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Book Review: Spanish Studies: An Introduction (review)

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Abstract

A partir de la lectura de la obra de Osvaldo Lamborhini, Adriana Astutti escribe *Andares clancos: Fabulas del menor* en Osvaldo Lamborhini, J.C. Onetti, Ruben Dario, J.L. Borges, Silvina Ocampo y Manuel Puig publicado en 2001 por la editorial Beatriz Viterbo Editora como parte de su coleccion de ensayos criticos. Reunidos estos autores por el hilo conductor de la fabulacion, o, quiza, por el creerse y crearse "orto" este es un libro interesante para el lector que se interese tanto en los escritores como en el tema.

Disciplines

Modern Literature | Other Arts and Humanities | Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures | Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature

Comments

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suasive. Like the object of investigation, the book is nothing if not richly textured.

Edward H. Friedman
Vanderbilt University

Andares clancos: Fábulas del menor en Osvaldo Lamborhini, J.C. Onetti, Rubén Darío, J.L. Borges, Silvino Ocampo y Manuel Puig
Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2001
Por Adriana Astutti

A partir de la lectura de la obra de Osvaldo Lamborhini, Adriana Astutti escribe *Andares clancos: Fábulas del menor en Osvaldo Lamborhini, J.C. Onetti, Rubén Darío, J.L. Borges, Silvino Ocampo y Manuel Puig* publicado en 2001 por la editorial Beatriz Viterbo Editora como parte de su colección de ensayos críticos. Reunidos estos autores por el hilo conductor de la fabulación, o, quizá, por el creerse y crearse “otro” éste es un libro interesante para el lector que se interese tanto en los escritores como en el tema.

Astutti, basándose en la teoría de Rancière, explica cómo surge la fábula a raíz de la muerte: “Basta que haya muerte, para que la explicación se ponga en movimiento” (13) y aplica esta teoría a la vida y obra de Osvaldo Lamborhini (1940-85). Éste era un escritor argentino no muy conocido en su país que murió a una edad muy joven fuera de su patria. Según Astutti los lectores, los críticos y algunos periodistas entendían que su fallecimiento les facilitó la fabulación de la vida, de la muerte y de las obras de Lamborhini. Aquí maneja la definición clásica de fábula—“una forma literaria breve perteneciente a un género demostrativo que pretende enseñar una verdad” (14)—y después señala cómo Lamborhini mismo empezó su propia fábula en las varias entrevistas hechas durante su vida. Tales fábulas y fabulación le dieron fama a este autor en el mundo literario después de su muerte y, hasta cierto punto, impulsaron la publicación posthúma de su obra entera.

Según la autora, los efectos de la muerte de Lamborhini dejan que el lector intuya que ni el autor ni su obra están al margen de la literatura,

que forman parte ya del centro productivo de ésta y en este caso del centro literario argentino. Entonces, hay que replantear el acercamiento a la obra lamborhiniana si forma ya parte del centro no vale clasificarla como marginal pero, a la vez, no llega a cobrar tanta importancia como para llamarla canónica. Por lo tanto Astutti crea su propia terminología, y de igual manera define el subtítulo de su libro “fábulas del menor” explicando el estado de Lamborhini de ser autor “menor.” Confirma que la literatura del menor, a diferencia de una literatura establecida, se caracteriza por condiciones revolucionarias y también por sus enunciados nuevos de valores inciertos (16). No obstante, aunque partió de la idea de centro-periferia, no relaciona la literatura del menor con un centro sino con una ruptura.

Una vez que Astutti establece las bases de la fabulación y de la literatura del menor, combina las dos ideas clasificándolas como ocasiones del “devenir escritor” (23). Éste crea, inventa, sueña, o, más bien, fábula fuera del centro con una voz revolucionaria. La autora subraya una vez más que reunió los autores escogidos por la temática del devenir escritor. Ve en cada uno de ellos, y siempre a partir de la lectura de Lamborhini, esa característica de suspender las ideas y normas establecidas y trabajar desde la ruptura con éstas y no desde un centro.

