

Juan E. Tazón Salces and Isabel Carrera Suárez, eds., 2005: *Post-Imperial Encounters: Anglo-Hispanic Cultural Relations* (Studies in Comparative Literature 45), Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 239 pp.

Christopher Rollason
Metz, France
rollason@9online.fr

I

It is now a commonplace to state that Spanish is one of the handful of languages capable of rivalling English at global level, and, indeed, to praise the vitality and dynamism of Spanish-speaking cultures in the contemporary world. However, detailed and rigorous comparative studies of the two language and cultural systems (or polysystems), Hispanophone and Anglophone, in their multiple synchronic and diachronic manifestations remain relatively rare. The volume under review thus appears as the concretisation (to a reasonable degree successful) of a valuable and necessary effort.

What we have before us is a collection of twelve essays on disparate subjects falling (mostly) within the broad area of Anglo/Hispanophone cultural relations, preceded by a brief editorial introduction but otherwise not explicitly linked. All the articles are in English, a choice which could be seen as a possible source of imbalance: a 50-50 language breakdown might have suggested an alternative take on the power-relations between the two systems. Neither polysystem is at any point actually defined, and it is taken for granted that the reader has a clear picture of what both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking worlds are, have been and are becoming. The textual presentation is not entirely consistent. Some articles quote the Spanish-language texts discussed in the original with English translations, while others offer their quotations only in English and others again leave their Spanish extracts untranslated: it would surely have been editorially preferable to apply a single set of "house rules." Of the contributors, three are native speakers of English and nine of Spanish, another factor militating against systemic equilibrium since three-quarters of the authors have had the disadvantage of not writing in their native language. The spirit of intercultural dialogue underlying the project as a whole is, however, never in doubt, as is witnessed from the beginning by the dedication to Patricia Shaw, formerly of the University of Oviedo and a key figure in the development of English Studies in Spain, "who first crossed borders and encouraged us all to follow."

In their introduction, the editors draw attention to the "relatively scarce crossing of [the English-Spanish] language boundaries in cultural analyses even today," stressing that "there is still a vast terrain to be explored." The contributions have turned out, the editors note, to focus around "themes which relate to past historical connections and to a post/imperial present," offering a series of studies (three historical, eight literary and one cinematic) around a triad of key temporal moments: the colonial epoch in the Americas; the period around the Spanish Civil War; and the globalised contemporary environment (9). One article, it has to be said - that by Isabel Carrera Suárez comparing the Chilean writer Lucía Guerra with the Guadeloupe-born Maryse Condé - seems to be

somewhat tenuously related to the volume's theme: if the Condé novel discussed is certainly located in the US, it was originally written - like all her work - in French and is quoted in English translation, and the reader may legitimately ask how far this article really falls within the volume's declared rubric. That said, for the rest the collection offers a chronologically ordered series of case studies in Anglo/Hispanophone relations. The connections proposed relate variously to influences, parallels, translation and perceptions. Translation, with all its well-known pitfalls, is the most visible textual manifestation of intersystemic contact, and here merits one article (on *Hamlet* in Spanish). The comparison of texts or life-stories from different cultures can take the form either of identifying and examining ascertainable influences, or - as in what is called the "new paradigm" of comparative literature - bringing out mutually illuminative parallels while not positing a direct causal link. Both methodologies are represented in this book, with a relative predominance of the second. Where the "influences" approach is chosen, cultural perceptions - the preconceptions and stereotypes that one group entertains about the other - may appear as a major determinant on the influence.

