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Three Years of Comparative Studies in Spain (2003-2005)

The three-year period to which this brief report on Comparative Literature publications in Spain refers was productive and interesting. This was the case, in particular, in fields such as inter-artistic relationships, methodological debate, and theoretical-comparative studies on translation. In harmony with the general rule in other countries, efforts have been aimed at specific fields of research, even in an applied sense. Moreover, some important books have been published that explore, from a comparative perspective, highly topical debates in the context of Literary Theory. All these spheres show ever more clearly the result of dialogue and collaboration between Spanish comparative scholars and those from other countries, thereby overcoming some limitations from the past. On the other hand, there are still few systematizations or general proposals involving comparative studies understood as a relatively autonomous field.

Nonetheless, one of these latest proposals is of exceptional importance, the new edition of Claudio Guillén's *Entre lo uno y lo diverso*, an obligatory reference for any comparative scholar. The first edition, from 1985, included a subtitle that has now been extended with a final parenthesis: *Introducción a la Literatura comparada (Ayer y hoy)*. This minimum expansion of the title suggests what the author has in effect accomplished. Maintaining the book's structure and modifying only a few matters of style and internal layout, he has enriched the bibliography

and included in the notes some critical comments on the enormous amount of theoretical and comparative work from the last twenty years. The book has the same essential structure as in 1985. Guillén first of all deals with the discipline's historical configuration in the epistemological and academic spheres. He then presents in depth the five subfields that he considers basic to comparative research: genre studies, morphology, thematology, international relations, and historiology.

It is worth highlighting, apart from this, the declared controversial intention of some passages, starting with the new prologue written for the occasion. This contains two central points, one of a global nature and the other a more local one. The first consists in distinguishing Comparative Literature from Cultural Studies and emerging Postcolonial Studies. The latter involves comparative studies' academic place within the Spanish university. Guillén is very critical in this regard, basically because he considers the merger of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature in a single academic site to be pernicious—a fusion that in 2000 was made official in Spain in an operation described as lamentable. In Guillén's opinion, it amounted to the absorption of comparative studies and represents an unfavorable breeding ground for the discipline's necessary renewal in Spain. This is undoubtedly a live debate in Spanish universities, although almost nothing has been published in reply or in any other sense. On the other issue, Guillén likewise expresses his rejection of the *aggressive* influence of Cultural Studies in the development of present-day comparative studies and, on the contrary, praises some fertile areas of agreement with Postcolonial Studies. As is traditionally the case with Guillén, these evaluations apply to the specific weight assigned not so much to the theoretical standpoints themselves as to the achievements of certain theoreticians and comparative scholars. These include Jameson, Steiner, and Said.

A second monograph also dealing with the discipline is *Teoría literaria y literatura comparada*. The book involved the collaboration of five teachers from the Universitat de Barcelona, headed by Jordi Llovet, and includes a like number of chapters with an extensive epilogue on teaching. One chapter is entitled precisely "Literatura comparada." Its author, Antoni Martí Monterde, is not the only one to deal with the speciality's characteristic problems. Other chapters deal with literary periodization or with the genres that, by their very nature, have a bearing on in this territory. In any case, Martí Monterde's is itself a contribution to the field, which thoroughly explores the alternatives to the crisis of comparative studies after the 2nd AILC/ICLA Congress and the field's entry into a new scientific paradigm. Imagology, the renewal of Literary History, and the debates on notions like "world literature" or "postcolonialism" are crucial ones in this context.

Indeed, other publications of notable interest also center on two of these areas: María José Vega's *Imperios de papel. Introducción a la crítica postcolonial* and the volume *Bases metodológicas para unha historia comparada das literaturas na península Ibérica*, coordinated by Anxo Abuín and Anxo Tarrío. The former develops an extensive series of problems that, starting from the late seventies (with publication of Said's *Orientalism*), favored the establishment of what Vega postulates as "postcolonial comparative studies," which feature an essential debate on the post-national dimensions of culture, hybridity, acculturation, the

subaltern, or the dialectics between the canonized Western tradition and symbolic resistance. The latter, with essays by twenty-two collaborators from thirteen European and North American universities, tackles the discussion on method raised by Comparative Literary History and will shortly be the basis for the volume on Iberian literatures within the AILC/ICLA series, *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*.

