

Swarthmore College

Works

Spanish Faculty Works

Fall 1985

Review Of "Narrative Irony In The Contemporary Spanish American Novel" By J. E. Tittler

John J. Hassett

Swarthmore College, jhasset1@swarthmore.edu

[Let us know how access to this work benefits you.](#)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-spanish>

 Part of the [Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

John J. Hassett. (1985). "Review Of "Narrative Irony In The Contemporary Spanish American Novel" By J. E. Tittler". *Hispanic Review*. Volume 53, Issue 4. 515-516.
<http://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-spanish/48>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the Swarthmore College Libraries. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spanish Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact myworks@swarthmore.edu.

Review

Author(s): John J. Hassett

Review by: John J. Hassett

Source: *Hispanic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Autumn, 1985), pp. 515-516

Published by: [University of Pennsylvania Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/473955>

Accessed: 21-08-2015 16:59 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Pennsylvania Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Hispanic Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

la crítica psicológica, sugiere la pertinencia de aplicar las teorías de Freud a aquella obra, mientras prefiere un acercamiento junguiano para *Motivos de son*, cuyos poemas interpreta Ellis no como conflictos raciales sino amorosos.

Contribuye también al esclarecimiento de la obra de Guillén el diálogo que establece Ellis entre poemas cronológicamente distantes pero allegados temáticamente, como es el caso de "Muerte" en su obra *La paloma de vuelo popular*, que contiene poemas escritos entre 1947 y 1958, en el que se adopta una actitud desafiante ante la muerte en el verso ". . . ¡Te vi primero!" que cierra el poema y que recuerda la actitud del hablante en el poema "Pero que te pueda ver," del libro *El son entero* (1947), actitud que refleja el materialismo de Guillén y la consistencia de su postura ideológica (pág. 146).

En las conclusiones de la tercera parte establece Ellis un paralelo entre Guillén y Martí, y llega a afirmar que la síntesis lograda en el proceso dialéctico de la poesía de Guillén lo convierte no ya en poeta de la negritud, sino en el cantor de la identidad nacional. Asimismo niega la importancia del folklore y del realismo mágico en la poesía de Guillén.

Al final se incluyen un útil glosario de términos literarios, una vasta bibliografía de y sobre la obra de Guillén, así como un índice onomástico y otro de poemas y obras citadas.

ESTRELLA BUSTO OGDEN

Villanova University

Narrative Irony in the Contemporary Spanish American Novel. By Jonathan E. Tittler. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984. 210 pages.

If, as Jonathan Tittler says, narrative irony is a phenomenon found in texts whose narrator/characters withhold vital information from one another, whose overall lack of clarity causes unceasing disorientation for the reader, whose narrative calls attention to itself as a linguistic artifact that is independent of the world it represents, whose primary traits include disjunction and discontinuity, and whose meaning always seems to be "some place else," then it should surprise no one that the author under review finds ample opportunity to examine this phenomenon in Spanish America's contemporary novel.

From a theoretical standpoint Tittler's study is highly indebted (a debt which he clearly acknowledges) to Wayne Booth's classic works, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Booth has provided Tittler with a model for irony that underscores the importance of the

implicit exchange between author, narrator, characters and reader. Throughout his book Tittler investigates how these entities interact, establishing the principle of esthetic distance as the fundamental element of the ironic mode.

The book is divided into two parts about: (1) static irony and (2) kinetic irony. Part one, composed of four chapters, examines narrative irony in four well-known Spanish American novels: Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, Puig's *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*, and Cabrera Infante's *Three Trapped Tigers*. It is in this section of his study that Tittler investigates primarily, although not exclusively, the structure of the narrator, the world of character relations and the role of the reader. Part two is less concerned with who and what are represented in the novels and views the work of fiction more as a verbal construct through which such representations of beings and events occur. Here Tittler comments on Vargas Llosa's *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, Cortázar's *A Manual for Manuel* and Goldemberg's *The Fragmented Life of Don Jacobo Lerner*. He explores in these novels the very thin line that separates irony and play and irony and narrative fragmentation, with particular emphasis upon how these aspects affect the acts of reception and interpretation.

There is much in this book that is insightful, thought-provoking and original. Tittler, through his careful readings and eloquent prose, clarifies extremely well the interaction among the principal elements of the narrative world and the way in which this interaction conveys meaning. If there is any shortcoming in this study, it is a tendency toward vagueness in defining and establishing categories. This is particularly true in the use of the terms "static" and "kinetic" in connection with irony. But this is really minor since any initial confusion is alleviated through context. Tittler's goal in undertaking this study was not to provide his readers with an historical approach to the novel, nor was he concerned with maximum coverage of the field. Rather, he has selected judiciously a small number of novels which demonstrate convincingly that irony, as he understands it, represents one of the essential properties of today's Spanish American fiction. Fortunately, by using English translations of these novels he has not restricted himself to a Spanish-speaking audience, and as a result his book will be of great interest to both the non-specialist and specialist, as well as to the critical theorist.

JOHN J. HASSETT

Swarthmore College