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# Book Review: Latin American Melodrama: Passion, Pathos, and Entertainment, ed and intro by Darlene J. Sadlier

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narrated voice of the semifictional protagonist Candelario Navarro in the pseudo-testimonial novel *Canto de sirena* (1977) by Gregorio Martínez (b. 1942). Similarly, Orihuela finds that the story of protagonist Tomasón Ballumbrosio in *Malambo* (2001) by Lucía Charún-Illescas (b. 1950) represents a fictionalized social history of the African diaspora in Perú. Other essays in the collection consider the *indigenismo* of Carlos E. Zavaleta's (1928–2011) *Los ingar* (1955), and *El Cristo Villenas* (1956), as well as poetry by Washington Delgado (1927–2003), Blanca Varela (1926–2009), Enrique Verástegui (b. 1950), and several other poets from the 1960s and 1970s including Carlos Henderson, Luis Hernández, Mirko Lauer, Antonio Cisneros, Reynaldo Naranjo, Manuel Morales, and Juan Ramírez Ruiz.

In the introduction, Orihuela indicates that the collection of essays under review comprises analyses and approaches to a corpus of texts from writers described on the back cover as some of the most representative authors and works from approximately fifty years of contemporary Peruvian literature. However, because Orihuela's project is to call attention to a systematically *understudied* and *underappreciated* Afro-Peruvian literary tradition, the essays cannot also be about the most representative authors from this period. Also, because the anthology represents proceedings from scholarly presentations and chapters from books published elsewhere, there seems to be little internal unity to the collection and little in the way of definition of terms or a discussion of the scope of Orihuela's project. In the essays themselves, for example, there is copious reference to "literatura hegemónica" (19), "la tradición canónica" (83), "la poesía culta" (20), etc., but nothing of what might comprise the traditional, national, and cultured corpus that the texts by Santa Cruz, Gálvez Ronceros, Martínez, and Charún-Illescas represent as a counter-tradition. Furthermore, the volume contains unexplained repetitions and double quotations of identical material. For example, a general introduction to Orihuela's proposal for expansion of the canon of Peruvian literature to include Afro-Hispanic titles is repeated with only limited variations in chapters 1 and 2; the same poem by Santa Cruz is reproduced on pages 22 and 30; and a reference to his work in a later essay seems to ignore the fact that the poet had been extensively considered previously. Because each essay has its own separate list of works cited, the volume suffers from bibliographic inconsistency and inaccuracy: several works are cited but not recorded or poorly referenced in the relevant bibliographies, four of the seven online sources in the essays are not accessible at the addresses listed, several of the sources appear to be of dubious or unverifiable quality including blogs, collections of articles not subjected to peer review, unpublished material, and the use of textbooks written for undergraduates. Now, these lapses are not fatal to Orihuela's important contribution to the expansion of the canon of twentieth-century Peruvian literature; indeed, his proposal for canonical inclusion of Afro-Hispanic literature and poetry is long overdue. However, the volume bears little logical coherence from one essay to another and the collection would have benefited from more effort by the author to articulate a unifying thesis, make connections among the writers and poets considered, and put the whole counter-tradition in conversation with the canonical writers of Peruvian national literature. While this may exceed the scope of Orihuela's stated intention to maintain "el espíritu y procedimientos hermenéuticos originales" (12) of the republished chapters and conference proceedings collected in *Abordajes y aproximaciones*, his work in these essays nonetheless invites a comprehensive and unified consideration of the place of Afro-Peruvian and other contemporary writers and poets in the canons of that nation's literature.

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**Sadlier, Darlene J., ed.** *Latin American Melodrama: Passion, Pathos, and Entertainment*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2009. Pp. 183. ISBN 978-0-252-07655-8.

This is a collection of essays on melodrama's role in Latin American film, nation-building discourse, telenovelas, and even in the antimelodrama works of New Latin American Cinema

throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. The authors in this collection challenge the idea of melodrama used only to foster national pride connecting personal lives and national realities. Instead, they demonstrate how melodrama was used also to question and criticize that same national discourse.

The book is divided into an introduction and nine essays on melodramatic works from Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela. Each reflects on an aspect of melodrama's importance in Latin America, such as in establishing film industries, celebrating national identities, as well as influencing vanguard film, contemporary documentary, and telenovelas. In the introduction, Sadlier explains the changing definitions of the term as melodramas grew further from musical works towards a display of deep passions where in the end good conquers evil and the heroic story often is a metaphor for the nation. She further explains that Cinema Novo and social action films attempted to reflect the changing realities in Latin America by pushing to make antimelodramatic films. Sadlier challenges the reading of the New Latin American Cinema as antimelodramatic since the filmmakers often used the same language of melodrama to communicate their socially responsible themes. While the cinema vanguard rejected melodrama's clean reorganization of the world into good and evil where good always triumphs over evil, melodrama's success is impossible to ignore, and, as Sadlier writes, "[its study] helps us understand why it has been the most durable form of popular art in the Latin American Cinema" (15).