Other publications derived from activities by the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela's Literary Theory and Comparative Literature group are *Elementos de Crítica literaria*, coordinated by Arturo Casas, and the first of two planned instalments of the monograph *A Literatura comparada hoxe*, coordinated by Anxo Abuín and César Domínguez. The first work comprises three sections, of which the first and especially the third will be of most interest for the comparative scholar, with essays on new comparative studies, thematology, and inter-artistic spaces (i.e., the relationships between literature and the arts such as the plastic arts, music, photography, cinema, comics, or new technologies). The second features chapters on Comparative Literature's relationships with Rhetoric, the canon from a comparative perspective, mass culture, *character* as a category, and others.

Thematology and the historiography debate, with direct repercussions for comparative literature, are the subject of two works in the ever-useful "Lecturas" series. They are entitled *Tematología y comparatismo literario*, coordinated by Cristina Naupert, and *Teorías de la historia literaria*, compiled by Luis Beltrán Almería and José Antonio Escrig. In addition to these Readers, these years have seen the publication of other monographs that, in the same context, reflect specific thematic-historiographic applications, in some cases with unquestionable benefit for the always complex task of shaping comparative studies in the medieval period. A good example of the latter is César Domínguez's *El concepto de materia en la teoría literaria del Medioevo*, which covers the rhetorical, annotative, or poetical functioning of the "matière de Bretagne" type. Another one coordinated by María José Vega, entitled *Poética y teatro. La teoría dramática del Renacimiento a la postmodernidad*, is oriented towards a comparative cultural history of theatre, with contributions on baroque comedy, Gender Studies, or cyber-theatre.

Another volume in the "Lecturas" series, *Literatura y cibercultura*, compiled by Domingo Sánchez-Mesa, represents a line of research that is becoming increasingly prominent among Spanish theoreticians and comparative scholars. In this regard, outstanding contributions have been made during these three years by María José Vega as coordinator (*Literatura hipertextual y teoría literaria*), Laura Borràs in the same role (*Textualidades electrónicas*), and Susana Pajares (*Literatura digital. El paradigma hipertextual*). There is also, from 2004, the proceedings on CD of the 10th Congress of the Asociación Española de Semiótica, entitled *Arte y nuevas tecnologías* and edited by Miguel Ángel Muro.

There is, in principle, a more traditional field of studies corresponding to inter-literary relationships. In this field, some books have proved to be singularly attractive due to their methodological approaches or their documentary ambition. Rich and very plural in its featured field is the first volume of the proceedings of the Spanish Italianist Association's 11th International Congress, coordinated by

Mercedes Arriaga and others under the title “*Italia-España-Europa*”: *literaturas comparadas, tradiciones y traducciones*. Other examples, centered on intertextuality and comparative paratextuality, are Alfonso Saura Sánchez’s *Las heroínas francesas y su recepción en España* and Beatriz Hernández Pérez’s *Voces prologales: Juan Ruiz y Geoffrey Chaucer*. Less frequent is the kind of polarity outlined by Ángeles Huerta in *La Europa periférica. Rusia y España ante el fenómeno de la modernidad*, which takes a critical-comparative perspective on the Russian and Spanish ways of feeling “from within” but of being seen “from outside” as peripheral to a Europe based on enlightened reason and its supposedly universal values. My last example in this field is Darío Villanueva’s *Valle-Inclán, novelista del Modernismo*, which argues that Valle-Inclán belonged to the international and cosmopolitan movement named in its title by analyzing aesthetic and literary links with writers like W.B. Yeats, André Gide, and James Joyce.

