

*de los laureles* refers to the palimpsestic creation of history and shows how the novel can raise awareness about the new man's historical and political task.

Fernández Utrera's work brings to the limelight a set of intriguing novels and is most successful in highlighting the emergence of a "new" feminity in Spanish modernity. The study's point of departure, the stereoscope, is a fit metaphor for the multifaceted texts examined in *Visiones del estereoscopio*. While at times unclear when classifying the hybrid novels into subcategories ("novela red," "novela al cubo," etc.), this study presents useful materials for the scholar interested in the production of visual and verbal texts in the Spain of the 1920s and 1930s.—SARAH DEMEUSE, *Columbia University*

VERÓNICA CORTÍNEZ. *Memoria original de Bernal Díaz*. México: Oak, 2000.

In *Memoria original de Bernal Díaz*, Verónica Cortínez brings fresh insight to a problem that, although in some ways removed from recent trends in colonial literary studies, remains vital to understanding the place of Bernal Díaz's work in the Hispanic American literary tradition. Indeed, Cortínez takes on the difficult task of describing the narrative qualities of this fascinating and ambiguous historical text, presenting the reader with a precise and nuanced description of the structure, style, and portrayal of character in the *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, as well as a brilliant analysis of twentieth-century readings of Bernal Díaz's text by Latin American writers and critics. At the same time, Cortínez's book offers a meditation on questions of historicity and literariness that are a source of richness both in colonial texts and in contemporary readings of them. As the author notes, "La incertidumbre entre historia y literatura marca no sólo el texto de Bernal sino también la construcción del sistema literario hispanoamericano por parte de críticos y escritores" (22). Cortínez has made an important contribution not just to scholarship on the *Historia verdadera* but to our understanding of the literary rediscovery of the *crónicas de Indias* as well.

Cortínez sets out to inquire how Bernal Díaz's vast and often chaotic firsthand recollections of the conquest of Mexico came in the last century to be considered a literary "classic," studied for the most part not in departments of history, but of literature. By focusing on the author's narrative strategies, successes, and foibles, Cortínez brings to the foreground the textual image of the old conquistador as a writer-in-the-making. The first of four chapters, "Figuras y sucesos," examines Bernal's treatment of character, highlighting the complex portrayal of Cortés, for whom the old soldier's open admiration is not without tinges of resentment. Cortínez suggests that more than any other chronicler of the period, Bernal Díaz records the experience of the common man, whether soldier, carpenter, ship builder, or blacksmith. These sorts of figures, she suggests, might be relegated in the work of another historian to the footnotes or margins of the narrative, but in Bernal Díaz's account, they constantly intrude into the main body of the text (67). Finally, despite his often evident prejudices, Bernal's representation of the indigenous world is surprisingly subtle, even betraying at times a critical awareness of the irremediable devastation he

has helped to inflict on a culture that he in many ways admires. His keen sense of the contributions of low-ranking historical actors such as himself shapes in part the distinctiveness of his melancholic vision. As Cortínez notes, “Más que el significado histórico, en Bernal actúa el amor que profesa por la copia exacta del momento, y por ello resalta gestos mínimos que un historiador habría omitido” (79). In essence, for Cortínez it is Bernal’s novelistic sensibility that inspires and challenges him to try to recapture the totality of the experience of the Conquest.

In Chapter Two, “Una crónica extraña,” Cortínez reviews the reception of the *Historia verdadera*, summarizing widely different critical efforts to categorize the text. In noting that the work eschews textual models – both literary and historiographical – of the period, she argues for a new generic designation as a “memoria original” (91). Cortínez notes the importance of Bernal Díaz as translator of the New World to the old, and points to the role of humor, popular refrains, and irony in his unpolished style. She describes in detail as well the ingenious ways by which Bernal, who does not appear in any other chronicle but his own, appears both as youthful character and as aging narrator: “En su búsqueda de autoridad como relator de la conquista, Bernal construye una insospechada autoría. Entre la humildad y la arrogancia de su discurso, Bernal origina una voz confiable, versátil y reconocible, la voz de un cronista distinto que logra superar la sospecha inicial de los lectores a través de la creación de un personaje de vital transparencia” (149). Finally, Cortínez highlights Bernal’s multiple textual roles of author, character, and reader in his own text (169). The third chapter, entitled “Memoria y lenguaje,” analyzes the paratactic construction of Bernal’s prose, and the ways in which the often chaotic juxtaposition of ideas and events aims to capture the totality of his experience. Finally, for Cortínez, Bernal Díaz’s emphasis on the acts of memory and writing earn the *Historia verdadera* a “surprising modernity” and explains in part the interest shown by writers of the Boom in the work (180).

