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Book Review: De Perlas

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): De Perlas by Angela Labarca, Olgalucía G. Gonzáles and Elmer A. Rodríguez

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personajes animados para dar mensajes estéticos, en lugar de éticos. Zapata no se interesa en opinar, su objetivo es sentir y contemplar. Celebrar el mundo con gesto panteísta, como cuando dice en "Las siete señales": "Pareciera ridículo pedir todo esto al Señor del todo y la nada. Hoy sólo deseamos leer la caligrafía de las hojas mojadas por la lluvia..." (28).

En "Falda de flores" el poeta retoma el tema erótico, que tan bien encausara en su libro anterior. En este poema, identifica los muslos de la amada con dos poemas, "dos libros derramados", libros nada menos que de Quevedo y Neruda. Concluye el poema: "Los viejos poetas están aquí entre nosotros, / bajo los bosques recorren las sombras perdidas, y reescriben / sobre la grama pacientemente tus encantos" (33). Aquí la belleza física y sensual se ha vuelto poesía, no hay distancia entre el cuerpo y las palabras. En la tercera parte del libro reaparece el ave alegórica: el cuervo, a la que también cantara en *Lumbre de la letra*. El cuervo en esta ocasión es el consejero del poeta, que le enseña moral poética. Dice el poeta: "De vez en cuando me habla al oído, quiero que redima mi alma" (41). El cuervo invisible es como la mirada del poeta, que se oculta en las alturas para espiar el mundo.

En las dos últimas secciones de *Escribir bajo el polvo* el poeta continúa elevando su tenor lírico. Es poesía en prosa que aspira al canto ceremonial para celebrar la naturaleza. No es extraño que aparezca Orfeo en el libro, ni que haya un poema dedicado a un poeta amigo, Jorge Tellier, titulado "El vino y el magnolio." El libro concluye en el cielo, porque aspira a la altura estelar. El poeta (el cuervo) necesita volar. El vuelo poético es la substancia de su canto. Dice en "Cuervo en el desierto": "...salgo a volar, como ahora que escribo desde el aire, / sin pensar en nada, perdido en lo celeste..." (56). No es extraño, entonces, que esta poesía de altura culmine en el cielo. M. A. Zapata tiene un concepto propio de lo lírico: la poesía, considera, eleva la visión, las sensaciones, y finalmente, eleva al poema en su propio lenguaje. El lenguaje elevado es el lenguaje del canto. Su poema en prosa es de un intenso lirismo, en que el ritmo del verso libre es reemplazado por la plasticidad y el dinamismo de las imágenes alusivas. La temática ahora provee el motivo del canto. El canto habita en los seres, y no en la rima del verso. El lirismo reside en la visión contemplativa del misterio poético.

Con este poemario Miguel Angel Zapata se establece, dentro de la poesía peruana e hispa-

noamericana, como uno de los cultores más originales del poema en prosa. Iniciado por Charles Baudelaire, ampliamente experimentado por nuestros modernistas, ensayado por los poetas de vanguardia y los contemporáneos, esta forma, nunca totalmente aclimatada en nuestro idioma, gana en Zapata uno de sus poetas más finos e innovadores, como queda finalmente demostrado en este libro.

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PEDAGOGY/LINGUISTICS

Labarca, Angela, Olgalucía G. González and Elmer A. Rodríguez. *De Perlas*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998. ISBN 0471109975. 293 pp.

De Perlas is an intermediate Spanish text that aims to develop students' language skills using a career-oriented approach and a cross-cultural analysis. Unlike other texts, *De Perlas* focuses on advanced grammatical structures and linguistic patterns without repeating basic structures from the first year. A self-evaluation at the end of each chapter offers learners opportunity to monitor their own progress. A distinct benefit of this text is a wide range of materials dealing with professional and global concerns that may affect student perspectives on Spanish language and culture. The text is accompanied by a student tape, a workbook, laboratory manual and tapes, and an Instructor's Resource Guide.