Astutti ha escrito un libro innovador en cuanto a sus comentarios, observaciones y aproximaciones a la obra de Lamborhini. Se lo recomiendo al lector interesado sobre todo en este autor o a aquel que busca o estudia la literatura del menor.

Jennifer Rathbun
The University of Arizona

Spanish Studies: An Introduction
Arnold, 2001
By Bill Richardson

Of the many books published each year on the ambitious topic of Spanish cultural studies, this one is clearly written, interesting and well-researched. The work is the culmination of the author’s numerous conversations with Spaniards in addition to solid sociological research into the

practical elements of daily Spanish life and the philosophical concepts of life and death, sex and marriage, and literary and artistic iconography. Richardson's style is clear, his explanations cogent and his choice of thematic material fascinating.

Each of the book's ten chapters begins with a broad sociological narrative about a human being's interaction with those around him or her which is then related to how Spaniards relate to one another and the rest of the world (especially Latin America and Europe). Chapters are then subdivided into more specific topics related to the overall general theme highlighted at the end by a brief "feature" which centers on a specific artistic work, person or a moment in Spain's history (examples include the year 1992, emigration and immigration, Columbus, flamenco dance and Picasso's Guernica). Richardson also includes a related excerpted "Reading" by well-known writers: Julián Marías, Amando de Miguel, Xavier Rubert de Ventós, José Antonio Marina, Miguel de Cervantes, Manuel Vicent, Miguel Delibes, Josefina R. Aldecoa, Rosa Montero, Camilo José Cela, respectively. Finally, each chapter ends with a short bibliography for further consultation. The book also contains a more complete general bibliography as well as the always-useful index of key concepts. The type face is clear and nearly free of typos; shades of grey help to delineate the sub-chapters.

The themes described in the book are diverse. Chapter One, "Hispanic v. European Identity: Where is Spain?," discusses historical links between Spain and Latin America and the Europeanization of Spain's culture especially as it is reflected in the writings of Ortega y Gasset. Chapter Two, "Spanishness: How Spanish are the Spaniards?" explores what Spanish people are like and the recent emergence of Spain as a "fully mature nation in all its modernity" (28-29). Chapter Three, "Place: Y tú, ¿de qué tierra eres?" focuses on the significance of the autonomous communities in Spain and characteristic locations that offer a "sense of place." In Chapter Four, "Language: How do Spaniards Speak?" Richardson writes about "the multilingual nature of modern Spain" and contrasts Spanish and English means of communication. "Icons and Archetypes: Who are their Heroes?" is the subject of Chapter Five in which the

author writes about Spanish icons and archetypal figures (mainly, El Greco's painting *The Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, El Cid, Celestina, Teresa de Avila and Don Juan). Spaniards' concept of sex, love, sexuality and gender issues are the topics of Chapter Six, "Love: How do they Love?" Chapter Seven, "Money: Food and Shelter, Wealth and Power" reviews the present economic system in Spain and addresses issues related to materialism, power and corruption. In Chapter Eight, "Home and School: Learning to Be a Spaniard," the author explains the primary influences on Spanish children at early ages, and their formation as part of the family. The topic of Chapter Nine is "Faith: What do Spaniards Believe?" and centers on religion and ideology and the role of the Catholic Church up to the present day. Chapter Ten's theme "Death: ...acercándonos al hoyo..." focuses on the public exhibition of death in films, dramas, festivals and other spectacles or artistic venues such as the bullfight and flamenco dance.

Perhaps the greatest strength of each chapter is Richardson's intimate knowledge of Spanish ways (behavior, attitudes, religious, political and ideological beliefs, etc.) and his application of statistical research from sources ranging from *El País* to UNESCO, from IBM to individual authors and researchers. In fact, Richardson's ability to bring together vast amounts of data from surveys, statistics and other studies is commendable since he coherently provides a fascinating and formidable understanding of Spanish customs and traditions. Also to be commended is Richardson's clear and concise writing style which provides for ease of reading.

