

**Maier, Linda S. and Isabel Dulfano, eds.** *Woman as Witness: Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. Pp. 218. ISBN 0-8204-6324-8.

This thought-provoking selection of ten essays and two testimonial texts examines the topic of testimonial literature written by women in Latin America. The anthology also charts the genre's relationship with literary criticism throughout its history. The essays in the first part of the anthology discuss the friction between two different approaches to testimonial literature—viewing testimonial literature as aesthetically versus politically driven. The essays in the second and third parts study specific testimonial texts from Central America and North and South America, respectively, while returning to the ever-present theme of aesthetics as opposed to politics. Finally, the fourth part is comprised of two original testimonials from Argentina. This last component distinguishes the anthology as a unique contribution to the canon of criticism on testimonial texts as it proves that the editors are dedicated to further advancing their readers' exposure to primary texts within the testimonial genre.

Maier's introduction to the anthology, "The Case for and Case History of Women's Testimonial Literature in Latin America," provides an extensive overview of the genre, touching upon pre-twentieth-century texts before proceeding to what she considers the post-1970 phenomenon of the contemporary testimonial. In her introduction, Maier emphasizes the anthology's focus on women's testimonial writing because, as she contends, "no single volume addresses the related issues of women's experience as expressed in Latin American testimonial writing" (2). Furthermore, Maier launches the issue of studying testimonial from the perspective of aesthetics or viewing the genre from a political standpoint, a concern that will be further developed later in the anthology. Finally, Maier includes an extensive and valuable bibliography on testimonial literature and criticism.

Part I, "Latin American Women's Testimonial Literature: Critical Issues and Challenges," includes four essays on testimonial's relationship with criticism. Marilyn May Lombardi's contribution to the anthology effectively warns critics against removing the human subject from her story in testimonial literature, questioning Georg M. Gugelberger's approach to *I, Rigoberta*

*Menchú* as an example. In her essay, Joanna R. Bartow presents testimonial criticism's colonizing tendencies that arise from the transcriber's relationship with the subject and concludes by celebrating the writings of the Chilean novelist Diamela Eltit as illustrations of how to overcome these tendencies. Sophia A. McClennen's essay on testimonial and film expresses reservations about the propensity toward considering these two genres solely as narrative texts and challenges critics to view them from the standpoint of their respective theories. Finally, Isabel Dulfano's essay discusses the issues facing testimonial literature in the future, synchronizing the various viewpoints thus far presented in the anthology.

Part 2, "Woman as Witness in Central America," begins with Donald L. Shaw's essay on Nidia Díaz's *Nunca estuve sola*. Shaw recognizes that testimonial literature encompasses an aesthetic as well as a documentary dimension, thus uniting the two conflicting approaches to the genre presented in the other essays (105). In her essay on the testimonials of Nidia Díaz and Ana Guadalupe Martínez, Vicki Román-Lagunas distinguishes testimonial as a vehicle for a broader notion of Latin American feminism.

Part 3, "Woman as Witness in North and South America," commences with Mary G. Berg's study of the testimonials generated by Argentinean Agustina Palacio de Libarona's life story. Mimi Y. Yang's contribution to the anthology is an analysis of Victoria Ocampo's autobiographical writings and the struggle between her public/inner lives. Ana García Chichester returns to the issue of the aesthetic versus the political in her examination of Elena Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*. García Chichester effectively presents Poniatowska's troubled relationship with Josefina Bórquez, the subject of the literary testimonial. Finally, Alyce Cook examines two of Luisa Valenzuela's novels as allegorical fiction and proposes this as the only style of testimonial open to Argentina during the years of dictatorship leading up to and including the *proceso*.

Mary G. Berg's introduction to Part 4, "Argentine Women's Testimonial Texts: Toward the Formation of a Canon," is followed by two original testimonial texts from Argentina: *Infortunios de la matrona santiagueña doña Agustina Palacio de Libarona la Heroína del Bracho (1840-42)* and an excerpt from *A Single, Numberless Death*. Significantly, the editors credit Palacio de Libarona herself with the authorship of her text although it was transcribed by Benjamin Poucel and later edited by Palacio de Libarona. Furthermore, the inclusion of two very different testimonials in this anthology enriches the reader's exposure to the genre; the first text is a 1925 edition of an 1856 text about a woman's experience of oppression in nineteenth-century Argentina, whereas the second is a fragmented and experimental twentieth-century account of life during the Argentine *proceso* written by Nora Strejilevich. The fortunate decision on the part of Maier and Dulfano to conclude their anthology with these testimonials establishes the anthology's commitment to the genre as well as its commitment to a better approach to testimonial that does not overshadow the voice of the subject.

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