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A History of Afro-Hispanic Language (review)

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(Review)

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Amenábar (1996), “turns a series of generic conventions on their ear.” Not only does it anticipate Wes Craven’s 1996 *Scream*, but it “performs the remarkable surgical feat of excising the sexual titillation from the slasher gore” scenes endemic to the unending series of films like *Halloween*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, or *Friday the Thirteenth*. Amenábar thus constructs a “highly entertaining and commercially successful film, all the while” refusing to give the public their gore and sex. María Pilar Rodríguez provides a much-needed corrective to the Generation X label used to describe so much cultural production by young Spanish writers and filmmakers. In her study of *Historias del Kronen*, she reveals its fundamental incompatibility with Douglas Coupland’s novel, while responding to previous Hispanist criticism of this Spanish novel and film. Some critics have moralized about the nihilism of *Historias del Kronen*, but Rodríguez claims that the alienation of these characters vindicates the way in which young people are subverting the “aesthetic and moral norms [of] contemporary Spanish society” (131). In the same section, Michael Schuessler’s essay on the representation of homosexuality provides a vivid history of the iconography of, he writes, “vestidas, locas, mayates and machos” from early Mexican film to the present. His goal is to “illustrate how one may better interpret Mexico’s representation of and reaction to what is generally perceived to be a deviant—and therefore unacceptable—‘vice’” (132). David William Foster studies the homoerotic narrative, the queer gaze and the filmic genre of the bank robbery as they intersect in Marcelo Piñeyro’s *Plata Quemada* (made in Argentina in 2000).

The last section of the volume, “The Female Gaze-The Male Perspective: Spanish American Literature and Film,” illustrates “how cinematic techniques have been inspired by the novel and by drama” (5). Patrick Duffy demonstrates how the Mexican writer Mariano Azuela and the Spanish Francisco Ayala incorporated formal cinema techniques, such as the long shot and the close up, pioneered by European cinema *auteurs*. Gustavo Fares, in his attempt to find a redemptive image of women in either

Borges’s fiction or filmic adaptations of his work, concludes that not only is there not a positive role for women, but also argues that we should study all of Borges’s work from this negative vantage point. Nora Glickman’s essay looks more in depth at the bridging of film and literature. Her comparison of Juan Carlos Onetti’s short story “El infierno tan temido [Hell so feared]” and its film adaptation directed by Oscar Viale and Raúl de la Torre in 1987, observes how the film “recreates Onetti’s ‘tortuous language,’ his ‘degrading choice of nouns,’ its deliberately ambiguous phrases, fragmented syntactic constructions, and the overall nightmarish atmosphere” that overwhelms the short story (177). Finally, William Childers’s reading of *Tristana* and *Camila* argues that Spanish and Latin American cinemas stage an “encounter between the female body and the masculine gaze” that is mediated by “pre-cinematic forms of popular theatre and religious practices” (185).

In conclusion, the sixteen essays read fluidly, and are well-researched and nicely balanced in terms of exposition and analysis. Most importantly, the volume will be an indispensable tool for both researchers and teachers of Spanish and Latin American film.

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***A History of Afro-Hispanic Language***  
Cambridge University Press, 2005  
By John M. Lipski

Lipski’s contribution to the study of Afro-Hispanic language is remarkable. The book is accompanied by the largest known collection of primary Afro-Hispanic texts from the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America, Africa and Asia, all available in an online appendix.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first three chapters cover the initial contacts between Europeans and Africans, the early Afro-Portuguese and the Afro-Hispanic texts. The following two chapters cover the Afro-

Hispanic contacts in Colonial Spanish America and historical texts found in Latin America. The following chapter gives an overview of the major African families. The next two chapters focus on the Phonetics and Phonology and the grammatical features of Afro-Hispanic language. The final chapter is a thorough overview of the Spanish-Creole debate.

Chapter 1 describes the first moments of contact between Africans and Europeans. The historical detail and precision included in the book is impressive. There is an overview of the slaving regions and ethnic designations of slaves. In this chapter Lipski admits that in parts of Latin America some partial restructuring may have occurred.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the early attestations of Afro-Portuguese language. Lipski provides a detailed description of not only the texts but also the connections to the phonology of African languages. The chapter ends with sections on the Portuguese of 16th to 17th century Africa, early Afro-Brazilian texts, and Afro-Portuguese texts from Asia.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the early attestations of Afro-Hispanic language. The first sections refer to the work of well-known Golden Age writers, such as Góngora and Lope de Vega. These textual analyses are interspersed with insightful explanations of the language in them. Lipski includes a section on musical repertoire, which proved to be a rich source of Africanized Spanish. The last section has a very helpful assessment of Golden Age *habla de negro*.

Chapter 4 presents historical data of the most significant African populations in Latin America. The first sections are dedicated to Peru, Mexico and Uruguay. The section on Cuba is longer and includes demographic information on the importation of slaves. Lists of the ethnic background and the countries of origin are complete and detailed. There are also sections on the presence of Africans in the colonial societies of the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, and Venezuela.

