

REVIEWS

*UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE CUYO. *Boletín de Literatura Comparada. Año XIII-XV, 1988-1990*. Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1990. 300 pp. No price available.

More than thirty years have elapsed since René Wellek reported on what already then was being perceived as a profound "crisis in Comparative Literature." Indeed, polemics and debates regarding the nature, object and scope of the discipline date back to its beginnings in the nineteenth century. Today, we are no closer to resolving the crisis. In fact, the escalation of divergent views and methods has led more pessimistic comparatists to proclaim the death of Comparative Literature.

Compounding the difficulty of defining the discipline, while paradoxically also bearing witness to its survival, is the emergence of Comparative Literature in regions of the world where it was traditionally not practiced, namely, in the so-called Third World, or Post-Colonial countries. To the deep chagrin of some, and the great satisfaction of others, the understanding of what constitutes the proper domain of Comparative Literature is now as varied as the new cultural contexts in which it is rapidly gaining popularity: India, China, Japan and Latin America, for example.

An inevitable consequence of this geographic extension of the discipline to some parts of the non-European world, such as India and the Caribbean, is the challenge that it poses to traditional conceptions of Comparative Literature. As practitioners of new comparatist perspectives situate themselves in a subversive position with respect to the Western literary tradition, it becomes obvious that it is not so much the discipline itself that is dead, as the Eurocentric and canonical assumptions upon which it was originally founded. Our understanding of what constitutes literary and cultural achievements changes as the frontiers of Comparative Literature expand.

However, the avant-garde spirit of the new Comparative Literature does not characterize the practice of the discipline in other Third World countries, such as Argentina, where the defendants of Comparative Literature are still looking to more traditional models in their struggle to define the discipline.

One of the most informative recent publications on the state of Comparative Literature in Argentina is the *Boletín de Literatura Comparada*. Published by the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, it is the official organ of the seven member research group, "Centro de Documentación e Investigación" of the same university, co-ordinated by Nicolás Dornheim, and currently engaged in a research

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program dedicated to the topic of Comparative Literature. The ninth volume published since 1976 is a collection of the nine papers originally presented during a post-graduate course on the same topic held in October of 1989. Divided into two main sections, "Hacia una Historia de la Literatura Comparada en la Argentina," and "Germanística Intercultural Argentina," the articles of the *Boletín* are aimed at either tracing the history of Comparative Literature in Argentina, or exploring certain aspects of Germanic-Argentine inter cultural relations.

Reading these articles, it becomes clear that a very important pragmatic function underlies the primary intellectual goal of analytically describing the scope, method and assumptions of comparatist scholarship in Argentina. The conscious valorization of past researchers whose work has surpassed the limiting confines of national boundaries, and the classification of their research efforts constitute an obvious first step towards the promotion of the supra-national spirit of Comparative Literature in a country where it has not yet been institutionalized at the university level. Although in Argentina the first manifestations of the comparatist spirit date back many decades, there are still no official departments, chairs, or consequently, degree programs in Comparative Literature. As one of the group's researchers explains, if any comparative research is being conducted in Argentina, it is owing to the devotion and energetic effort of a few university professors who, working against the grain of conventional academia, and in the pioneering spirit of the first Argentine comparatists, have accepted the challenge of Comparative Literature as a necessary solution to the limited national, linguistic and disciplinary boundaries that still characterize Argentinian post-secondary literature programs. The organization of post-graduate courses, the development of research projects, and the publication of the *Boletín*, are some of the worthy attempts to consolidate the efforts of interested scholars and to develop comparative literary studies in that country.

Typical of the post-colonial experience is the direct relationship between the emergence of Comparative Literature and the rise of national consciousness. In fact, Comparative Literature often becomes a means of affirming a national literature, culture, or identity. As Claudia Garnica de Bertona notes in her article, "Temas comparatistas en revistas literarias argentinas," towards the turn of the century an interest arose in examining how Argentina compared to the Other. Out of this interest developed the view that national literature is a phenomenon that exceeds national boundaries, and that understanding it entails the examination of relationships with other literatures. This focus on national literature and culture does not appear to have changed in Argentina. As Nicolás Jorge Dornheim writes in his Introduction to the *Boletín*, in Argentinian universities, inter cultural and comparative relations are viewed from the national perspective.

