate stress in words not accented on the penultimate syllable. Two other techniques facilitate the students' comprehension: verbs are presented in their conjugated form, just as they appear in the text, as well as in the infinitive. In addition, each noun is preceded by the definite article indicating gender. A complete vocabulary is found at the end of the reader.

The text has one serious drawback which may make it difficult for a beginner in Italian and more appropriate for an intermediate student; that is, the passato