Hijuelos, Oscar (1951-) Encyclopedia Article

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Hijuelos, Oscar (1951—)

New Yorker Oscar Hijuelos' bestselling novels are epic family sagas of the twentieth-century Cuban-American experience. His debut, *Our House in the Last World* (1983), charts the cultural identity crisis of two brothers and their Cuban-born parents in New York during the years after World War II. Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989) flamboyantly depicts 1950s New York as a musical, multicultural melting pot. The Irish-Cuban protagonist of *The Fourteen Sisters of Emilio Montez O'Brien* (1993) is torn between fulfilling the mainstream American Dream of movie stardom and the doting, redeeming love of his all-female family. All of Hijuelos' novels, including even the more understated and contemplative *Mr. Ives' Christmas* (1995), exhibit a troubled fascination with the cultural hegemony of Hollywood. It is therefore appropriately ironic that the 1992 Warner Brothers production, *The Mambo Kings*, brought Hijuelos' work to a wider, moviegoing public.