It comes as no surprise that, initially, the methods applied in the study of Argentinean relations with other parts of the world were based on the philolo-

gical search for sources, influences and intermediaries, and the description of an author's or work's reception in a different cultural milieu. Today, although one of the investigators of the "Centro," Pierina Lidia Moreau, expresses the awareness that traditional influence studies have been surpassed, and that Comparative Literature has evolved towards increasingly complex theoretical models, as well as the study of new kinds of relations between literature and other forms of experience, between literature and other series of facts, none of these developments have yet gained much recognition in any of the research centres mentioned in the *Boletín*. Most of the contributors to this volume of the *Boletín* point to reception studies as one of the focal points of interest among Argentinean comparatists, understanding by reception not the exploration of reader-text interactions, but rather the study of fame, influence and fortune, that is, the impact of one author, work or literature on the author or literature of a different cultural milieu. Typically the study of the influence of the Other still entails the commitment to canonical works and authors.

Other trends in Argentinean comparative studies acknowledged by members of the "Centro" include: thematology, travel literature, exile literature, translation studies, literature and the arts, and image studies (*imagología*).

Topics explored by articles in the second section of the *Boletín* include: the reception of Stefan Zweig in Argentina, the impact of G. Kaiser's and E. Toller's theater on the plays of Francisco Defilippis Novoa, the exile and translation of Werner Bock, and German literature in the Buenos Aires journal *Claridad*.

Although comparative studies are a relatively new phenomenon in Argentina, the devotion and enthusiasm with which Argentine scholars are consolidating their interests and resources in order to promote the discipline augur well for its future development in that country. (MARISA BORTOLUSSI, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*PETER HAIDU. *The Subject of Violence: The Song of Roland and the Birth of the State*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. Pp. x + 257. \$ 39.95 hardcover.

While studies devoted to the Old French *Chanson de Roland* continue to thrive, they do so, apparently, out of all proportion to the degree to which they are read by anyone other than specialists in Old French or other medievalists. This does not mean that *The Song of Roland* has not been frequently translated, and that it has often found favour with a wider public. Nowadays it brings to mind the opening sentence of Kafka's "Ein Hungerkünstler": "In den letzten Jahrzehnten ist das Interesse an Hungerkünstlern sehr zurückgegangen." Art forms have their moments, they are historically and culturally circumscribed, and once their day is done audiences dwindle. While I think Haidu would agree, he would also argue that we neglect the *Song of Roland* to our peril. Part of the problem is that

despite "continuities between the Middle Ages and modernity [they] have been obscured by the self-serving ideologies of successive 'modernities' — from the sixteenth-century 'renaissance' to the twentieth-century rediscovery of a medieval semiotic problematic — which use the Middle Ages as a negativized counter-image of modernity's desired ideals" (5). This has happened for a variety of reasons, one of which is the institutional move that lifted medieval literature out of the realm of philology only to secure it more safely in the realm of "literature" that permitted the "radical dispossession of texts, their excision from the social world of signification they assumed and addressed" (1). Haidu's project, magnificently achieved, is to (re)place the text, in particular the *Song of Roland* into its social "co-text." When one considers that the vernacular literatures of medieval Europe were, in fact, minority literatures in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari have given that expression, it becomes immediately apparent that what contemporary theory has generally chosen to neglect has surprising analogues with current preoccupations in semiotics, narratology, and anthropology.

