

Ferreira, César, and Jason R. Jolley. *Antonio Skármeta: Nuevas lecturas / New Readings*. Universidad Ricardo Palma, Editorial Universitaria, 2017. Pp. 206

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As various retrospective pieces and literary homages appear honoring Antonio Skármeta's life and work since his passing in October 2024 at age eighty-three, it is fitting to review a relatively recent critical work bearing the title *Antonio Skármeta: Nuevas Lecturas / New Readings*. Skármeta's long career as a writer, diplomat, and public intellectual undeniably impacted Chile's cultural life and the broader literary and creative circles extending far beyond his home country. This bilingual volume of ten critical essays edited by César Ferreira and Jason R. Jolley spans his early short stories, first published in 1967, through his novels and his role as a leading writer of the literary Post-Boom, to his children's literature. The essays offer fresh readings of Skármeta's works that account for his political and social contexts and the vast bibliography of his literary contributions to date. The introductory chapter, written by Ferreira and Jolley, provides a brief biography and framework for understanding the significance of his works against the backdrop of the Allende presidency in Chile (1970-1973), the military coup of 1973 and subsequent Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990), and through the post-dictatorship era.

Several chapters deal specifically with the theme of youth and coming-of-age in various texts by Skármeta. Ashley Kerr's chapter on *La chica del trombón* focuses on the significance of the female protagonist in mid-20th century Chile. Jorge Avilés-Diz assesses some of Skármeta's children's literature featuring the coming-of-age of its young protagonists. David Wood examines the themes of sports and games that figure prominently in many of Skármeta's early short stories, in which the young protagonists engage in sport as a means of exercising freedom and self-expression absent in other outlets. Germán D. Carrillo studies the novella *No pasó nada* as both an exile novel and a *bildungsroman*.

César Ferreira's and Jason Jolley's essays both situate Skármeta within his literary context. Jolley elaborates on the significance of *El cartero de Neruda / Ardiente paciencia* as a key turning point from the Boom to the Post-Boom novels. Ferreira analyzes the themes of orphanhood and paternity in Skármeta's literature and extends the metaphor to discuss Skármeta's literary parental figures, including the poets Pablo Neruda, Nicanor Parra, Vicente Huidobro, César Vallejo, Gabriela Mistral, as well as fiction writers Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Jorge Luis Borges.

Other chapters deal most directly with the theme of exile and the political contexts of Skármeta's writings. Cecily Raynor analyzes the novel *Soñé que la nieve ardía* as it depicts the political activism of young men in the days of the Popular Unity movement in Chile, emphasizing the urban locales of Santiago and slang of the working-class youth as sites of resistance. Allison Libbey-Titus examines the narrative structure of *Los días del arcoíris* and its use of dual protagonists in the context of the 1988 Chilean plebiscite that voted Pinochet out of power. Both Juan Colín and Esther Sánchez-Couto contribute chapters on *La insurrección*, Skármeta's novel about the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. Colín presents the novel as a vehicle for highlighting the collective guerrilla fighter through a multiplicity of narrative perspectives. Sánchez-Cuoto analyzes the main female character in the novel, Victoria Menor, drawing a parallel between the fight for liberation in Nicaragua as well as for women in society.

While this volume's authors focus on a variety of themes present in Skármeta's fiction over the course of his career, including sports, political exile, and gender, to some extent, they all recognize Skármeta's emphasis on the visceral experience of youthfulness and eagerness for life that is present throughout his works. This is a well-organized and smartly presented volume published by the Universidad Ricardo Palma. It is undoubtedly a worthy read for any scholar of Latin American literature and indeed a new required reading for specialists in contemporary Chilean literature. It is refreshing to see a radically bilingual volume, in the sense that some chapters are in English, and some are in Spanish, published with the logical assumption that its readers will be competent in both. Skármeta had a unique talent, emblematic of the Post-Boom, that charmed popular and academic readers alike. The authors in this volume show that he was a tireless defender of human rights and democracy throughout his entire literary career, and his fiction will live on as a testament to his enduring desire for justice and his exuberant enthusiasm for life.