

LORI COLE, *Surveying the Avant-Garde: Questions on Modernism, Art, and the Americas in Transatlantic Magazines*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press. 2018. xiv + 240 pp.

This innovative study begins by challenging us to reconsider the ways in which *avant-garde* and Modernist ideas were discussed, debated and shaped in answers to questionnaires published in cultural magazines. The very first sentence of the study focuses on an example of survey fatigue dating from 1928 and also contains a criticism of an obsession with metrics that feels immediately relevant and familiar. This way into the topic through a specific example is replicated across the five chapters, which all open with material from a questionnaire that becomes the subject of the chapter. Following on from the initial anecdote, the Introduction explains that the questionnaire is a genre in its own right and sets out the intention to ‘analyze the genre and the ways in which it was used to define the relationship between art and national identity within the triangulation of the United States, Latin America, and Europe in the early twentieth century’ (4–5). Each chapter deftly brings together these different strands and the book very successfully shows that the terms *avant-garde* and Modernism were concepts that contributors to all the magazines studied in this book were attempting to define. Cole explains that questionnaires can and should be used more often to help us more fully understand the complexities of Modernism precisely because they contain a polyphony of voices, whereas the manifesto, which is what we often look to for a definition, tends towards a more singular vision. She reminds us that the questionnaire involves reflection whereas the manifesto is about stating aims yet to be fulfilled, which perhaps makes the questionnaire more useful as a document through which we might seek to understand how people defined their work and reacted to the cultural *Zeitgeist*. The Introduction draws to a close with a note on the focus of book, which is English- and Spanish-language questionnaires linked to the Americas. What comes to the fore in the Introduction, and indeed throughout the book itself, is the wealth and richness of the material that Cole draws upon.

The first chapter is very clearly about engaging with the terms used throughout the study. It explores the genre of the questionnaire and sets out a rigorous genealogy that would provide an excellent basis for anyone wishing to focus on the trajectory of the development of the genre. Cole also recognizes here that her focus foregrounds ‘the role of the periodical in the development of modernism’ (18). In addition to this, there is a clear overview of the difficulties inherent in treating Latin America as a homogenous entity in relation to the development of Modernism, yet Cole also acknowledges the ways in which some of the questions she studies are framed to do just that and she recognizes the tension this brings to her work.

The *Revista de Avance* is the focus of Chapter 2, which opens with a few questions from the magazine that aimed to assert the unique nature of American art; however, Cole notes that these very questions put ‘pressure on the designation *arte americano* in ways that were characteristic of the period, as magazines across the Americas sought to displace European dominance by developing, defining, and defending an idea of “American Art” ’ (47). The chapter gives an excellent overview of the political and artistic climate in Cuba, showing that such questions have a long history and are not limited to the pages of Modernist magazines. This is followed by detailed analysis of the foundation of the *Revista de Avance*, and Cole is particularly careful to fold in information and examples from other magazines she studies in the rest of the book. The chapter returns to the responses to the questions posed at the beginning and provides analysis of answers given to these across twelve issues of the magazine. It closes by considering the legacy of the *Revista de Avance* and the contribution it made to the perception of Latin-American art in other magazines.

Chapter 3 looks at *Imán* and *transition*, both of which were published in Paris and ‘hoped that their work would advance greater transatlantic understanding, even as they unmasked

tensions between Europe and the Americas through their questionnaires' (75). Cole explores the conditions that allowed both Latin Americans and North Americans to look to France as a model for their creative expression but notes that this was not wholly uncritical. She gives a very clear sense of the scope of content of both magazines, with a focus on two complimentary questionnaires that appeared in them. The chapter inevitably contains more information on *transition*, which was published for over a decade, in comparison to the one issue of *Imán*, none the less the comparison of the two is well balanced and illuminating.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to an exploration of the role of the *avant-garde* in the national cultural canon, with a focus on Spain and Argentina. The chapter explores the *ultraísta* movement in both countries and begins with some questions asked in *La Gaceta Literaria* in 1930. Cole acknowledges that *ultraísmo* developed differently in both countries and she focuses on its international influences, which serves to create a sense of cohesion between the differing forms of the movement. Cole studies all the major Argentine magazines associated with the movement, with sections on *Prisma*, *Proa*, *Nosotros*, *Inicial* and *Martín Fierro*. The analysis of the questionnaire published in *Martín Fierro* is a reminder of the role that questionnaires played in shaping the contents of the magazines and thinking about modernity in general. Cole then discusses the tensions between Spain and Latin America through the debate around Guillermo de Torre's statement that the cultural meridian ran through Madrid that unfolded in *La Gaceta Literaria* and *Martín Fierro*.

The final chapter turns to the contemporary and the idea of unrest through a questionnaire from *Cahiers de l'Etoile*. It also opens up a more international dimension to the questions posed because of the participation of respondents from Asia, Eastern Europe, North America and Latin America, yet Cole notes the constant return to the national context in their answers. This chapter addresses questions of the transatlantic and charts the evolution of the questionnaire right up to the present day. The short conclusion reflects upon the persistence and efficacy of the questionnaire, even noting that it has successfully made the transition from print to digital formats.

Overall, this book offers a wide-ranging and engaging discussion of the ways in which literature, art and the Americas were discussed in some of the most important transatlantic magazines of the Modernist period. Cole moves seamlessly between the wider socio-cultural context and specific examples in order to provide an impressive analysis of responses to questions drawn from different magazines. The study covers a lot of ground but also broadly retains its focus on the questionnaire in a coherent and engaging way. Perhaps the one area that might be developed further is the analysis of the responses to the questions themselves, which sometimes seem to be dealt with a little too briefly, but I recognize that this is because of the breadth of material covered. This book should appeal to a range of different audiences. The succinct contextualization of each magazine means that different sections can provide students with the necessary introduction to the Modernist movement in different parts of Latin America. The extensive archival research and turn towards the questionnaire as a site for aesthetic debates in the Modernist period make this book a necessary read for anyone working on Modernism and the *Avant-Garde* in the Americas.

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LISA BLACKMORE, *Spectacular Modernity: Dictatorship, Space and Visuality in Venezuela 1948–1958*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 2017. xii + 268 pp.

Albuquerque travel writer Erna Fergusson arrived in Caracas in 1937, the first stop on her tour of Venezuela. She was not impressed. She described the centre of the city as 'noisy, busy, dirty and indifferent' (*Venezuela* [New York: Alfred Knopf, 1942], 66). Its streets were 'littered,