II

Three of the essays concern what the editors call "historical encounters" (9). Francisco J. Borge, in "A Tropological Approach to New World Promotional Writings in Renaissance England," analyses a number of English imperial texts by Richard Hakluyt, Walter Raleigh and others, and compares these texts with Spanish-language writings by the likes of Bartolomeo de las Casas and, indeed, Columbus himself. What he finds is not so much difference as similarity: rather than differentiating, as some might, between "Catholic" and "Protestant" perceptions of the New World, he stresses the shared ideological tropes of the commentators from both sides, and sees both nations as participating, albeit as rivals, in a shared European imperial enterprise: if the English devalued the Spanish, both devalued the natives of the New World. By contrast, both Juan E. Tazón Salces ("The Menace of the Wanderer: Thomas Stukeley and the Anglo-Spanish Conflict in Ireland") and Jacqueline A. Hurlley ("Wandering between the Wars: Walter Starkie's Di/visions") focus in their studies on a single historical figure, offered as in some way representative of Anglo-Hispanic relations from the 'Anglo' side of the divide. Tazón Salces explores the career of Thomas Stukeley, an English Catholic adventurer who intrigued in Spain and died at the battle of Alcácerquibir in 1578, in an essay whose subtext suggests that Anglo-Spanish relations in the sixteenth century were constructed primarily in the register of plotting and spying, each side viewing its rival through an ideological prism as ineluctably and irreducibly Other (and yet, be it noted, both were ideologically united in a shared contempt for the despised Irish). Hurlley examines the trajectory of another conservative yet marginal figure, the Irish-born Walter Starkie, traveller in Spain and British Council representative there in the 1940s and 1950s. Starkie helped legitimate the presence of British establishment culture in Francoist Spain ("the Council gained entry through post-Civil War Spain on Walter Starkie's *persona grata* status as a Roman Catholic and supporter of General Franco's cause" - 50), yet remained attracted to the non-official Spanish subculture embodied in

gitano lore. Hispanophone culture thus appears as a focus of attraction for (even conservative) Anglophones thanks to the vibrant folk and popular elements alive within it. Taken together, the book's three historical studies point up the existence not only of antagonisms between the two cultural worlds but of similarities between both and tensions within each, recalling the extreme complexity of all cultural interaction and the permanent need to guard against reductivism.

III

The older or canonic literary tradition is examined in another group of three essays, two dealing with the seventeenth century and one with the earlier twentieth century. The crucial issue of translation (here, English into Spanish) is tackled head-on by María del Carmen Bobes Naves, in relation to a text lying at the heart of the English-language literary canon, namely Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Her essay "The Translation of *Hamlet* by Leandro Fernández de Moratín: Neoclassical Genius and Dramatic Rules" presents Fernández de Moratín's annotated rendering of the play (published in 1798) as a case of what Translation Studies today calls "domestication," i.e. the negation of the translated text's "foreign" elements in favour of a version deemed palatable to the home audience's tastes and preconceptions. In this case, the domestication is carried out through commentary and glossing, rather than operating directly on the text. Bobes Naves shows how, while *censoring* the play as such is largely eschewed, Fernández de Moratín's commentary systematically attempts, through *censuring* it, to neoclassicise the unruly Shakespearean text, "recommending" the excision of scenes and lines which do not fit the Procrustean bed of Aristotelianism. Her account is fascinating, though the thought occurs that it might usefully have been balanced by a parallel investigation of Cervantes in English: were this done, the foundations could be laid for a productive bidirectional translation model for both English and Spanish classic texts.

Shakespeare and Cervantes died on the same day, and this visible, if fortuitous, link is underscored by the latter's presence in the volume - in relation not to translation but to literary influence. In his contribution "The Theatrical Construction of a Cavalier Mentality in Fletcher's Plays and a Jonsonian Riposte," Keith Whitlock expounds the ways in which episodes, characters and passages from Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* enter the source material of a number of plays by John Fletcher and Ben Jonson. Spanish literature thus fertilized the English drama in the teeth of cultural prejudice, but the process remains ambivalent insofar as the characterisation of "the Spaniard," especially in Jonson, tends to be negative (vain, quarrelsome, treacherous, etc): the Other is admitted into "our" cultural production only tacitly and at a price.

