

## BOOK REVIEWS

### GENERAL

*Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*. By GIUSEPPE BELLINI. Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1985. Bibliography. Indexes. Pp. ix, 814. Paper.

Ambitious projects such as this easily lend themselves to unfortunate factual errors and the exclusion of important works. Bellini has compiled a volume that is impressively accurate and complete. Its 19 chapters cover writing in all genres from the pre-Columbian period to the early 1980s, including such recent phenomena as the Colombian novel of the 1970s and early 1980s and Chilean poetry written in Chile and abroad after 1973. Seen in its totality, the study is a well-researched and balanced presentation of Spanish American literature.

Bellini's basic approach is to discuss the writers by nation, region or literary movement and in a chronological fashion. In his section on the "New Novel," for example, he begins with a 30-page introduction and then describes the phenomenon nation by nation, focusing primarily on one or two writers and then discussing the other contemporary novelists briefly. In the case of Chile, he deals with the work of José Donoso in some detail, and then mentions briefly Jorge Edwards, Antonio Skármeta, Hernán Valdés, Ariel Dorfman, Poli Délano, and a few others. The analyses are those of a traditional critic who must frequently deal with a writer using brief adjectives such as "*escritor original*" (description of Tomás Carrasquilla) or "*narrador vigoroso*" (Eduardo Zalamea Borda).

Errors are minor and infrequent. Bellini repeats Angel Rama's error in *La novela latinoamericana 1920-1980* (1982) by identifying Andrés Caicedo's magazine *Ojo al Cine* as a novel. Unlike Rama, however, Bellini recognizes the presence of one of Colombia's most talented young writers, Gustavo Alvarez Gardezabal. The section on recent Colombian theater, nevertheless, does not even mention one of Colombia's most important theater directors of the 1970s, Santiago García.

Despite these minor errors, this valuable book is one of the best introductions to Spanish-American literature and complete sources of information available. It will serve as an essential tool for scholars of Latin American literature and related fields for many years.

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