



Book reviews

Ros Haynes , Christopher Routledge , Bill Overton , Robin Dix , Martin A. Kayman , Kirstie McAlpine , Marisol Morales Ladrón , Jennifer Richards , Geoffrey Davis , Tamsin Spargo , Tim Youngs , David Punter , David Pierce & Catherine Sandbach-Dahlstrom

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García Márquez. Edited by Robin Fiddian. *Modern Literatures in Perspective*. General editor Seán Hand. London and New York: Longman, 1995. x + 244 pp. £45 (hb). ISBN 0 582 21405 X (hb).

García Márquez is an anthology of fourteen previously published critical essays on the work of the renowned Latin American writer, divided into two parts of unequal length ('Contemporary Documents' and 'Critical Readings') and prefaced by an extensive introduction by Robin Fiddian in which he analyses the historical, cultural, and political background of Márquez's literary career. In Fiddian's eyes, Colombia — with its richness of regional traditions — is an important frame of reference, and as such he attempts to place Márquez's literary activity and his use of magical realism within the mainstream of the Latin American fiction of the boom and the 'post-boom' decades. The introduction is followed by a useful chronology of Márquez's life and works.

The first section of the anthology consists of two excerpts from early reviews of Márquez's works. The first, by Hernando Téllez, is a pioneering evaluation of *Leaf Storm*, his first novel; while the second, by Tomás Eloy Martínez, is a celebration of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* which maintains that this novel marks the beginning of an important new direction in Latin American fiction, and evaluates the impact of Márquez's work in relation to that of his contemporaries.

The core of the collection is formed by the twelve essays that constitute the second section of the volume. The discussions range from questions on realism and violence in Márquez's production to the both mythical and demythologized readings of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* undertaken by Angel Rama and Gerald Martin. One of the most significant is Mario Vargas Llosa's contribution on the tradition of medieval chivalric romance, a seminal study which highlights the significance of Márquez's successful combination of the everyday and the marvellous in his depiction of Latin America. Theoretically oriented approaches based on deconstruction, semiotics, hermeneutics, structuralism and Bakhtin's theory of the carnival also find a place in this volume. Postcolonialism and feminism on the other hand have a minor role, and marxist theories together with questions on narrative techniques are absent. Julio Ortega's adoption of a deconstructive method based on semiotics succeeds in drawing attention to the existence of a dialogue between Márquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and its different cultural, political, and mythological codes. This work is also

analysed, less thoroughly, by Michael Palencia-Roth applying modern hermeneutic theory to draw attention to the importance of the themes of colonialism and decolonisation. Mark Millington's interpretation of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in terms of male dominance and female marginality together with his structuralist analysis of *Innocent Eréndira* grounded on Bakhtin's theory of carnival form a superb combination of thematic and theoretical criticism. General studies on the history of Latin America, the Caribbean and the Afro-American literary traditions undertaken by Christopher Little and Vera M. Kutzinski close this collective work on Márquez's literary production. While some of these contributions highlight the confrontation between theory, politics and literature throughout Latin America, the pitfalls in the various theories involved show an uneven critical consideration of Márquez's literary canon. Although these texts do not represent the latest critical debates of the writer's whole production, most of them have become authoritative and classics.

The surprising number of different approaches amongst the fourteen articles does much to highlight the theoretical and cultural diversity within Márquez's writing. The editor's well-documented introduction addresses cultural and historical issues both with regard to Colombian and Latin American literature as a whole, but perhaps the most important achievement of the volume is its thoroughness: each essay is prefaced by a substantial abstract designed to place the articles within a wider context, and the volume concludes with a glossary of terms and cultural references, a select bibliography of criticism in English, and a full index. *García Márquez* is thus a volume that both complements and challenges established critical interpretations of Márquez's work and is an important addition to Márquez's scholarship.

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Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought. By Ann Moss. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. xiv + 345 pp. £45.00 (hb). ISBN 0 19 815908 0 (hb).

What is a commonplace-book, and who might want to use it? Ann Moss provides a simple answer to these questions in her introduction to *Printed Commonplace-Books* which she then expands in the course of her study.