De Perlas is written primarily in Spanish with communicative exercises and activities. This text is organized into seven chapters with a variety of themes from personal to professional and social issues, such as "food and health," "the world and the environment," and "literature and arts." Each chapter is divided into four major sections: "Para comenzar," "Sigamos adelante," "Continuemos," and "Finalmente." The chapter begins with a listening exercise that allows students to practice vocabulary related to the topic. The vocabulary is presented within the context using sentences or useful expressions in Spanish rather than the English translation. Both structured and open-ended exercises allow students to practice new words in a meaningful way. The "Sigamos adelante" section focuses on developing students' reading comprehension and strategies using authentic materials. The section ends with "Perlitas" which contains short readings recorded as listening passages to reinforce both reading and listening skills in related con-

texts.

The "Continuemos" presents specific grammatical structures and practices with a series of controlled and open-ended exercises. Grammatical structures are presented with the explanations in English and the examples in Spanish. Most of the exercises are guided using prescribed models. However, some of them may not allow the learner to create with the language. A distinct feature of this section is "Fijate Bien," which deals with words and structures that Intermediate students may encounter when interacting with others. For instance, the usage of "como," "puesto que," "ya que," and "porque" can be found in Chapter 4 of the text. Each chapter concludes with the "Finalmente" section which provides more listening practice and writing exercises. Generally speaking, the materials presented in this section are more challenging than other sections. For instance, the script of the listening passage does not appear in the student text. Students are advised to listen to the tape four times and each time they are guided with specific instructions. The purpose is to have students develop their listening strategies and skills from the previous listening exercises to complete the last listening passage. Guided writing exercises followed by the listening practice are carefully designed to allow students to use the chapter's vocabulary and grammar. The "Autoprueba," a self-evaluation that includes vocabulary, grammar, writing and oral practice can be found at the end of each chapter.

Overall, *De Perlas* is a fine option for use with Spanish intermediate students. One of the positive attributes of the text is the career-oriented approach that allows students to explore specific vocabulary, expressions, and cultural knowledge and awareness for professional needs. The authors have done a good job of introducing more advanced linguistic patterns without repeating the basic grammar from first year and incorporating a variety of the exercises into each chapter. These exercises are generally communicative-based and succeed in engaging students in practicing vocabulary, grammar points and writing. However, teachers will have to use supplementary materials for the development of students' oral skills.

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Maceri, Domenico. *Grammar Workbook for Introductory Spanish.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000. ISBN: 0-07-244025-2. 237 pp.

This third edition of the workbook has been thoroughly revised and expanded with eleven extra chapters. For use in first-year classes or for review, the grammar is presented in a logical progression beginning with nouns and present-tense regular verbs and ending with compound tenses and the subjunctive. Variety in the types of exercises keeps practicing from becoming monotonous. Simple fill-ins of forms, substitutions, translations, switching from singular to plural or between tenses, circling the correct form of possible forms, completing charts, and providing corresponding indefinite or negative words are some of the exercises. Each lesson begins with simple exercises and progresses to more complex ones with the context or situation noted for the particular usage of the forms. Opportunity for review abounds with exercises at the end of each lesson and a comprehensive review section in the back of the book.

Although the *vosotros* form is introduced as being used in Spain, it is not presented in each chapter. Shaded boxes in each lesson present verb or other grammar charts, and these are followed by grammar terms in Spanish and English and by basic grammar rules. Explanations are concise but adequate and are written in much the same way that an instructor might introduce and explain them in class. Exercises are introduced in the same manner. Reminders and examples appear with exercises as needed, and reminders often are restatements of the rules for forming the verb or grammar point. Students should find this reassuring as they begin the exercises.

Lessons begin with concisely-stated rules and continue with examples prior to the exercises themselves. A bonus at the end of some chapters comes in the form of tips that often refer to the spoken rather than written language, and language patterns of native speakers are cited for comparison.

As with most workbooks, some sentences used in the exercises tend to be somewhat random. However, the topics reflect items of interest to students, including what they do on weekends, what they and the instructor do in class, what their families do, and what their plans are for the future. Contemporary personalities and issues are mentioned, and it would be quite an easy progression for the instructor to extend discussion after the initial answer is presented.

Several lessons focus on groups of verbs. Forms and uses of *ser* and *estar* are presented in separate chapters with plenty of exercises