With the exception of the support provided by the *Annales* school of French historians and certain other medievalists, Haidu throws down the glove to his literary colleagues, who do not appear to make the connection between dominant medieval and modern ideologies, namely Christianity and Marxism, and adopt a "conservative nostalgia, both politically and theoretically" (16). In other words, they construct a Middle Ages dissociated from the contemporary, preserved in an alterity with which they have inscribed it. In some respects he echoes Norman F. Cantor's recent observations of historians, in contrast to literary critics, as having been responsible for keeping open the gap of alterities. Because of the work of literary theorists, it is now possible to observe that contemporarily constructed "medieval civilization stands toward our postmodern culture as the conjunctive other, the intriguing shadow, the marginally distinctive double, the secret sharer of our dreams and anxieties" (*Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* [New York: Morrow, 1991] 47). Haidu's Middle Ages is even nearer in its foundational character.

Haidu's argument turns on the question of subjectivity. Not only is the *Song of Roland* invoked as the moment in the history of literature when the formation of the modern subject is brought to its threshold, but also read so as to demonstrate that "in and by the *Song of Roland* ... a specific form of subjection is performed, perhaps for the first time in European history, in a manner that is constitutive of later European subjectivity and history" (15). The design of the argument is to open the text, displacing it from readings of Christian closure by a combination of successive readings of crucial episodes that address the initial councils, the failed defence of the pass and Roland's apparent heroic and Christian death, Charlemagne's mourning over his "son," the revenge taken against Baligant, and the judgement against Ganelon. In order to prepare the reader for

the transformative character of the text, two excursions are provided, on the one hand, on the relation of aesthetics, economics, and politics and, on the other, on the role of the medieval king. What appears as a long semiotic gloss on narrative performability gradually takes upon itself a large dialectic turn that posits Roland's death as a necessary sacrifice to the rise of the new order of monarchical feudalism. Thus Haidu neatly overcomes an occasional question in Roland scholarship whether the central figure of the poem is Roland or Charles. Both are central, but the song is of Roland. The dirge, one might say, is of Charles.

As a consequence, Roland is not to be understood except in relation to Charles. Roland stands "as the subject before the subject, the subject who enjoys to the utmost limit available to man ... an integrity which is the perfect identification with the system of values imploded in him by and as his constitutive ideology" (188). What the text performs, through the collusion of the figures of God and Charles, is the partial repression of Roland, the emblem of anarchic, knightly power. By so doing it lays the ground work for the split subject elaborated by medieval romance. Charles, Olivier, and Ganelon all "bear traces of the split subjectivity" (192) necessary for the transformation of the nomadic predations of the knightly class into the nascent modern state apparatus. In other words, Roland and what he represents must be sacrificed in order for the monarchy to acquire control over the knightly class. As a consequence, the Saracens are no more — and no less — culpable than Charles, who is the eventual receiver of the action.

For this transformation to occur, the characters must be constructed as signifiers, actors, and actants, which allows them to mediate the text and its social and political co-texts. Such a move readily removes religious overdetermination from the text and destabilizes fixed heroic roles. Such a functional reading permits Charles, for example, in his roles as feudal lord, king, emperor, and *rex-sacerdos* to become the kind of sliding signifier that anticipates the splitting of the subject (118-19). It also permits one to ask who the subject of the poem is. To answer that question Haidu makes persuasive use of Greimas's semiotic square in which one political order is transformed into another and the role of the subject shifts dialectically from Roland to Charles. Were Roland not to die, indeed to be sacrificed to the nascent state, no transformation of the subject could occur. Thus his death is not simply tragic; it is a necessity homologous with the gradual transformation of the Capetian state from Louis VII to Philip Augustus.

