

BOOKREVIEWS

César Domínguez, Haun Saussy & Darío Villanueva, *Introducing Comparative Literature: New Trends and Applications*. Routledge, 2015, pp.169.

This volume is a synthetic and yet comprehensive contribution to the teaching of Comparative Literature in a wide range of situations. The three authors, César Domínguez, Haun Saussy and Darío Villanueva are well-known scholars in the field, and provide different overviews of very diverse aspects of the discipline. Villanueva is the current director of the Royal Academy of Letters in Spain (Real Academia Española), Saussy is also a reputable scholar who has presided institutions such as the American Comparative Literature Association, and Domínguez is currently Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration, a position which has allowed him to call attention to the role of the discipline in glocal and multicentric (not just global) contexts.

The book is divided in nine chapters. Chapters 1, 8 and 9 are written by Villanueva, 2, 3, 7 by Domínguez, and 4, 5, 6 by Saussy. From the first pages, the volume establishes Comparative Literature as a process of writing, reading, and circulation (including translation, adaptation and so on). This process exhibits replicative patterns, analogical and differential structures at various spatial scales and across time-periods. As the celebrated essay by Claudio Guillén, "Literature as system" ("La literatura como sistema") stated, literature is a complex process where a work, as David Damrosch also points out, "has an effective life as world literature whenever wherever [...] beyond its original culture" (*What is World Literature?* 173, cited in Domínguez, Saussy and Villanueva 3) Indeed, the difficulties in defining the discipline, a topic which re-emerges again and again at each meeting of the International Comparative Association, have to do with its non-linear qualities that show correlations, variations and loops across time and space, only comparable to complexity models in dynamic systems theory.

Thus, although each chapter focuses on particular issues, the ongoing discussion which emerges in this cohesive, yet open, volume, shows the nodes, twists and turns upon which the controversies of the discipline are built. These controversies evidence that comparative literature is far from dead, and that those who enjoy doing comparatism, whether we engage in quests, puzzles or patchwork, following the dictates of convergent, divergent, problem-solving, or other types of thought processes, will be able to continue to perform both distant and close readings, and draw analogies as well as paradoxes; all the more if we are able to read in several languages and across an increasing wider range of cultural contexts.

The volume sows its 'seed values' in chapter 1, where Darío Villanueva establishes the framework upon which the complexity of the discipline is based; that is, in rhizomatic networking between poetics, literary theory, literary criticism and literary history, each of them with their own distinct traditions and methodologies. The chapter also covers the evolution of the discipline, from its beginning, in close textual scrutiny, to a growing panorama of contexts and cultures; beyond the comparison of schools, themes, motifs, symbols and national pursuits, to the natural dispersion of its atomic sections in transnational polyglot dialogues, the natural result of the migrant and

exiled perspectives of many comparatists who realized that their languages, cultures, and nations were no longer one. The 'ideological vicissitudes' of uncertainty, dissent and postmodern deconstruction have, paradoxically, grown new stolons to the "wider consideration of the literary phenomenon" (13). As Prof. Villanueva explores systemic paradigms in work by Tynyanov, *Mukařovský*, Vodička, Jauss, Lotman, Groeben, Schmidt, Tötösy, Lambert, Marino, Casanova, Miner or Skwarczynska, among others, he insists that the perennial crisis of the discipline, with its runners in Bassnett's translation studies, Bernheimer's cultural turn, Chakravorty Spivak's death of Western models, or Damrosch's world literature, among others, needs to be recontextualized within the discussion of the impact of the humanities in education across distinct spatiotemporal settings.

The traditional division between the French and American schools is the object of chapter 2, which focuses on interliterary theory and the contributions coming from Slovak scholar Dionýz Ďurišin. *César Domínguez's argument stems from Jonathan Culler's view that critical theory "is not an account of the nature of literature or methods for its study [...] but a body of thinking and writing whose limits are exceedingly hard to define" (Literary Theory 3 cited in Domínguez 20). Culler bases his approach, argues Domínguez, in practical problem-solving, just as Ďurišin's conception of interliterary laws. Indeed, the aim of this chapter is to cultivate other structural axes, vascular parallels to the American-French core embodied by René Wellek (1958) and Paul Van Tieghem (1931) respectively. Ďurišin's proposal "aimed to trace literary growth from national literature to world literature" (25), and he did so by establishing relations not just between two elements, "but at several levels simultaneously, such as, for instance, between the source element, the target element, and their respective contexts, or between the source- and target-systems and their contexts." (25) Domínguez does an excellent job at establishing the importance of Ďurišin's interliterary relationships and forms of reception, all of which enable the author to balance genetic filiations and typological affinities at the individual-psychological and sociological levels as well as at the level of representation. Interestingly, Ďurišin's work only became instrumental and visible to Western scholars in the 1980s, when Douwe W. Fokkema responded to rumours of crisis within the discipline with his discussion on the "attitude of tolerance towards other patterns of culture" ("Cultural Relativism" 240 cited in Domínguez 31). It is in this regard that Ďurišin's contribution remains significant and largely unexplored. Chapter 2 ends with a number of practical showcases intended to provide visible applications of Ďurišin's theory on interliterary communities, including aspects such as plurifunctionality, complementariness of oral tradition, and the delayed incorporation of literary items to the cultures of given communities, a factor that points to the discussion on decoloniality in the following chapter.*