There are, however, a couple of drawbacks to using this text in any introductory-level course on Spanish civilization and culture. First, the choice of thematic topics does not lend itself to a true introduction to Spanish studies as is suggested by the author. Indeed, in his very brief Introduction, "What Does it Mean to Be Spanish?" Richardson clearly states:

The scope is deliberately broad and the range eclectic. This reflects the conviction that students of Spanish language and culture wish to have an

overview of the culture they are studying and are interested in exploring Spain from many different angles. (1)

While most would agree that students *do* want an eclectic understanding of Spain, this text is more suited as an additional tool for students who *already* possess a good, workable knowledge of Spanish history, politics, society, literature and other cultural areas. Another concern, related to the first, is that there is no systematic review of Spanish history (only three areas are covered in any detail: Franco-Cantabrian art, Spain's Roman heritage and Al-Andalus, all in Chapter One). True, Richardson does mention a few other important historical moments (i.e., Spain and its discovery of the New World, the Spanish Civil War and Franco's regime, among others) but ignores any detailed description of many significant socio-historical developments. Other concerns center on less-important matters. For example, what might be the logic behind translating some key phrases or terms from Spanish to English, and not translating others? Also, why is the better part of the first chapter focused on Latin America, its traditions and customs?

Despite the aforementioned disadvantages, this text is very useful to the advanced learner if used as a supplementary work. It would especially be valuable in a course on modern Spanish culture. Richardson's skill in carrying out this project is no doubt evident by his in-depth knowledge and research into Spain, its people, traditions and customs. The book is a welcomed addition—and an important one—to the non-Spaniard's understanding of Spanish culture.

Chad M. Gasta
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Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios
Duke University Press, 2001
By The Latina Feminist Group

This book is part of the critical series *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations*.

Telling to Live is a compelling book of *testimonios* that was produced collectively by the Latina Feminist Group. This is a diverse intergenerational group of eighteen Latina "academics" from varied social classes, sexual orientation, and national/ethnic backgrounds including Chicanas, Puerto Ricans born on the island, Nuyoricans, Mexicanas, Cuban-Americans, Sephardic, Central American, Dominican, Native-American/Chicana and other women of mixed heritage. The members of this group are: Luz del Alba Acevedo, Norma Alarcón, Celia Alvarez, Ruth Behar, Rina Benmayor, Norma Cantú, Daisy Cocco De Felippis, Gloria Holguín Cuádriz, Liza Fiol-Matta, Yvette Flores-Ortiz, Inés Hernández-Avila, Aurora Levins Morales, Clara Lomas, Iris Ofelia López, Mirtha N. Quintanales, Eliana Rivero, Caridad Souza, and Patricia Zavella.

What these professional women have in common is that they are engaged in gender and Latino/a studies in their teaching and research. All of them are educators and scholars from diverse disciplines including literature, psychology, ethnography, anthropology, ethnic studies, Latino/a studies, women's and gender studies. Many of them are also creative writers, poets, cultural workers, and political activists dedicated to their larger communities beyond the walls of the university. They work at institutions in seven states in the Northeast, Midwest, Southwest, and Western regions of the United States. Many were born here and others are immigrants.

These women first came together in 1993 to share their life experiences and to explore their political and cultural identities. *Telling to Live* is the outcome of their multi-year encounter, including two summer institutes at the Colorado College Baca Conference Center in the summers of 1995 and 1996. This book is the product of the collaborative process in which these women encouraged each other to write their *testimonios*. Their writings, in which they often mix the use of Spanish and English, include short stories, poems and autobiographical narratives about a wide range of topics including childhood memories, how each of them chose the path of higher education often overcoming many social, financial, and psychological barriers, their traumatic survival of incest, sexual harassment and other forms of emotional abuse,