Thus, far from being a mere afterthought, the Baligant episode testifies not only to the oral character of the poem but, as Haidu argues, discovers, indeed anticipates, events in the co-text. Roland and Charles contend for subject-positions and Roland, as representative of the knightly class, loses to the centralization of the French monarchy. In the process, Charles's actantial role shifts from being that of the sender to that of the hero as subject. The validity

of this argument is complementary to the traditional argument that Roland dies and Charlemagne avenges his death. If the poem is read actantially, in which roles are distributed to actants and not reflected as specific actors, the poem possesses a double function: "it bespeaks *both* a generalized celebration of warfare *and* a desire for peace impeded by the latent conflict between the feudal class of great warring nobles, fused with their irascible vassals, on the one hand, and, on the other, that class of one which is the monarchy" (175). On the actorial level, the feudal class is fulfilling its duty; on the actantial level, it cannot help but be in conflict with the king. The consequences are logical and persuasive. Baligant as actor, for example, is an enemy; as an actant, he is an adjutant. The larger consequence, pregnant with irony, is that "the defeat at Roncevaux, a defeat on the actorial level, is a triumph on the actantial level ... [leaving] the field of force open to the monarchy to occupy" (175).

What increases the poignancy of Charles's role as actor and function as actant is his position as father-figure in respect of Roland. This means that Roland's sacrifice to the state reverses the classical Oedipal order: "The inauguration of the nation-state would be attended by a willed death of the favorite filial figure, as a result of which endless guilt is lodged in the monarch who is phallogically equated with the One, to which the figure of the son must be sacrificed" (192). In a stroke, civilization appears to turn from a shame culture into a guilt culture, one more readily akin to ours. Thus the final response toward Ganelon as scapegoat, transferring responsibility onto the knightly class, is patriarchal with a vengeance.

The consequences for history are greater and of deeper effect inasmuch as the shift testifies to the establishment of the European nation-state, which, in appropriate dialectical fashion does not entirely negate what it opposes, but rather draws upon it to its advantage. As Fredric Jameson puts it in a homely metaphor, dialectic "can be described as a kind of leap-frogging affair in time, in which the drawbacks of a given situation turn out in reality to be its secret advantages, in which what looked like built-in superiorities suddenly prove to set the most iron-clad limits on its future development" (*Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974] 309). This is precisely what appears to occur in the text and co-text of the *Song of Roland* in which two orders of power, nomadic warriors and the state, come into conflict. The latter "makes every effort ... not so much to eradicate the violence, but to capture its potential and its use" (199). While the consequences of such a transformation of violence are to be found everywhere in cultural artifacts, the full consequences, as Haidu argues in a long epilogue, are with us everywhere. The *Song of Roland*, then, becomes a foundational sign for the social order that follows and has not concluded. The subjectivity that it authors is to be understood as ours.

Indeed, "Ours" is the last word and sentence of the book. It completes a peroration of several pages that may appear, after such a richly argued text, somewhat rhetorical. This may be due to the fact that the poem is given a rather large burden to bear, announcing several centuries of a future in which we live. If it is true, as Georges Duby and others have argued, that the form of government instituted in France in the High Middle Ages continued at least until the French Revolution of which we are the heirs, then Haidu's thesis carries considerable weight. One might ask whether this poem is the sole foundational text. Clearly the *Nibelungenlied* matches *La Chanson de Roland* for unrelieved violence, but it is of the older, merely feudal kind. The necessary transformations are not as evident, and I think the same could be said for other "national" epics of the period. Haidu announces that other consequences will be pursued in a subsequent study of Chrétien de Troyes, which will certainly be welcome for the elaboration of the split subject.

In the same way as it may appear, at least, that Haidu overdetermines the significance of the poem, it could be suggested that his exergual texts tarnish occasionally an argument that stands on its own merit. I would point particularly to a sentence of Walter Benjamin drawn from his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940): "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." The validity of this statement is evident for the *Song of Roland* and indeed most epic texts. If it were in most cases true, it would call into question not only the activity of institutions of learning, a hidden agenda I do not overlook and under certain circumstances support, but also the production of the most insouciant lyric. It questions, furthermore, the very argument that it is drawn upon to support and, therefore, casts a shade of irony over the book which makes it more troubling than the book's logic alone would suggest. It bids one ask, as Haidu himself does at the beginning of the Introduction, what the price of "literature" is? One of the answers, of course, is that, without it, the levels of consciousness that Haidu raises might not be possible. Another would be whether texts such as these could properly be used to seek, as its dedication requests, "a better world."