As Domínguez indicates, the debate on the role of postcolonial writings in canon formation (see Bernheimer Report 44) took place during the process of decolonization and the growth of new nation-states (former colonies) and national literatures (42). If as Walter Mignolo has shown, "de-colonial shift [...] is a process of de-linking," ("Delinking" 452 cited in Domínguez 43), where should comparison be located? In order to provide some answers to this question, Domínguez approaches

the field of comparative philosophy, by means of corms or internodes to the work of Raimundo Panikkar, Cao Shunqing, and Zhi Yu, as well as various Latin American scholars. The chapter goes on to show the tensions between 'delinking', which seeks mutually exclusive representations between cultures and heightens differences, and Lu Xing's idea of "ambiguous similarities" (50). All of these new shoots enlarge the project of comparative literature.

The following chapters, 4, 5, 6, authored by Prof. Saussy discuss the concept of 'world literature' in relation to comparative literature, and extend the thematic circulation of literary texts as a means to reach spaces and times no longer present. Chapter 6 introduces the problem of diverse languages, translation and untranslatables. Saussy's project is based upon three carefully differentiated and contextualized understandings which he goes on to simultaneously replicate and expand in each of his chapters: a) artistic creation balanced against the modes of perception and blindness specific to a given context; b) a sympathetic insight which transcends eras and cultures, balanced against the mediation of translation and reciprocal literary history; and c) the individuality of works and cultures, balanced against the marketplace of communication (59). The author starts from an account of world literature that relates Goethe's and Marx and Engels' contributions, and goes on to discuss Pascale Casanova's, David Damrosch's or Franco Moretti's, among others. A parenchyma of issues such as education, acculturation and transculturation, his discussion of cannon formation and the literary world system includes the provocative suggestion of contemplating words, texts and their contexts in terms of inventions, answering social and cognitive needs, where "their diffusion in space and time requires a special sharpening of the comparatist's optic", for the history of literature "should be no only of authors, works, and movements, but of the discovery and adaptive use by readers of such 'equipment for living'" (67). Along these lines, chapter 5 explores the comparison of themes and images as an ethnographer would; that is, employing different tools and techniques under different conditions of use. The discussion opens up possibilities to inter-art comparison beyond formal aesthetics, translation, as well as national and transnational intercultural reception, by including the context of authorship, distribution and circulation of literature, the conditions of close and distant readership, and the material conditions, from orality to print and digitalization. Chapter 6 provides further insights into the problems of translation, its invisibility, transduction, and occasional untranslatability. Saussy's claim that "perhaps between any two languages there is a zone of mutual borrowing, a zone where translation is superfluous or always erroneous" reminds us that those in the comparative zone should cherish the benefits of reading in various languages. Indeed, he asserts that "the existence of translations should never be an excuse for maintaining monolingualism. On the map of comparative literature, monolingualism is blank. Through attention to multilingualism, code-mixing, and creolity, comparatists can make translation something other than a connector between two blank zones." (87).

As mentioned, the fractal structure of the volume mirrors that of the discipline of comparative literature, as each chapter hints simultaneously back and forth, and at several levels. In Chapter 7, it is Domínguez again who attempts to map the lessons to be learnt from comparative literature history. In doing this, he extends notions already

introduced in earlier chapters while, at the same time, he throws for a loop. The chapter presents some relevant contributions of the AILC/ICLA Committee on "comparative literary histories," with a plural that suggests the interliterary relations among communities. This part speaks of maps, nodes and marginocentric points, bringing to the fore the systemic approach used. As before, the discussion is sustained with references to the works of relevant researchers, such as Marcel Cornis Pope and John Neubauer, as well as showcases intended to make the theoretical points more visible to students and scholars alike.