Chapter 5 details the Afro-Hispanic texts from Latin America from the 16th to the 20th centuries. Lipski gives an explanation of the

Afro-Latin *bozal* corpus. Lipski presents the intricacies of the Afro-Dominican, Afro-Puerto Rican, Afro-Ecuadorian, Afro-Colombian, Afro-Panamanian, and Afro-Venezuelan language corpora. The reader will notice a parallel between this chapter and the previous one, which presents the external history of language contact in those countries.

Chapter 6 provides a survey of the major African language families. This chapter is necessary because of the fact that *bozal* Spanish and Portuguese came about under a series of diverse language contact situations. However, Lipski identifies some recurring traits among *bozal* Spanish and Portuguese.

Chapter 7 concentrates on the phonetics and phonology of Afro-Hispanic language. There are sections on the common denominators among African languages, the tonal adaptations of European loan-words in African languages, and the possible impact of tonal languages on Spanish and Portuguese. At the end of the chapter there is a list of the major structures that are analyzed in detail, such as the lateralization of syllable-final /r/ and reduction of syllable-final /s/, among others. The chapter provides a summary reconstruction of the early Afro-Iberian phonology, as well as a section on what Lipski calls the “final stages” of Spanish American *bozal* Spanish.

Chapter 8 traces the grammatical features of Afro-Hispanic language and covers possible substratum influences in Afro-Iberian speech. Among the features discussed, there are general word order, subjects and subject pronouns, direct objects, double negation, yes-no questions, nominal plurals, among many others. The chapter ends with a summary of the general grammatical characteristics of pre-nineteenth century Afro-Iberian speech.

Chapter 9 is fundamental to the field since it provides a discussion of the Spanish-Creole debate. Lipski summarizes the various perspectives on the question of the contribution of Africans to the Spanish language. There are sections on the scarcity of Spanish creoles and the claims of *bozal*-derived Afro-Hispanic creole, a notion supported by many Hispanists. Lipski also discusses

the putative evidence that *bozal* Spanish turned creole in Cuba and Puerto Rico, also a hotly debated topic in creole studies. A section that deals with the presumed creole features of *bozal* Spanish provides the most complete and detailed list of the structures in question.

As can be ascertained from the present review, the volume *A History of Afro-Hispanic Language: Five Centuries, Five Continents* leaves “no stone unturned” and reveals Lipski’s masterful treatment of the topic.

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***Orfeo XXI: Poesía española contemporánea y tradición clásica***  
**Cátedra Miguel delibes/Llibros del Peixe S.L., 2005**  
**Editado por Pedro Conde Parrado y Javier García Rodríguez**

This book’s origin is a conference that took place in Valencia in 2004 organized by the Cátedra Miguel Delibes of Contemporary Literature in collaboration with the Valladolid Society of Classical Studies. It is composed of three segments: the first is a concise introduction by the editors, who reveal that the conference program was organized around two genres—the epigram and the elegy—and two myths, those of Orpheus and Ulysses. The second component contains the four papers presented at the conference, all of them of outstanding quality and clearly documented with copious footnotes. They are “Versiones, revisiones y (per)versiones del epigrama en las últimas generaciones poéticas” by Begoña Ortega Villaro, “Formas de la elegía en la poesía española reciente” by Francisco Díaz de Castro, “Orfeo ya no vive aquí” by Jorge Fernández López, and “Ecos de Homero en el discurso poético contemporáneo. *La Odisea* en verso” by Pedro Conde Parrado. In the paper by Ortega Villaro, the author reviews the origins of the epigram, underscores the contributions of Marcial and Catulus, and then focuses her at-

tention on contemporary poets such as Miguel d’Ors, José Luis García de Martín, Luis Alberto de Cuenca and Enrique Badosa, among others, who work within this genre in the contemporary milieu. For his part, Fernández López develops his arguments concerning the elegy along similar lines, and pays special attention to the metapoetic aspects of this genre in such poets as Guillermo Carnero, Aurora Luque, and Angel González. Fernández López directs his attention to what the author terms the “diálogo necesario con la cultura del mundo grecolatino” (59), focusing on the recycling of such classical myths as Orpheus, Narcissus or Icarus in contemporary poetry. Rather than merely using the myths as a convenient thematic organizational ploy, this author ably demonstrates how a variety of Spanish poets utilize the myths and their named personages as a process of discovery in the contemplation of contemporary life. The Orpheus myth represents his prime exploratory node, and he utilizes the poetry of Guillermo Carnero and Antonio Colinas as prime examples of how one Classical myth is utilized as one more aesthetic resource available to the poets to illustrate contemporary concerns. The final essay by Conde Parrado utilizes Homer’s *Odyssey* as the point of departure for a review of Spanish poetry that rework this story in contemporary form. It should be noted that this author does include in his study both male and female poets whose poetry enters into intertextual dialogue with this Classic work, but concentrates on those poems whose focus is Odysseus. However, he does indicate that the figure of Penelope also has inspired much poetry, but for reasons of time he was not able to develop it further.

The third and final component of this book is an extensive anthology of poems by more than one hundred contemporary authors including more than twenty women whose work reflects the conference themes, that is, epigram and elegy as well as Orpheus and Ulysses. There are poems by well-known poets such as Juana Castro, Jaime Gil de Biedma, Angel González, and Ana Rossetti, as well as those by poets of younger generations whose work is now becoming internationally known, such as Enrique