The moral vigour of the book is everywhere apparent to the point, however, where it might seem to argue at times against itself. The other remark I have is perhaps more serious and addresses the model of the subject that the argument of the book develops. In order to construct Charles as a new figure and one upon which the transformations the poem performs can persuasively occur, Roland must be a figure without consciousness, which Haidu defines as a possession of "the creature haunted by contradiction, by remainders, by margins, by inexplicabilities that become essential" (189). Roland is at once a beginning and an ending, a beginning whose ending is necessary for the instauration of the modern. There must always be a beginning, at least for an argument, but this beginning is also an origin before which there seems to be nothing other. While

no one would argue that Roland is a complex character, he is constructed to appear to be a naïve character in Schiller's sense, allowing Charles to manifest auroral aspects of the sentimental. Given the general validity of the argument, such a difference may be valid and therefore confirm Schiller's intuition. Any beginning, as Edward Said points out, is "a necessary fiction" whether it be "an intransitive, 'pure' beginning" or "a transitive, problem- or project-directed beginning" (*Beginnings: Intention and Method* [New York: Columbia UP, 1985] 50). Roland, like Schiller's notion of the naïve, falls into the latter category. The strength of Haidu's argument would imply, in fact, that he was already constructed so by whoever felt the necessity of the Baligant episode, suggesting that the class Roland represented was not entirely naïve, but required such a construction. Such an implication folds back curiously upon Benjamin's assertion, and also gives increased power to Haidu's argument.

The brevity of this review can hardly do much more than gesture toward the profound significance of Haidu's project. Its carefully thought use of both semiotics and Marxism as they are brought to bear upon this seminal medieval text marks it as brilliant achievement in literary history. Furthermore, the evident passion with which it has been nurtured for over two decades makes the text *actuel* in ways that few studies have been capable of doing by reinserting it into a history that is at once its own and ours. (E.D. BLODGETT, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*MARÍA ROSA MENOCAL. *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994. 295 + xv pp. \$49.95 hardcover, \$ 18.95 paper.

This is an eloquent indictment of Alfonso the Wise, Petrarch, Nebrija, Bartolomé de las Casas, Bembo, Curtius, de Rougemont, and philology, and a passionate defense of Dante, Columbus, Luis de Torres, Ibn Arabi, Lluïl, Spitzer, Auerbach, and comparative literature. Indeed, the medieval world around the Mediterranean, its view of itself and our attempts to understand it, divide thus: in one camp, the inventors and defenders of History as a great coherent, orderly, causal, evolutionary, diachronic, grammatically codified and hegemonically totalizing narrative from which has been exiled and erased anything that could not otherwise be cleaned up and smoothed over; in the other camp, the exiled practitioners of Memory, living and writing in the "productive chaos" (19) and "great muddle" (76) of cacophonous, mongrel, eclectic, hybrid, polyglot and polymorphic cultures. Columbus serves as the coincidental paradigm of such a culture, as *Shards of Love* was originally scheduled to appear in 1992: he spoke, among other languages, Castilian (codified by Nebrija in 1492) and Latin but took along as an Arabic interpreter Luis de Torres, a Jew with an Andalusian accent, who was to translate his dealings with the Taino on Cuba. The Taino chief, his

language and his encounter with Columbus are gone from history because Las Casas wrote them out of History, as History and philology and literary criticism have written Muslims and Jews (expelled from Spain on August 2, 1492) out of the Western tradition.

A less anecdotal paradigm of those for whom the "universe ... sang" (19) in a myriad of accents, in irregular vernaculars and bad grammar, are the poets of (love) songs, exiles from History for whom Memory is "tellable only in the near incoherence of the lyric" (13). Menocal's discussion of the muwashshahat (24-32) is but one instance of her wide-ranging, memorialistic and recuperative digging into the "memorial structures of the literary universe" (21).

