

Epps, Brad, and Luis Fernández Cifuentes, eds. *Spain Beyond Spain: Modernity, Literary History, and National Identity*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2005. 388 pp.

"Literary history . . . may well be impossible," the editors of this collection state, "but that does not prevent it from existing" (13). The paradox is elegant but imprecise: it is still quite feasible to write literary history but for some scholars it has become increasingly hard to do so in good faith. More than impossible, literary history has, in the eyes of some, become *illegitimate*, as the pounding waves of theory have eroded almost all of its founding axioms: the nation, the canon, grand narratives and the institution of literature itself. However illegitimate, though, traditional national literary histories continue to be in demand and will continue to appear.

Ironically, those who have stopped believing in literary history have been unable to kick their addiction to evolutionary narrative; even the story of narrative's end is, in the end, a story. And as the neat, overarching histories of their object of study—Spanish literature, say—have become problematic, scholars in the humanities and social sciences have resorted to narrativizing the history of their own disciplines. In Peninsular Hispanic Studies, too, institutional history has been on the rise, fueling, over the past ten years, a lively debate over the field's institutional genealogy and ideological baggage. Key publications in this regard are a 1996 issue of *Siglo XX* on "Cultural Studies and Hispanisms" edited by Danny Anderson; *Spain in America* (ed. Richard Kagan, 2002); and *Ideologies of Hispanism* (ed. Mabel Moraña, 2005). The seventeen essays in *Spain Beyond Spain* constitute a rich, important and original contribution to this ongoing debate (which, incidentally, has been conducted almost entirely in English). Since it is impossible to do justice here to the variety of sophisticated positions and approaches adopted in this book, I will limit myself to drawing out a couple of the more noteworthy lines of argument presented.

As a collection, this book is a symptom of, and answers to, a nagging sense of crisis in the discipline. Its essays identify, stage and, in some cases, attempt to patch up the major fault lines in the crumbling edifice of Hispanist literary studies. One major fault line is geographical: the tectonic plates of Spain- and US-based Hispanism seem to be drifting apart inexorably. The whole problem of the impossibility of literary history, for instance, does not seem to bother literary scholars working in Spain much at all. As Geraldine Nichols points out, literary history in its traditional shape is alive and well on the Peninsula in spite of its consistent, and still largely unquestioned, marginalization of women and texts written in languages other than Castilian. In fairness, Nichols points out that the differences between Spanish and American Hispanism have quite practical and material explanations rooted in the structure of schools and universities: cultural studies is more popular in the States than historicist philology in part because American academics are forced to cater to their students' tastes. Similarly, though, Nichols argues that the configuration of the canon in Spain, purporting to identify literary quality, has catered to the pedagogical need of the ruling sectors to consolidate their hegemony.

Wadda Ríos-Font also deals with the construction of the canon, showing how the first Spanish literary histories were less a reflection of Spanish identity than crucial instruments in its definition. Jo Labanyi, in turn, presents a nuanced

re-assessment of nineteenth-century Spanish nation-formation as “a process of debate between divergent positions” engaging in a pluralistic, liberal public sphere, “rather than as the elimination of ideological difference in favor of a single model” (170).

The history of American Hispanism, too, has been largely shaped by practical and political considerations. As James Fernández shows, for instance, the field’s rise in the US has always been linked to the country’s economic and political interest in Latin America. That Spanish cultural production was nevertheless privileged in terms of scholarship had to do with the field’s need to shore up its prestige vis-à-vis French, Italian and German (whose unpopularity during World War I was shamelessly exploited by American Hispanists), but also with the notion that Latin America could best be understood by studying its Spanish “source”.

Another critical chapter in the history of US Hispanism—and the Humanities in general—is drafted by Joan Ramon Resina, who ruthlessly exposes the political weakness of the field in the years of the Cold War. Resina also explains why US Peninsular Hispanism remained its self-sufficient and politically anodyne self when, in the mid-1960s, most of the other humanities and social sciences were transformed and revitalized by counterculture, civil rights and critical theory: “Locked in the historicist and philological traditions in which it produced its best work, Cold War Hispanism sidestepped historical materialism, feminism, class, race, and minority issues, all of them congruous with the critique of Spain’s imperial past” (72). Eduardo Subirats, too, calls for a re-evaluation of Spain’s colonial enterprise—which in his view ushered in not a “golden” but a “barbaric” age (284)—along with a revision, in a nuanced international context, of its Enlightenment and avant-gardes.