The last two chapters are again by Prof. Villanueva. He provides a certain closure to the elliptical circle while simultaneously opening up to inter-artistic comparison, the history of ekphrasis, and the dialogue between literature, music, the plastic arts, cinema and so on. The book ends with "the return to literature," a chapter that replicates issues and controversies presented in the volume. However, such replicative transpositions introduce contemporary concerns on the role of hypertextual formats and digitalization: "it is important to note the extent to which the technologies of alphabetization and movable type *echo* and need one another in their *atomizing* approach to language and their centralizing mode of production and distribution. To the industrial character of European printing, one might contrast the East Asian *boo*, which, produced from carved wooden blocks, retain its roots in calligraphy, handicraft and domestic industry." (127; emphasis added) Thus, in the wake of the debate over the past and future of comparative literature, one of the paths opened by the volume brings us back to the present of Ithaca by a *commodious* vicus of recirculation. Always already we find ourselves in solitary confinement, enjoying the domestic pleasures of reading this wonderful volume and writing this review, possibly the most fundamental reasons why we do comparative literature at all. The glossary and the list of further reading provide additional strolls and twists.

Andrés Pérez-Simón, *Drama, literatura, filosofía. Itinerarios del realismo y el modernismo europeos* [Drama, Literature, Philosophy: Itineraries of European Realism and Modernism], Madrid: Fundamentos, 2015, pp.192.

The monograph *Drama, Literature, Philosophy: Itineraries of European Realism and Modernism* (written in Spanish) proposes a new conceptualization of the history of European and Spanish literature by means of a theoretical and historical analysis of three genres of particular relevance at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century: the dialogic novel, the philosophical drama, and the exuberant drama.

Pérez-Simón's conceptualization of the dramatic text as hybrid space between narrative and drama recognizes an intellectual debt with *Drama as Literature*, a study published by Jiří Veltruský in 1977. Based on Veltruský's work, the author proposes a dialogue between the fields of narratology and dramatic theory in order to explain the structural characteristics of a diverse body of texts that complicate the generic distinction between narrative and drama. Pérez-Simón approaches the dramatic text as space of interaction between literature and philosophy. Shaw and Unamuno, whose works he discusses in the second chapter, are two examples of this phenomenon. To

conceptualize dramatic writing as something that converges with the philosophical activity, the author refers to recent contributions in the field theatrical theory such as those by Martin Puchner, Freddie Rokem and Evelyn Gould. Pérez-Simón also establishes a dialogue between Veltruský's work and the Spanish scholars María del Carmen Bobes-Naves and José Luis García Barrientos, as well as discussing Gérard Genette's strict separation between narrative (diegesis) and drama (mimesis) in the light of studies by narratologists such as Marie-Laure Ryan, Seymour Chatman and Manfred Jahn.

In addition to recognizing the recent debates on the topic, the author places drama, literature and philosophy in a dialogue with a new concept of modernism as a literary and cultural phenomenon. He argues, for instance, that the historical narrative drawn by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane in *Modernism: A guide to European literature, 1890-1930* has become obsolete with the emergence of the journal *Modernism/Modernity* in 1994, which then evolved into the official publication the Modernist Studies Association, founded in 1998. The founding publishers of *Modernism/Modernity*, Lawrence Rainey and Robert von Hallberg define modernism as a radical art movement which completely altered the shape of the production, transmission and reception of the arts in line with the changes taking place simultaneously in disciplines such as philosophy, historiography and social theory, not to mention the scientific discoveries that the modernists claimed as part of their cultural revolution. In line with the expansion of disciplinary boundaries, the journal *Modernism/Modernity*, argues Pérez-Simón, engaged, in the year of its launching, a special issue on F. T. Marinetti, the leader of Italian Futurism, not taken into consideration by Bradbury and McFarlane who had identified modernism almost exclusively with the stylistic experiments of Joyce's and Woolf's narratives, and the poetry of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. *Modernism/Modernity* and the Modernist Studies Association also published research that modified the limits attributed to literary and cultural modernism in order to reach the middle of the 19th century, counting on the judicial persecution of Gustave Flaubert and Charles Baudelaire as historic pioneers of the movement.