If "the search for a way out of ... totalizing History" (16); if "the reveling in pluralities; the refusals to cultivate the great tradition; the writing of literature in the crass dialects...; the embrace of the popular and ungrammatical...; [the admittance of] the noises of the rabble ... as real literature" (37); and if "construct[ing] an authentic self from cultural fragments" (50) are all the marks of the postmodern condition, then the Middle Ages must be called postmodern, a time of exile spent far away from the orthodoxies of modern medieval and later writers, philologists and critics.

And whither are unorthodox philologists and critics exiled? The "legacy of ... exilic ... philology has been in comparative literature, conspicuously created by the exiled community ... hopelessly idiosyncratic and inherently lyrical in its structures" (137).

Does Menocal overstate her case, or reduce it to too simple a dichotomy? Neither criticism would detract from her erudite analyses and spirited synopses. To stimulate our reflection on literature and the profession, she obviously felt that effective rhetorical devices were called for. And "limiting" her study to the origins of the love lyric in no way precludes, indeed encourages our thinking about other exiled genres. Nor should the profound unity between "la femme et l'oeuvre" escape our attention: an exile from Cuba herself, her critical stance is memorialistic, her book unconventional (even materially: Part IV, "Readings and Sources" [191-269], contains essay-length "footnotes"), and her memory a bridge between medieval and modern (Carpentier, García Márquez, Paz, Guillén *et al.*) postmodernism. (HANS R. RUNTE, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY)

*ROBERTO GONZÁLEZ ECHEVARRÍA. *Celestina's Brood: Continuities of the Baroque in Spanish and Latin American Literature*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. 281 + xi pp. \$ 17.95.

Roberto González Echevarría has been one of the most perceptive and influential critics in North America over the last few decades. His studies of his Cuban compatriots Alejo Carpentier (*The Pilgrim at Home*) and Severo Sarduy (*La ruta de Severo Sarduy*), plus the general study, *Myth and Archive: a Theory of Latin*

American Narrative, are illuminating and provocative. These major books, plus his many articles and papers, have rightfully gained him a reputation as one of the key figures in the current debate on Latin American literature on this continent and elsewhere.

Celestina's Brood, which, as the subtitle indicates, deals with the continuation of the Baroque spirit and form in both Spanish and Latin American literature, certainly adds to his reputation as a scholar of the first rank. This most recent study is divided into ten chapters, five devoted to Spanish literature and five to Latin American literature, with a five-page preamble and thirty-two pages of notes. Unfortunately, as is increasingly becoming the tendency these days, this volume lacks a bibliography, which is a serious defect in a scholarly work, in my opinion. I should also point out that all of these chapters have appeared elsewhere in other books and journals, and have been compiled after the fact to produce a hoped-for unity which is not always attained, in my view. This, however, does not detract from the intelligent and fascinating points which the author makes in the discrete essays, the collection of which does not always produce the desired effect.

In the preamble González Echevarría apologizes for his own monstrosity, that is, his use of the English language, a medium with which he is not entirely happy or comfortable. When one considers the number and names of the experts who read the manuscript, it is surprising that some of the more obvious stylistic and linguistic infelicities were not spotted and corrected. Since the brief preamble is the only part of the book not published before, one reads it with pleasure and interest as the history of the author's critical education as a scholar from the early 1960s up to the present — the influence of orthodox English Golden Age specialists, up through Structuralism, Deconstructionism, various branches of Marxism, etc. From the disciple of Derrida, de Man, Foucault and the other heavyweight theorists, González Echevarría, as his scholarship confirms, has developed into a strong critic with an authoritative voice of his own.