If Whitlock confidently speaks of "the sheer volume of Spanish source material," (64) in the Jacobean texts he studies, D. Gareth Walters, writing on Federico García Lorca and Dylan Thomas, chooses to explore not influences but parallels. In "Two Ages of Man in Lorca and Dylan Thomas: From the Adolescent Imagination to the Childhood Perception", Walters, while at no point suggesting that either poet knew of the other's work, offers a series of textual and conceptual parallels between the Welshman's and the Andalusian's explorations of the sensations of childhood and adolescence, drawing especially on the early work of both - Lorca's *Libro de poemas* and

Canciones, and Thomas' *18 Poems*. While not neglecting the differences between the two, he suggests that reading Thomas and Lorca side by side throws illuminative light on the theme of growing up - the broader implication being that even where there is no direct link Anglophone and Hispanophone perceptions of the world can usefully both offset and complement each other.

IV

The five remaining literary essays - all by women critics - form a group insofar as they concentrate wholly or mostly on contemporary writing, and engage directly with the discourses of feminism and/or postcoloniality. The majority employ the comparative paradigm of parallelism rather than that of influence. The authors in each case juxtapose texts from the Hispanophone universe with others from the Anglophone (or in one case Francophone) world in order to shed light on the circumstances and consciousness of subjects perceived as marginalised, namely women and/or members of minority groups.

María Elena Soliño, in "When Wendy Grew Up: the Importance of *Peter Pan* in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* and Esther Tusquets' *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*," takes two contemporary Hispanophone texts by women writers (Tusquets is Catalan but wrote the novel in question in Spanish) and compares both with an older text (*Peter Pan* in its novelised version) by a male Anglophone writer, the Scot J.M. Barrie: given Tusquets' recognised status as a lesbian writer, this analysis further takes in concerns not only of gender but also of sexual orientation. In both Spanish texts, Soliño argues, the female protagonists "begin to find not only love, but also their own authorial voices" (apparently replicating Barrie's Neverland - in Tusquets' novel, indeed, "the two women enjoy the closest, and most fulfilling relationship of their lives"), but "only to end trapped in ... frustrating silence" (181, 185). The male Anglophone master narrative thus appears as a dead end, reworked with ironic intent by the two Hispanophone women writers. In a comparable vein, Luz Mar González Arias, in "Revising Phallogocentrism: Lourdes Ortiz's 'Eva' and Irish Rewritings of the Myth of Eve," takes a master narrative - in this case none other than Genesis - and examines its subversion in parallel fictions by women from both Spanish- and (mainly) English-speaking universes: "Eva," a short story by the Spanish writer Lourdes Ortiz, and a selection of Irish poems by Mary O'Donnell, Kate Newmann, Anne Hartigan and (in Gaelic) Áine Ní Ghlinn. González Arias employs feminist perspectives taken from Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous to show how both Ortiz and the Irish poets interrogate and deconstruct the biblical story of Eve, while also warning against reductionism and cultural stereotypes: "Despite the fact that both countries are reputed to be *the* [sic] Catholic communities of Europe, it is somehow significant that the number of re/writings inspired by the Christian creation story seems to acquire higher dimensions in Ireland. This seems to be related to the higher degree of secularization in Spain as well as to the postcolonial nature of Ireland" (207).

This presence, not for the first time in this volume, of Ireland, here explicitly seen as a postcolonial society, connects to the three studies relating to the condition of women in the New World, considered from both (post)colonial and gender viewpoints. Isabel