In the fourth and last chapter, Cortínez examines a prominent example of Bernal’s literary legacy by analyzing the ways in which Carlos Fuentes has interpreted and even imitated the *Historia verdadera*. As a reader and critic of Bernal’s history, Fuentes played a prominent role in fostering the shift by which colonial Spanish American texts came to be studied as “literature.” Through an analysis of *Valiente mundo nuevo*, a series of essays based on lectures that Fuentes gave while a visiting professor at Harvard in the 1980s, Cortínez studies the “voluntary kinship” that the Mexican novelist establishes between the *Historia verdadera* and his own narrative,” as well as the “profound commentary” that the essays reveal about Fuentes’s own fictive creations. Cortínez finds conflicting impulses in Fuentes’s appreciation of the work of the *cronista*: “Se trata de una valoración doble, pues a medida que le asigna a Bernal un lugar de honor en las letras mexicanas y del continente, el escritor ejecuta un acto crítico con el cual se inventa un ilustre precursor a la vez que realiza una cartografía en la que todos los caminos parecen llevar a la preclara región del boom” (222). In particular, Cortínez focuses on the complexity of the analysis of the intermingling of history and fiction in *Terra nostra* (260) and on the author’s confession in “Las dos orillas” that his reading of the *Historia verdadera* is, in essence, a personal interpretation of the text (281).

*Memoria original de Bernal Díaz* is a literary tour de force in its own right, a work of solid scholarship written in prose that is both engaging and elegant. The author reveals an impressive command both of the historical and the literary criticism on Díaz del Castillo and on that of the Boom, and she brings a new level of precision to our understanding of the works she addresses. Cortínez's own contagious enthusiasm for her subject emerges on every page, and this work, perhaps more than any other I have read, communicates the originality of the *Historia verdadera* at the time that it was written, as well as the imaginative ways by which the *cronista* continues to captivate and conquer readers across the centuries.—SARAH H. BECKJORD, *Boston College*.

LYN DI IORIO SANDÍN. *Killing Spanish: Literary Essays on Ambivalent U.S. Latino/a Identity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 167 pages.

Lyn Di Iorio Sandín's underlying argument in *Killing Spanish* is that the many black doubles, dead mothers, masked machos, and other archetypes in U.S. Latino/a literature are allegorized versions of the fundamentally ambivalent Latino/a self caught between the pressures of assimilation into mainstream U.S. culture and the demands of loyalty to the community of origin. This ambitious collection of essays, which grew out of Di Iorio Sandín's doctoral dissertation, proposes a new typology of U.S. Latino/a literature founded upon the allegorical tendencies of the Latino/a author's fragmented psyche and then examines texts by authors such as Rosario Ferré, Cristina García, and Junot Díaz. By engaging a culturally diverse group of narratives and a variety of theoretical approaches, Di Iorio Sandín both avoids the limitations of criticism predicated on cultural specificity and offers compelling points of entry into Latino/a texts.

Starting with close readings of the echoing of magical realism in Cristina García's novels, Di Iorio Sandín cogently argues for the existence in some U.S. Latino texts of allegories whose referents are not only tied to the lost land of origins but also to twentieth century Caribbean and Latin American literary tradition. In Di Iorio Sandín's view, instances of magical realism in *The Agüero Sisters* and other Latino/a texts lack the deep faith so essential to Alejo Carpentier's formulation of *lo real maravilloso*, and this skepticism is one of the many ambivalences that structures U.S. Latino literary identity. This discussion is one of many in *Killing Spanish* that crosses boundaries between literary traditions and periods in order to elucidate the tendencies of U.S. Latino writing.

The essay on Rosario Ferré's narratives ("Killing Spanish") follows her evolving use of the house metaphor to chart her relationship to her languages and cultures, her "evolution from *autora puertorriqueña* to U.S. Latina writer" – a "self-conscious assimilation" that, even as it requires killing Spanish, "also chooses to keep on carrying and showcasing the corpse" (61). In the next essay, Di Iorio Sandín brings thoughtful analysis of Afro-Caribbean religion and Freudian psychoanalysis into her reading of Loida Maritza Pérez's protagonist in *Geographies of Home*. An upwardly mobile Latina from a working class Dominican family, the protagonist of *Geographies of Home* is burdened by her thoroughly ambivalent sense of identity. Di Iorio Sandín's insight that the book