Resina and other contributors—Santana, Martí-López, Romero Tobar, Harrington, Monegal and Lewis—show how the blindness of Hispanism to its imperialist underpinnings have prevented it from coming to terms with Spain’s multicultural and multilingual reality. At the same time, as Harrington shows, Basque, Galician and Catalan literary and cultural histories have tended to adopt the same traditional, Romantic and exclusionary tenets as their “Spanish” counterparts. For Monegal, Comparative Literature provides a methodological way out of this nationalistic trap.

Together with the three collections mentioned above, *Spain Beyond Spain* provides a much-needed diagnosis and devastating critique of Hispanism not only as a scholarly field—critically analyzing its methodology and institutional history—but also as an *ideology* invested in a unitary and exclusionary representation of Spain. The term Hispanism, in fact, might no longer be the most appropriate to signify an entity whose principal feature is its heterogeneity. (Resina proposes a non-hierarchical, pluralistic field called Iberian Studies.) In this sense, “Hispanism” is as tainted as *España*, which in the past, as Mayoral, Juaristi and Pope show, could still support a progressive, albeit nostalgic and idealistic brand of patriotism.

As the editors point out (18), it is ironic that US Hispanism—institutionally more numerous, rich and powerful—can think of itself as an oppositional voice challenging (in English!) the hegemony of a much weaker Spanish academia, many of whose libraries cannot afford to buy the books and journals produced in Britain and the US. It is safe to say that *Spain Beyond Spain* will hardly be distributed

in the Peninsula, let alone be translated into Spanish. This is, of course, too bad; it is also symptomatic of the enormous linguistic and intellectual gap separating Spanish from US- and UK-based Hispanism (not to mention French, German and other Hispanisms, which have been left out of this debate altogether). Nevertheless, the fact that Epps and Fernández-Cifuentes were able to gather the voices of Spain- and US-based Hispanists into one volume—and Luis Beltrán Almería's level-headed attempt at mediation—might indicate that the gap has not yet become unbridgeable.

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**Grzegorzcyk, Marzena. *Private Topographies: Space, Subjectivity, and Political Change in Modern Latin America*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005. 191 pp.**

In *Private Topographies*, Marzena Grzegorzcyk offers a new way of understanding the process of nation-building in nineteenth-century Latin America. Focusing on texts from Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, she argues that creoles struggled with two concepts of the nation—civic and ethnic—and that the attempts to bridge these two can be found most clearly articulated in the writing produced in the period. Thus she engages in detailed close readings of certain key authors (Fernández de Lizardi, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juana Manuela Gorriti, Machado de Assis and Euclides da Cunha) whose texts display the contradictions between the symbolic and the experiential, order and the body, the citizen and the self.

This is a welcome book indeed. Nineteenth-century literary studies of the past fifteen years have tended to focus on a model of foundational fictions, which, while opening up the field, have sometimes overshadowed other understandings of nation-building and the ways in which creole subjectivity was formed out of a series of complex negotiations that had to do not only with ethnic and social identities, but also with their sense of place and time. Grzegorzcyk attempts to forge an ongoing process by which scholars will begin to analyze the nineteenth century in Latin America through an attention to specific moments and experiences that are often forgotten in more overarching views of the period. Her focus on the particular tension between mobility versus stasis is a vital one. Drawing on Angel Rama, she argues that the creole urge for symbolic regulation created a “lettered individual,” one who reflected upon the world from the comfort of his reading space, as opposed to a mobile citizen who reacted to that which surrounded him or her. The tension that Grzegorzcyk traces comes from the collision of experience with the symbolic, movement with stasis.

She uses the term “implacements” to describe the ways in which creoles, responding to historical events, reorganized the spaces around them and invested them with a sense of place that was both empirical and subjective. This interface between public and private, political and personal, is theorized through the body. Grzegorzcyk uses not only literary but also architectural theory to articulate an embodied sense of place that informs the nation-building process during the period.

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