Carrera Suárez, in "The Americas, Postcoloniality and Gender: New World Witches in Maryse Condé and Lucía Guerra," juxtaposes the ideological construction of female witchcraft in two historical narratives, Guerra's short story "De brujas y de mártires," set in Guatemala in 1541, and Condé's novel *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière ... Noire de Salem*, located in the Massachusetts of 1692. As I have noted above, however, the presence in this particular volume of an essay comparing two respectively Hispanophone and Francophone texts does seem to be methodologically debatable. Ana María Bringas López, in her article "Perspectives on Caribbean Gender Relations in Narratives by Velma Pollard, Hazel D. Campbell and Micheline Dusseck," is on much firmer ground in her comparison of works by three Caribbean women writers - a group of stories by two Anglophone (both Jamaican) writers, Pollard and Campbell, and *Ecoss del Caribe*, a novel by Dusseck, who, though Haitian-born, writes (in an interestingly multicultural gesture) in Spanish. Rather than differentiating between discrete postcolonial perceptions of racial and gender oppression, Bringas López sensitively brings out how these texts, transcending the language barrier, reflect the shared experience of Caribbean women, exalting "women's strength under hardship" and describing "a *status quo* which is far from being what it ought to" (117). In a comparable vein, Belén Martín Lucas, in her contribution "North American Native Autobiographies and Latin American *Testimonios*: The Dialogic Self," carefully explores the political and gender connotations of two genres associated with marginal elements within, respectively, Anglophone and Hispanophone cultures, taking, on the one hand, a Native American autobiography from the US, Mary Crow Dog's *Lakota Woman*, and, on the other, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*, the *testimonio* of Guatemala's 1992 Nobel Peace laureate and defender of her indigenous community's rights. Employing John Beverley's definition of the *testimonio* as a print narrative "told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events" (121), Martín Lucas shows how Menchú's deployment of this genre exposes social and cultural contradictions in a similar fashion to Mary Crow Dog's English-language autobiography. Both texts, she argues, offer an alternative to hegemonic Euro-American notions of the self by narrating their authors' life-experiences as essentially collective and communal: here too, the stress is on common features found in minority writing in the two dominant European languages.

V

The final essay stands somewhat apart, as the only text in the volume devoted to non-print material. Guillermo Iglesias Díaz, in "Postmodern Mysteries: Allen and Almodóvar across Genre Boundaries," takes the comparative endeavour into the realm of cinema, perceptively examining how the conventions of the thriller movie are subverted in one Spanish and one US film, Pedro Almodóvar's *Tacones lejanos* and Woody Allen's *Manhattan Murder Mystery*. The perspective is one of parallelism rather than causation, with no suggestion of direct contact between the two *auteurs*: this study appears in a sense as a kind of "sampler," pointing up the importance of carrying the intersystemic dialogue beyond the realms of literature and history and into the wider contemporary area known as Cultural Studies.

VI

Indeed, in the broader context adumbrated by this last essay, some suggestions may here be made for future work in this crucial area of intercultural studies. The present volume certainly opens up a multiplicity of perspectives and its essays mutually illuminate each other, but, with only a brief introduction and no concluding section, it falls short on synthesis. It does, however, stimulate the reader to imagine a cornucopia of future studies. In the literary field, one might think of Robert Graves and Claribel Alegria, neighbours in Deià, Mallorca; or of how in the Civil War period Portbou witnessed the border crossings of both George Orwell and Alejo Carpentier; or of Graham Greene's Monsignor Quixote, breathing his last in the wilds of Orense. For cinema, one might suggest the films of Carlos Saura and how far the Anglophone critical response to them reproduces the "Spanish" stereotypes that Saura interrogates; for popular music(s), studies might include the Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon with its US-led "rediscovery" of ageing Cuban musicians, or the controversy over Colombia's superstar Shakira and whether she "should" record in Spanish or English.

Very possibly, the most fruitful area will prove to be that of postcolonial and transcultural studies and, in particular, the possible points of contact between Latin American literature and writing from the former British empire: in this connection, we may note the exemplary contribution of the remarkable recent study by Dora Sales Salvador, *Puentes sobre el mundo* (2004), which explores, in parallel, the creative appropriation of the language and literary forms of the hegemonic culture in the fiction of Peru's José María Arguedas and India's Vikram Chandra, concluding in favour of intercultural dialogue and bridge-building through literature. The coming globalised future will beyond all doubt generate more, not less, interaction between Anglophone and Hispanophone cultural systems. The volume here reviewed marks a valid and useful step in a process which will now call for further multiple, detailed, and, let us hope, enjoyable explorations by scholars from both sides of the language divide who are committed to the cause of communication and understanding between cultures.

Work Cited

Sales Salvador, Dora 2004: *Puentes sobre el mundo: Cultura, traducción y forma literaria en las narrativas de transculturación de José María Arguedas y Vikram Chandra*. Berne: Peter Lang.