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Abstract

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Special Issue on
The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction
Guest Editor
Donald L. Shaw

Introduction

Donald L. Shaw

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The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction

Donald L. Shaw

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Abstract. The article discusses the dating of the beginning of the Post-Boom, the factors involved in discussing it, and lists possible representative writers belonging to it. The views of Skármeta, Allende and others are reported and a list of possible Post-Boom characteristics is suggested. It is argued that there are difficulties in the way of relating the Post-Boom easily to Postmodernism, but that the notion of Post-colonialism may prove helpful in future criticism. (DS)

Eva Luna: Writing as History

Lynne Diamond-Nigh

29

Abstract. The Bildungsroman of Eva Luna's development as a writer reflects—in a somewhat fragmented manner—important developments in Latin American literary history. Her personal quest was paralleled by an aesthetic quest, manifested in the trying on and taking off of various genres, literary movements and myths characteristic of Latin America; she even goes so far as to allude explicitly to specific authors and their individual works. Although some of these are simply lightheartedly parodied, others are reworked and reinterpreted in the light of the feminist enterprise of the past twenty-five years. *Eva Luna* transgresses

fundamentally by having an intellectually strong, sexual, nurturing, very feminine protagonist, setting up an initial rupture with the dichotomy so clearly demarcated by Octavio Paz between “the mother and the whore.” Four primary categories suggest themselves: myth and the mythic consciousness; magical realism; Boom writers; and then a miscellaneous grouping that subsumes a host of other significant literatures and literary themes: the picaresque, the neo-romantic, novels of the dictators, the ever-present conflict between civilization and barbarism, and testimonial literature. (LDN)

The New Novel / A New Novel: Spider’s Webs and Detectives in Luisa Valenzuela’s *Black Novel (with Argentines)*

Sharon Magnarelli

43

Abstract. The article analyzes Valenzuela’s novel in relation to Shaw’s summary of projections about the directions the new novel will or should take. Specifically, it examines the novel in terms of the detective novel to which the title alludes and demonstrates that Valenzuela departs from the traditional detective novel with its quest for knowledge. In Valenzuela’s novel there are no definitive answers, only obscurely intuited connections, which we would perhaps prefer not to make, for Valenzuela eschews both a master narrative and a narrative of mastery. Nonetheless, as the article demonstrates, the protagonists’ search for motives, their quest to understand the gratuitous violence of Augustín’s murder of an actress whom he had just met, is directly related to the desire to understand the sociopolitical events—the terror and violence—in Argentina during the late 1970s and early 1980s. (SM)

Literary Invention and Critical Fashion: Missing the Boat in the *Sea of Lentils*

Elzbieta Sklodowska

61

Abstract. In pursuing the relation of *Sea of Lentils* (1979) to the Spanish American literary canon, I argue that while Benítez-Rojo’s novel did not fall into the category of the already canonized—and therefore was spared a parricidal gesture of the Post-Boom writers—neither did it belong amidst the previously marginalized texts. I suggest that *Sea of Lentils* concentrates its internal critique of language and representation around the process of remembering in a manner that is radically at odds not only with the “traditional” historical novel, but with the official voice of the ascendant *testimonio* as well. Moreover, the notion of

memory as unpredictable “turbulent flow” and the breaking down of a globalizing *grand récit* into “fractal” *petites histoires* lead us toward chaos theory and Postmodernism. I conclude that while *Sea of Lentils* prefigured a variety of concerns that were to become dominant in the 1980s, it essentially failed to satisfy the more immediate expectations of invention on the part of “technocratic” critics, on one hand, and, on the other, of “culturalists” longing for a genuinely Latin American and “authentic” discourse. (ES)

Ideology and Structure in Giardinelli’s *Santo Oficio de la memoria*

Gustavo Pellón

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Abstract. The article studies the most recent novel by Argentine novelist Mempo Giardinelli from the point of view of its polyphonic structure. *Santo Oficio* is compared to one of its models, William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, and the respective modern and postmodern aesthetics of both novels are discussed. Giardinelli’s approach in this ambitious novel is contrasted with that of major authors of the Latin American Boom. A family tree of the Domeniconelle family, the protagonists of *Santo Oficio*, is included. (GP)

Only Joking? Gustavo Sainz and *La princesa del Palacio de Hierro*: Funniness, Identity and the Post-Boom

Philip Swanson

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Abstract. The Mexican Gustavo Sainz has been seen as one of the initiators of the Latin American Post-Boom, largely because of the humor, accessibility and interest in popular culture that characterize some of his work and are often said to characterize the Post-Boom in general. His 1974 novel *La princesa del Palacio de Hierro* (*The Princess of the Iron Palace*) is a representative case. However, the Post-Boom’s incorporation of “popular” elements within a relatively sophisticated “new novel” framework is a highly problematic process. This can be seen, in this novel, in the broad relationship of the “funny” and the “serious.” The protagonist appears to revel in her comic account of transgressive adventures while revealing her simultaneous socialization into the norms of family and gender that are seemingly transgressed. At the same time, her own “fun” narration (transgressive of frivolous) is problematized further by the commentary of an implied author, figured as an intellectual and, possibly, a male. The function of the novel’s humor thus emerges as both to transgress and mark the transgression,

creating an interplay between the desire to affirm identity and an awareness that all identity is a construction based on hierarchical models. It is this sense of the contingency of identity that perhaps underlies the shift in emphasis and textual character represented by the Post-Boom. (PS)

Alvaro Mutis and the Ends of History

Gerald Martin

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Abstract. Part of the confusion of the current literary and critical moment, in Latin America and elsewhere, involves a debate as to whether the most characteristic forms of contemporary writing are the more apparently transparent (in contrast to current critical practice) or the more impenetrable and indecipherable of literary texts. This debate is of particular relevance to Latin American discussions about the so-called "Post-Boom," and the work of the Colombian Alvaro Mutis, a writer who came late to narrative fiction and to critical attention, offers several insights into the links between writing, criticism and ideology at this moment close to the end of the century and even, so some thinkers have said, to the end of history. (GM)

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