The articles vary in their focuses. Some, such as Gilberto Perez's "Melodrama of the Spirited Woman *Aventurera*", concentrate on the spirited woman as a common pivotal character in melodrama. Others look at the history and origins of a national industry. Luisa Alvaray's "Melodrama and the Emergence of Venezuelan Cinema" shows how the melodrama genre coming from Mexico ironically initiated a national film industry in Venezuela. In others, such as "The Building of a Nation: *La guerra gaucha* as Historical Melodrama" by Paula Félix-Didier and Andrés Levinson, "The Humiliation of the Father: Melodrama and Cinema Novo's Critique of the Conservative Modernization" by Ismael Xavier, "Women as Civilizers in 1940s Brazilian Cinema: Between Passion and the Nation" by Cid Vasconcelos, and "Luis Alcoriza; or, A Certain Antimelodramatic Tendency in Mexican Cinema" by Marvin D'Lugo, we see the uses of melodrama that broke with a traditional past by celebrating local identity, exceptional female characters, irony, or even parody of the genre itself.

Sadlier contributes to the work with an article entitled "Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Cinema de lágrimas*" in which she tells of the British Film Institute's attempt to celebrate twentieth century film by commissioning over twenty filmmakers worldwide to make movies on the history of film in their countries. Brazilian Nelson Pereira dos Santos was chosen to represent all of Latin American Cinema with a single documentary. Instead, he created a fictional film entitled *Cinema de lágrimas*. This romance combines both melodrama and Cinema Novo in an unrequited love story about Rodrigo, who travels from Rio de Janeiro to Mexico to find the films his mother forbade him to see. Like Rodrigo, Pereira dos Santos returns to find the "mother" of all Latin American film genres: the melodrama.

Beyond fictional films, in "Weeping Reality: Melodramatic Imagination in Contemporary Brazilian Documentary", Baltar takes a close look at the 1994 documentary *Peões* (*Peons*) by Eduardo Coutinho to show the contemporary use of melodrama in an intimate form of documentary film by using the personal to represent society. The use of melodrama is also vital to present-day telenovelas. In the final essay, "Televisual Melodrama in an Era of Transnational Migration: Exporting the Folkloric Nation, Harvesting the Melancholic-Sublime", Benamou explains how melodrama continues to shape the present with its creation of a pan-Latino identity beyond the national borders of Latin American countries through the exported telenovela.

This collection of essays shows the extensive history of melodrama within Latin America and its current ability to forge national film industries, audiences, and national identity. One possible weakness in this volume is the absence of an article on Cuban melodrama, which could

have added an interesting contribution to this analysis on the power of melodrama in nation-building discourse given the importance of Cuban film. Also, a Spanish-language version of this book would be a great addition to the field.

This research is accessible to a broad audience including film, literature, and cultural studies students and scholars. The anthology is effective in providing a clear analysis of the use of melodrama in building national narratives while also highlighting the ironic transnational realities of film and telenovelas. The collection underscores melodrama's importance to Latin America as the genre of both choice and change.

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## Linguistics, Language, and Media

**Azevedo, Milton M.** *Introducción a la lingüística española*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009. Pp. xx, 411. ISBN 978-0-205-64704-0.

PowerPoint Presentation (download only) for *Introducción a la lingüística española*. 3rd ed. ISBN 978-0-69050-3.

*Workbook. Introducción a la lingüística española*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009. Pp. 120. ISBN 978-0-205-64706-4.

*Answer Key. Introducción a la lingüística española*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009. Pp. 48. ISBN 978-0-205-64707-1.

The new third edition (2009) of this book, first published in 1992, with a second edition in 2005, features changes to the content and the format, which have significantly enhanced the quality of its two predecessors through major revisions to the content and the presentational format. The current volume contains features that make it an extremely attractive and viable pedagogical tool for college instructors who wish to provide their students with an accurate, comprehensible, well written, conceptually integrated, and carefully crafted introduction to Spanish linguistics.

Among the noteworthy additions are the following: (1) systematic usage of the International Phonetic Alphabet; (2) new and improved graphics (maps and figures); (3) the addition of the *Vistazo general* (an initial overview of the chapter content); (4) an improved list of chapter objectives designed to provide focus and direction for the reader's preliminary study preparation; (5) a new section at the end *Volviendo al epígrafe* (intended to allow students to interpret its meaning upon completion of each chapter); and (6) an expanded *Glosario de términos técnicos*.

The twelve chapters in the textbook address the following topics: (1) *La lengua española en el mundo*; (2) *Lenguaje, lengua y lingüística*; (3) *Fonética: Los sonidos del habla*; (4) *Fonología: Los fonemas del español*; (5) *Morfología: Forma y función de las palabras*; (6) *Sintaxis I: La estructura de las oraciones*; (7) *Sintaxis II: Algunas estructuras específicas*; (8) *Variación temporal*; (9) *Variación regional*; (10) *Variación social*; (11) *Variación contextual*; and (12) *El español en los Estados Unidos*. Azevedo thus covers the essential materials that an introductory Spanish linguistics textbook should contain.

The regular and consistent format of each chapter allows the student to acquire basic linguistic concepts easily. Each chapter contains the following basic features: (1) an initial *epígrafe* that addresses the central theme of the chapter; (2) a *Vistazo general* (with an overview of its contents); (3) *Objetivos* (what the student should know after reading the chapter); (4) the chapter content; (5) *Términos clave*; (6) *Mitos sobre el lenguaje* (presentation of a commonly