Finally, there are three additional groups of publications that are worth examining schematically. The first centers on inter-artistic relationships, the second on comparative studies that involve translation, and the third on an open series of concepts and problems that may or may not be strictly comparative but can be considered in heuristic terms from this perspective.

In relation to the first group, I would just like to mention the fertile commitment to research in the field of links between literature and cinema. Outstanding in this regard are three books by José Antonio Pérez Bowie, two on adaptation—*La adaptación cinematográfica de textos literarios. Teoría y práctica* and *Cine, literatura y poder. La adaptación cinematográfica durante el primer franquismo (1939-1950)*—and a third dealing with the impact of debates about cinema among Spanish intellectuals during the period 1910-1936, more specifically with its repercussion on theatre theory at that time, *Realismo teatral y realismo cinematográfico*. Some of these same matters, viewed in the theoretical and historical light of intermediality, reappear in María Teresa García-Abad’s monograph *Intermedios. Estudios sobre literatura, teatro y cine*. On the other hand, a more thematic perspective is featured in the volume edited by Carmen Becerra and others, *Mujer, adulterio y cine*, the second instalment of *Lecturas: Imágenes. Revista de Poética del Cine*, and by Carmen Becerra in the same series, entitled *Rescribir ficciones. Imágenes de la literatura en el cine y la televisión*. Another periodical, *Signa* magazine, devoted issue 13 to a complete dossier on “Literatura y cine.”

Comparative studies on translation are another emerging field that occasionally overlaps with the field we have just mentioned. A good example would be the books coordinated by Patrick Zabalbeascoa and others, *La traducción audiovisual: investigación, enseñanza y profesión*, and by Raquel Merino and others, *Trasvases culturales: literatura, cine, traducción*. Very different are another two books representing an equally attractive territory that is perhaps subject to more diffuse methodologies. I am referring to those published by José F. Ruiz Casanova, Henriette Partzsch, and Florence Pennone (*De poesía y traducción*) and by Jaime Siles (*Poesía y traducción: cuestiones de detalle*), both of a decidedly critical nature in their approach to analysing the practices of poetical translation while covering a wide range of European, American, and Asian poets.

Finally, I would like to mention briefly a less delimited series of publications from the period under consideration, which I will represent with five books. First, the newly expanded version of Darío Villanueva's book *Teorías del realismo literario*, whose first edition has been translated into English as *Theories of Literary Realism*. Villanueva explores the phenomenological and pragmatic approaches to a realist reading of narrative fiction and *intentional realism* as opposed to the conceptual deficiencies of genetic and formal perspectives. Secondly, Alfredo Saldaña's book *El texto del mundo. Crítica de la imaginación literaria*, which, with essential support from phenomenology, Bachelard, and Durand, offers reflections on thinking in images during the creative act and on the reception of literary texts. The third publication is the volume *La literatura en la literatura*, based on the Proceedings of the 14th Symposium of the Sociedad Española de Literatura General y Comparada, edited by Magdalena León Gómez, with studies in three fields: Don Quixote as a literary theme, interculturality, and the paratextual analysis of literary titles. The fourth publication, coordinated by Antonio J. Gil González, corresponds to an issue of the *Anthropos* magazine under the general title *Metaliteratura y metaficción. Balance crítico y perspectivas comparadas*. It includes general analyses of the metaliterary phenomenon and of different applications to several literary genres and to other artistic expressions, such as comics, cinema, theatre, music, painting, or hyper-textual fiction. I will finish this panorama by referring to a publication of an imagological nature, an attractive field that has not been sufficiently covered by Spanish researchers to date: the book coordinated by José Manuel López de Abiada and Augusta López Bernasocchi, *Imágenes de España en culturas y literaturas europeas (siglos XVI-XVII)*.

Arturo Casas, *Universidade de Santiago de Compostela* (Spain).

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