Since all of the essays in this collection have been published before, one need only state generally that they pertain to the Baroque as an expression of the modern, and they also demonstrate how this phenomenon is reflected in contemporary Latin American literature. Chapter 1 deals with *La celestina*, which is of course not baroque, but has influenced not only the Spanish Golden Age works to be examined in Chapters 2-5, but also the Latin American works of today: e.g., *Aura*, "Eréndira," *Cobra* (as developed in Chapters 6-10). Chapter 2 on Cervantes and the picaresque, illustrates the influence on Cervantes of the *Lazarillo*, and of the *Novelas ejemplares* on García Márquez, Fuentes, Cortázar, Cabrera Infante, Sarduy, and the like. Chapter 3 treats poetry and painting in Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*, while chapters 4 and 5 both deal with Calderón's *La vida es sueño* from the point of view of monsters. As I stated earlier, the

links between the various chapters and the work as a whole are not always clear, and at times are rather tenuous, even forced. However, as individual essays they do have merit, if only as manifestations of González Echevarría's personal interests and obsessions. Harold Bloom admirably supports the author's technique by claiming that "one's method has to be oneself." I am not totally convinced of the efficacy of this justificatory approach imposed here *post factum* on the parts to convince us of the validity of the whole.

The second half of *Celestina's Brood*, although there is no formal division in the volume, is more successful from the point of view of both content and form. One feels that González Echevarría is more comfortable with the Latin American side of his thesis. In Chapter 6, in his reflections on the *Espejo de paciencia* of his Cuban baroque compatriot, Balboa (who was actually born in the Canaries), and Chapter 7 on the Peruvian Espinosa Medrano (Lunarejo), González Echevarría's theory on the modernity of baroque poetry seems to hold up much better. In chapters 8, 9 and 10 the critic is most at home in his dealings with twentieth-century artists like Carpentier, e.g. blacks and history in *El siglo de las luces*, the baroque novel *par excellence*. Nicolás Guillén (Chapter 9) is seen not only as an Afro-Cuban political poet, but as a universal figure, truly baroque in his debt to the Spanish Generation of '27 (and Góngora's influence), as reflected in his *Motivos de son*. The most personal of these essays is Chapter 10 devoted to his recently deceased friend Severo Sarduy whose *Cobra* owes much to the baroque elements of the other great Cuban poet Lezama Lima, also to his theory (*La expresión americana*) and to his fiction (*Paradiso*). *Cobra*, as González Echevarría claims, is surely a linguistic (and metaphysical) distortion of Cuba.

Celestina's Brood, because of its provenance and its formal make-up, lacks perforce the originality and the freshness of González Echevarría's previous criticism. Nevertheless, it is still an important volume that can only add to his stature as a fine scholar. One can enjoy the individual essays for what they are, even if they do not always hit the mark communally as a sustained and developed collection of literary criticism. Also, because of the nature of the composition, some chapters are better (and longer) than others. In my opinion, the Latin American essays, especially those on the twentieth-century Cuban writers Carpentier, Guillén and Sarduy, are superior to their Spanish Golden Age counterparts, and in many ways demonstrate better the continued presence and influence of the baroque in modern Hispanic literature. In sum, this is an attractive, nicely produced, interesting and challenging volume of criticism, for which we are again grateful to Roberto González Echevarría. (JOHN WALKER, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY).

*DOROTHY MATHILDA FIGUEIRA. *Translating the Orient: The Reception of "Sakuntala" in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. 260 pp. \$ 59.50 hardcover, \$19.95 paper.

Dorothy Figueira's scholarly analysis of reception of a classical Sanskrit text in nineteenth century Europe, especially France, Germany and Italy, can be usefully studied in the context of three statements that she makes by way of defining the scope and purpose of her work.

1. The initial effect of Sanskrit literature on European audiences was tremendous. To study this oriental renaissance would be a vast project doomed to only partial success at best. It is for this reason that I have chosen to emphasize the particular in lieu of the general (8-9).
2. I question the virile compulsion to view the West's reception of the East solely in terms of possession, power and control (5).
3. The luxury of "finding oneself" in any culture other than one's own presupposes certain prerogatives (5).