Facing the problem of how to define modernism as a unitary transnational movement or a plurality of national movements, Pérez-Simón mentions the work of Fredric Jameson as well as the trend signalled by *Modernism/Modernity*, which would define modernism as the artistic reaction to the sociological, technological and scientific changes of 'modernity', understanding 'the new' as a central concept of the logic of individualism and capitalism. Indeed, as Pérez-Simón indicates, the problem is associated to the complexity of a series of artistic demonstrations which can be characterized by hybrid discourses, present in "the dialogic novel", exemplified by Galdós and Joyce, "the philosophical drama", explored in Unamuno and Shaw, and "the exuberant drama" in Flaubert and Joyce.

Thus, the first chapter, "the dialogic novel", explores this hybrid form, midway between narrative and drama, which featured representatives in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. The dialogic novel is free from the intrusions of the narrator, and the presentation of the action also hides this presence so that everything seems to happen as a performance on stage. Pérez-Simón goes on to demonstrate its origins in Flaubert's narratives. The author's research benefits from

materials as diverse as notebooks, letters and prefaces to elucidate the theoretical discourse that explains the hybrid generic practices of Flaubert, Galdós and Joyce.

In the second chapter, "the philosophical drama", the author starts from Martin Puchner's conception of "drama of ideas", that emerges in early nineteenth century inspired by the Platonic tradition. Here he distinguishes two evolutionary lines: the first following Friedrich Schleiermacher's translation of Plato's works and the hermeneutical readings he proposes where he points out the importance of the dramatic features in dialogue; the second line is a "philosophy of tragedy", in Peter Szondi's words, which culminates in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. Pérez-Simón presents Shaw as a representative of this philosophical-theatrical tradition that originates in the modern readings of Plato's dialogues, an affiliation that the Irish playwright acknowledges in the preface of *Man and Superman* and which, according to Shaw himself, extends to work by Schopenhauer, Ibsen and Nietzsche. In this regard, the author demonstrates the inadequacy of cataloguing Shaw as an Edwardian dramatist. In the same chapter he also focuses on Unamuno, his hostility to commercial drama as well as his tendency to contemplate theatre as a collective spectacle in line with classic Greek tragedy.

The third chapter, "the exuberant drama" reconstructs the literary and philosophical sources that characterize a drama constituted by opposing discourses and spatio-temporal displacements, the overflowing presence of many characters, and the confusion between fiction (even hallucination) and reality. As Gould observes in *Virtual Theatre*, dramatic works in this period function as private spaces for a philosophical dialogue that takes shape in what Gould defines as virtual scenarios. Pérez-Simón finds the theoretical precedents of "exuberant drama" in the defence that Friedrich Schlegel makes of creativity and imagination in the wake of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Pérez-Simón starts from Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, where hundreds of inserted passages refer to Kant, Hegel and Spinoza. In this chapter, the author also concentrates on "Circe", an episode included in Joyce's *Ulysses* which constitutes the longest chapter, with nearly 150 pages in the canonical edition of Hans Walter Gabler. The episode's peculiar arrangement and structure, consisting of highly surrealist dramatic dialogue, contrast with the meticulous realism that prevails in the rest of the Joyce's novel. Pérez-Simón explores the exuberance of this chapter of *Ulysses* as a very different trend to the one observed in Joyce's dramatic passages in *Dubliners*, where his own theory of "epiphanies" was introduced for the first time.

In sum, in *Drama, Literature, Philosophy: Itineraries of European Realism and Modernism*, Pérez-Simón draws three vectors, "the dialogic novel", "the philosophical drama" and "the exuberant drama" which are particularly important in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The study of these fields, characterized by the contradictory presence of literary, theatrical and philosophical discourses, helps the author reconceptualize the period known as modernism, and the debate on the sociological and philosophical limits of modernity. Pérez-Simón's argument is that these three lines are manifestations of evolutionary movements that are clearly visible from the nineteenth century. When selecting the six case studies that make up his study, Galdós, Unamuno, Shaw, Flaubert and Joyce, Pérez-Simón observes that the three vectors, "the dialogic novel", "the philosophical drama" and

“the exuberant drama”, crystallize in their works as well as in a varied repertoire of reflections present in letters, interviews and introductions. The second chapter, dedicated to the intersection of theatrical and philosophical discourses, operates as a hinge between “the dialogic novel” and “the exuberant drama”

Drama, Literature, Philosophy: Itineraries of European Realism and Modernism is ground-breaking in that it opens a new line of research that challenges the boundaries of literary and discursive genres. It also questions traditional approaches to the dramatic texts and their staging. Finally, the volume facilitates new ways to problematize modernity in European literary history. In reconsidering the Spanish and European historiography from the practice of comparative literature, the author continues the path of renewal initiated by Ricardo Gullón in 1969, and expanded more recently by various researchers (Cardwell, McGuirk, Mainer, Gracia, Santiáñez, among others), a path that does not contemplate Spanish literature in isolation, but as part of the European literary tradition. The book explores decades of literary, theatrical and philosophical discourses, an interest that crystallizes in the writings of the authors explored, as well as in a wide range of reflections that appear in their letters, interviews and prologues.

