MEXICO’S RUINS
Juan García Ponce and the Writing of Modernity
Raúl Rodríguez-Hernández

Explores the trope of modernity in García Ponce’s writings.

At face value, the concept of modernity seems to reference a stream of social and historical traffic headed down a utopian one-way street named “progress.” Mexico’s Ruins examines modernity in twentieth-century Mexican culture as a much more ambiguous concept, arguing that such a single-minded notion is inadequate to comprehend the complexity of modern Mexico’s national projects and their reception by the nation’s citizenry. Instead, through the trope of modernity as ruin, author Raúl Rodríguez-Hernández explores the dilemma presented by the etymology of “ruins”: a simultaneous falling down and rising up, a confluence of opposing forces at work on the skyline of the metropolis since 1968. He focuses on artists and writers of the generación de medio siglo, like Juan García Ponce, and envisions both the tales of modernity and their storytellers in a new light. The arts, literature, and architecture of twentieth-century Mexico are all examined in this cross-cultural and interdisciplinary book.

“Rodríguez-Hernández accomplishes what he describes in García Ponce’s fiction: he opens readers to new connections, moving them beyond a Manichaean choice of modernity versus ruin, toward a flexible reading of the mobility and inter-referential nature of both. Rodríguez-Hernández teaches his readers the pleasure and necessity of reading ruins, whether archeological, cultural, political, or literary. The debris of the past is ever-present.” — Carol Clark D’Lugo, The Fragmented Novel in Mexico: The Politics of Form

Raúl Rodríguez-Hernández is Assistant Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at the University of Rochester.

A volume in the SUNY series in Latin American and Iberian Thought and Culture
Jorge J. E. Gracia and Rosemary Geisdorfer Feal, editors

NOVEMBER I 240 pp
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THE OTHER DAUGHTERS OF THE REVOLUTION
The Narrative of K. White (1809) and the Memoirs of Elizabeth Fisher (1810)
Edited and with an Introduction by Sharon Halevi

Presents two of the earliest autobiographies of American women.

Early in the nineteenth century, New York residents K. White and Elizabeth Fisher wrote and published two of the earliest autobiographies written by American women. Their lives ran along parallel courses: both were daughters of Loyalists who chose to remain in the United States; both found themselves entangled in unhappy marriages, abandoned for extend periods, and forced to take on the role of sole provider; and both became involved in property disputes with their male kin, which eventually landed them in prison, where they wrote their narratives. White’s tale is a highly crafted text, almost an embryonic novel, incorporating several subgenres and interweaving poetry and prose. Fisher’s story, while less sophisticated in terms of rhetoric and style, is nevertheless a compelling account of a woman’s life and struggles during the Revolution and the early years of the republic.

Their narratives, read together, highlight many literary and historical issues. They present an unruly, disobedient, and assertive female subject and illuminate popular attitudes regarding women and marriage. By articulating a consistent and growing unease concerning the institution of marriage and the unlimited power husbands had over their wives, these narratives lay the groundwork for a political critique of marriage and the status of women within it.

“I find this a powerfully engaging and beautifully executed book. Sharon Halevi’s introduction offers a provocative thesis that it was pamphlet memoirs such as these, rather than fiction, that offered the first feminist critiques of domestic ideology in the early republic by giving voice to unruly female subjects.” — Phyllis Cole, author of Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism: A Family History

“Taken together, these texts contribute to the contemporary reframing of an earlier feminist paradigm of separate spheres and propose one way to approach thorny issues of arguing from texts to lived experience.” — Sidonie Smith, coauthor of Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives

Sharon Halevi is Lecturer in the Department of Multi-Disciplinary Studies at the University of Haifa.

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Altered States examines the rise of Spiritualism—the religion of séances, mediums, and ghostly encounters—in the Victorian period and the role it played in undermining both traditional female roles and the rhetoric of imperialism. Focusing on a particular kind of séance event—the full-form materialization—and the bodies of the young, female mediums who performed it, Marlene Tromp argues that in the altered state of the séance new ways of understanding identity and relationships became possible. This not only demonstrably shaped the thinking of the Spiritualists, but also the popular consciousness of the period. In diaries, letters, newspaper accounts, scientific reports, and popular fiction, Tromp uncovers evidence that the radical views presented in the faith permeated and influenced mainstream Victorian thought.

“Tromp makes a good case for the wide-ranging import of Victorian Spiritualism; as she sees Spiritualism, it provides a fulcrum for fraught Victorian ideologies of sexuality, imperialism, intoxicants, and gender roles. Like our own ghosts, those of the Victorians nestle at the heart of their culture’s phobias and hopes, and Tromp’s enlightening study unveils their devious power.” — Nina Auerbach, author of Daphne du Maurier, Haunted Heiress

“Tromp asks why Spiritualism mattered and what effects it produced, and she answers these questions on the basis of primary research and careful attention to the Victorian cultural web. She showcases what in so many places are very exciting, very well articulated, and very new ideas with significant bearing on Victorian cultural studies as a whole.” — Martha Stoddard Holmes, author of Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture

Marlene Tromp is Associate Professor of English at Denison University. She is the coeditor (with Pamela K. Gilbert and Aeron Haynie) of Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context, also published by SUNY Press, and the author of The Private Rod: Marital Violence, Sensation, and the Law in Victorian Britain.

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Jong S. Jun is Professor Emeritus of Public Administration at California State University at East Bay. He has published many books, including Rethinking Administrative Theory: The Challenge of the New Century.

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