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Title

GIES, DAVID T, ed. The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature . Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 863 pp.

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1j9730jq

Journal

Mester, 34(1)

Author

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Publication Date

2005

DOI

10.5070/M3341014631

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GIES, DAVID T., ed. *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 863 pp.

An attempt to compile a historical, critical anthology of one of the world's richest literary traditions is undeniably a Herculean task. *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* is the first work of such magnitude to be published in English since the 1970s. Aside from being a great resource for teachers and students, it offers the general audience a brilliant introduction to the Spanish literary panorama, from its beginnings to the end of the last century. Especially helpful is an eleven-page chronology of important events on Spain's political and cultural stages, spanning from 2000 BC to AD 2000.

More than seven hundred and fifty pages of the book feature a collection of essays presented in ten parts, beginning with an excellent introduction by the editor, David T. Gies. His remarks astutely complicate the very meaning and making of a literary history in general. Some of the significant questions he raises take into account such contemporary theoretical sensibilities as Homi Bhabha's claim that literary history is "an act of forgetting," and Louise Bernikow's remarks on literary history as a "record of choices." What is left then is an attempt to register, as described by Stephen Greenblatt, "multiple voices across vast expenses of time and space" (12). Geis' explicit invitation to readers is to find value in a compilation that is porous and lacks cohesion, one that reflects the fragmented realities of our dynamically changing world.

Part II, *History and Canonicity*, problematizes the notions of "authorship, national context, and ideological determination" (35) behind the creation of literary canons. The following eight parts are comprised of various chapters thematically grouped around different eras, from the Medieval to the Post-Franco period. These fifty-five chapters chronologically examine specific literary and cultural genres: poetry, prose, film and theatre. Those interested in some of Spain's literary giants, whose works have come to define a certain period, will find commentaries dedicated exclusively to Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Cervantes, José de Larra, Galdós and García Lorca. Nonetheless, the compilation's novelty is its inclusion of lesser-known literary contributions, notably the Catalan *Renaixença* and modernist writers, *Noucentisme*, and the Catalan Avant-Garde. Another characteristic of the book is its interdisciplinary nature that generously

draws from cultural theories to engage us in, for instance, studies of film and censorship under Franco, and the language of new media in post-Franco Spain.

Although certain sections express the desire to at least name some non-canonical yet worthy authors, Gies's introductory honesty seems to persist: the collection is porous. Academics who are looking for an ambitious, up-to date compilation of Spanish literary history that does not simply exalt only the best-known authors, should find a suitable match. However, those scholars in search of a critical anthology with more focus on gender and class distinctions, among other categories, might not find enough emphasis to satisfy their research. Perhaps, consulting some fifty pages of the book's comprehensive bibliography will compensate for those gaps.

Still, none of the previous, similar compilations in English, such as: *The Literature of the Spanish People from Roman Times to the Present* (1957) by Gerald Brenan, *A New History of Spanish Literature* (1961/1991) by Richard E. Chandler and Kessel Schwartz, and *A Short History of Spanish Literature* (1979) by James R. Stamm, is extensive or inclusive enough, to compare to the long overdue contribution this terrific reference makes. It overflows with information deftly presented by some of the top international scholars. What the novice and the master will encounter is quite sufficient to inspire a substantial number of vigorous debates over the words effectively pronounced by Lawrence Lipking, at the end of the past century: "Literary history used to be impossible to write; lately it has become much harder" (12). *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* without a doubt offers its readers the most comprehensive attempt to favorably engage with such powerful thoughts.

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