Asunción López-Varela
Universidad Complutense Madrid
alopezva@ucm.es

Scollon, Ron, and Scollon, Suzie, Wong, (2003) *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World*, London/New York: Routledge.

Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World authored by Ron Scollon and Suzie Wong Scollon is mainly about discourses located in the material world within the framework of ‘geosemiotics’. This textbook examines the social meanings of the ‘situatedness’ of language and discourse in the physical world. It aims at providing the researchers, particularly students, with the methodology and models necessary for pioneering in the field of ‘geosemiotics’.

The book consists of a preface, ten chapters, a glossary of terms, and references. With the exception of Chapter one, five, and ten, the rest of chapters have a practical and theoretical section. These include ‘geosemiotics’, ‘indexicality’, ‘visual semiotics’, ‘Interlude on geosemiotics’, ‘Code preference’, ‘Inscription’, ‘Emplacement’, ‘Discourses in space and time’, and ‘Indexicality, dialogicality, and selection in action’.

Chapter one and two discuss the concept of ‘geosemiotics’ and ‘indexicality’ respectively. As just maintained by Scollon and Scollon (2003:1), ‘geosemiotics’ considers the role played by the interaction order, visual semiotics, and place semiotics in discourses which exist in the material world. Accordingly, it considers the indexical nature of communication situated in time and space to convey meaning. This means that ‘indexicality’ is the basis to understand ‘geosemiotics’.

In chapter three and four, we move from the interaction order to its visual representations. Scollon and Scollon select four semiotic systems of Kress and Van Leeuwen’s grammar of visual design to see how the interaction order is visually represented: represented participants, modality, composition, and interactive

participants. For example, consider composition, shop signs give importance to the central placement of a shop name, whereas the left position is designed to provide information about the items, as opposed to the right place specified to the specific items and new information. In chapter five entitled ‘Interlude on geosemiotics’, we know that, as just maintained by Scollon and Scollon (2003: 110), the preceding chapters are intended to set up the main foundations of the term ‘geosemiotics’.

In chapter six, seven, eight, and nine, place semiotics is fully discussed. In chapter six, code preference is one of the issues examined by Scollon and Scollon (2003: 119-120). Chapter seven discusses that distinctive fonts carry different meanings in the same linguistic message (Scollon & Scollon, 2003: 130-134). According to Scollon and Scollon (2003: 135-137), materials also have specific meanings in the material world such as heavy materials of signs, the medium of inscription, and layering. Chapter eight discusses emplacement. This concept includes three semiotic practices: ‘decontextualized’, ‘transgressive’, and ‘situated’ semiotics. In chapter nine, we know that multiple discourses form ‘semiotic aggregates’ in places such as restaurants, neighbourhoods, and street corners. These discourses fall into four major categories: regulatory, infrastructural, commercial, and ‘transgressive’ discourses. Chapter ten covers the relationship between action and indexicality within the contexts of dialogicality and selection.

Their book is to develop the first systematic analysis of the ways to interpret language as it is placed in the material world. Although the language is crucially important for linguists, Scollon and Scollon have not used the term ‘geolinguistics’. This is due to the consideration that their theory mainly concerns the ‘indexicality’ of the material world to which language points and in which language is used (Scollon and Scollon, 2003:110). In the linguistic landscape, several researchers such as Backhaus (2007) and Ben-Rafael (2006) draw on Scollon and Scollon’s framework of code preference. In studying the linguistic landscape of a particular country, as in the case of China, code preference has played a role in developing coding schemes in the linguistic landscape. When a text is written in multiple codes or orthographies, say English or Chinese, there is a preferred code. It is not possible that these items are located in the same place. However, the authors have not investigated the languages written from right to left, as in the case of Arabic.

References

- Backhaus, P. (2007) *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism: in Tokyo*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Ben-Rafael, E. et al. (2006) Linguistic landscape as symbolic construction of the public space: the case of Israel. In: Gorter, D. ed., *Linguistic landscape: a new approach to multilingualism*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp.7-31.
- Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996) *Reading images: the grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.

Omar Alomoush
Department of English, Tafila Technical University
alomoushmar@yahoo.com