

Reviews

Antonio Ballesteros, *Narciso y el doble en la literatura fantástica victoriana*. Colección Monografías. Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1998.

This work may be situated within the renewed interest in 19th century British literature, particularly in the fantastic fiction produced during that period, shown lately by contemporary literary scholars. Nineteenth century British literature, and fiction most particularly, has been reread and revaluated in the last few decades from a plurality of critical perspectives, which has encouraged its study even further among the different specialists in the field. This book by Antonio Ballesteros may be read as one of these recent critical contributions to the rediscovery of nineteenth century fantastic fiction. The author studies the prevalence of the myth of Narcissus in Victorian literature, especially in fiction, arguing that it is precisely in fiction where the themes of narcissism and duality have been more widely explored. He also vindicates fiction as the most revolutionary and representative genre in a consideration of fantastic literature.

The starting point for this exhaustive study is the consideration of duality (alter ego) as an extension of narcissism. The work is structured into two clearly separated parts. In the first one, the author analyses in a detailed manner the origins and sources of the myth of Narcissus since the Classic Age, with special emphasis drawn to its relevance in English literature from its origins to the second half of the nineteenth century. The second part of the work concentrates in the study of a selection of Victorian literary works, where the author detects the presence of the myth of Narcissus and the theme of duality. He justifies the inclusion in his study of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* here as the epitome of the gothic novel and starting point for the modern science fiction novel. He also underlines the relevance of this novel in later literature, particularly in the area of fantastic literature.

The work starts by making a number of necessary considerations as to the nature of myth, argument and motif, from which the author moves on to the myth and argument of Narcissus and its projection into the motif of duality (alter ego). He departs from Ruiz de Elvira's (1984) definition of myth. Ruiz de Elvira distinguishes a trilogy of essential elements in the concept of myth: uncertainty or improbability, pretension of veracity and tradition. Ballesteros explores the presence of duality (the alter ego motif) in the literature after the Enlightenment and its relation to the upsurge of fantastic literature. He considers not only the literary but also the ideological and socio-historical causes for this sudden flourishing. This is the prologue to his consideration of the presence of the myth of Narcissus in English literature. Ballesteros argues that Narcissus as such is rarely present in English literature, but that instead the motif of the alter ego, of duality, appears, which he relates to the development and success of nineteenth century fantastic literature. In this connection, he vindicates fantastic literature as "the alter ego" of the realist canon, arguing that nineteenth century fantastic literature in

many ways complements and subverts the canon. Ballesteros identifies one of the essential motifs of fantastic literature precisely as that of duality, of the alter ego. Fantastic literature is seen to reflect the ideological preoccupation for the complex dual nature of the human being, which comes to the fore with the industrial revolution. Literature is understood as the artistic double of reality, and Victorian reality as context of duality itself, where London is used as illustrative example –the author makes a point here of the impact of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. The next step in the construction of the central thesis of this critical work is a comparison between (i) the relation between fantastic literature and duality and (ii) the relation between the first (I) and second (you) persons. Fantastic literature is seen as exploring the relations between I and you, I and what is not I: the other. The author outlines a process from being seen as independent and different beings (where you, or not-I, is external to I) to being seen as inseparable, as part of the same being. He argues that we may trace this evolution in the texts chosen as sample.

From this moment, the literary sources of the myth of Narcissus and its presence in English literature are deeply considered, the book concentrating wisely on those sources of relevance for the study which is going to be carried out later on. Two classic sources are studied in detail: Ovid's and Pausanias's, though it is recognized that Ovid's is without doubt the most influential source. Ovid's version is analysed in detail, offering the reader also different readings of it. The author also reviews other Classic and Medieval sources which he considers of relevance, basing his study particularly on the works of Louise Vige (1967) and Yolanda Ruiz Esteban (1989). It is interesting to point out here that he includes later an extensive bibliography with a list of significant sources as well as a classification of critical works which study these sources. Finally, the author pauses for a consideration of Pausanias's version of the myth, to show how he sometimes adopts an ironical positioning towards Ovid's version. Pausanias holds what the author describes as a rationalist position according to which Narcissus has a twin sister with whom he falls wildly in love. At his sister's death, his self-image reflected in the water appears as substitute for the lost sister. Duality here is placed around incest. The author then explores other variations on this theme, offering the reader a very extensive panoramic vision of the Narcissus myth and its main variations. From here, Ballesteros explores the ways in which the myth of Narcissus has been dealt with in English literature prior to the nineteenth century. He argues that, before the nineteenth century, the myth of Narcissus is always understood as one of Classical Antiquity and particularly Ovid's legacy, and as such he is referred to in an explicit and direct manner. However, from the nineteenth century on, this source undergoes new mythical and thematic variations and additions which make the referential universe more and more complex. Thus, for example, the romantic poet believes the illusion that he is himself Narcissus, which ultimately concludes in a pretended subjectivity. In a way, the character of Narcissus is slowly and progressively freed from the Ovidian frame, at the same time as it loses its traditional moralizing interpretations. An exhaustive survey of the presence of Narcissus in English literature prior to the nineteenth century follows, covering from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment and Romanticism.

With all these preliminaries in mind, the second part of this work concentrates around the study of the theme of duality, as extension of the myth of Narcissus, in a selection of works considered by the author to be representative of Victorian literature. The motif of duality (alter ego) is affirmed over other motifs in the literary argument of Narcissus. The author explores the theme of duality in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*; Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*; R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; Abraham Stoker's *Dracula*; H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* and James Barrie's *Peter Pan*. The final conclusion is that British literature of the second half of the nineteenth century is the prelude to psychoanalysis in so far as psychoanalysis is going to systematize the human preoccupation for "its other" (the duality analysed in the works selected) in what will become the subconscious. Finally, the reader will find an exhaustive bibliographical section organized in parts according to the different texts under consideration and offering a plurality of readings on these same texts.

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Rodríguez Álvarez, Alicia. *Documentos notariales vernáculos del condado de Durham (siglo XV): Estudio y edición*. Córdoba: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba y Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1997, 253 pp.

It is only within the last decades that there is a renewed interest in performing translations and studies of mediaeval English texts, others than literary. This interest could be a response to a great concern for the generally neglected study of the history of English from other non-literary perspectives that may account for specific phenomena not yet discussed in detail by specialists. In this context, the work *Documentos notariales vernáculos del condado de Durham (siglo XV): Estudio y edición* (henceforth *Documentos notariales*) emerges bringing new information about late mediaeval English legal text language and structure.

Rodríguez's *Documentos notariales* is divided into four main parts covering a great deal of what has been said about mediaeval English legal language and texts: *Los documentos*, *Los escribanos*, *Los textos*, and *Edición*. The book also comprises an *Introducción*, *Glosario de términos y expresiones legales*, *Glosario de medidas de superficie, tipos de terrenos y divisiones administrativas*, *Índice de nombres propios*, *Índice de topónimos*, *Mapa del condado de Durham*, *Índice de comienzos de oraciones*, *Bibliografía* and *Figuras*.

In part one *Los documentos*, Rodríguez Álvarez describes not only the physical side of the documents, but also their contents, what serves as main division to her material. The total amounts to the impressive number of 57, some of them not found in the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (1986) and whose data are included in this book for the first time. In this part, the reader is also given some information concerning