Three good reasons which are fully justified in an excellent piece of research in the areas of Comparative Literature, Translation, Linguistics, and Modern Critical Theory. The study is not only multilingual but interdisciplinary and it is eminently successful at both levels involving as it does not only three major European languages and Sanskrit but the variations within the same language approach depending on the particular translator. The individual as well as national prejudices, preferences and priorities are studied with remarkable insight and precision.

Figueira is very perceptive when she says that the Indian reality was "apparently radically different from that of nineteenth-century Europe" (201) and the Europeans could not sympathize "with the seemingly pessimistic Indian Weltanschauung" (201). Here the words "apparently" and "seemingly" are very important, because Western minds, no matter how sophisticated, tried to comprehend the East in terms of their own Weltanschauung. As the author herself points out — "Schopenhauer reinterpreted the Upanishadic theory of illusion as Kantian phenomenalism. Nietzsche abusively reconciled India with Plato ... Schopenhauer's distorted synthesis of Buddhism and Brahminism ebbed and flowed steadily through the spiritual landscape of the nineteenth century" (288). Also, as Figueira points out: "The Greek model was not absolute"; "Aristotle's opinions on drama based as they were on Sophocles, only have bearing on Greek drama"; *Sakuntala* presented "a different dramatic model which challenged Aristotle's absolute authority" (15); the play itself was "a rich source of archetypal values" (13); and, as Herder put it, "a masterpiece such as appears once every two thousand years" (13).

However, Figueira is quick to show that the Italian and the French were receptive to the Indian ethos. Giovanni Berchet who introduced the play in Italy showed to what "lofty heights" the poetry could ascend (16) and the Frenchman Lamartine "examined Kalidasa's play in the light of the precepts of Sanskrit dramaturgy" (17).

It is obvious from the present study that Figueira is not only steeped in European languages such as French, German and Italian, but that she knows the "host language," Sanskrit, which enables her to sit in judgement over minute, intricate details and expose linguistic and cultural "distortions" in translation. She is able to see where the nineteenth-century Europeans went astray — how "race preoccupations entered into the text's translations" (194). She has highlighted both the grammatical errors and distortions. She has convincingly shown how Sanskrit linguistic idiosyncracies supporting the specific image of man found in Hinduism presented difficulties for the European translator (196). Figueira takes into consideration the unique difficulties in translating from Sanskrit — how the very strict and definite metrical forms, complex patterns of assonance and alliteration, its qualities of rhythm and musicality, highly inflected nature of Sanskrit, capacity of building very long nominal compounds, and wealth of synonyms present very special problems for a translator apart from cultural differences between the East and the West. She points out how that doyen of American Sanskritists Professor Ingalls mentions that "the term 'King' can have as many as one hundred and twenty synonyms" (22). Though the author has chosen a number of translations of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* — she mentions that there are forty six translations in twelve different languages which followed Jones's translation (12) and includes twenty versions in her extensive and definitive bibliography (247-49) — she includes "primary translations directly from Sanskrit" (23) from Jones, Bergaigne, Chezy, Herzel, Gerhard, Fauche, Meier, Lobedanz and Rückert (222).

Figueira, after setting the scene for her own analysis in the first three chapters — "Background and Theoretical Considerations," "Critical Reception and Methodology" and "Nineteenth-Century Translation Conventions" — provides "An Introduction to the *Sakuntala* in the fourth chapter and proceeds to the systematic analysis in the fifth chapter, "Analysis of the Text." She does not merely choose the "particular" rather than the "general" as was mentioned at the beginning. She narrows it down further to not only the Fifth Act of the play but just three passages — Verses 1, 3, 4-6 and 23-27. Since this is the main thesis and argument, more than half the number of pages of the work are devoted to this "Analysis." At the end of the fourth chapter she sets down very clearly the reasons for her choice of these particular "excerpts" for analysis. As she affirms, this "Repudiation Scene" is "central to the meaning of the play" (41). The combination of thematic significance, characters, the variety of *Prakrits* and their

alternation with the Sanscrit, the absence of *Chaya*, and the uniformity between recession, all render these excerpts particularly fruitful for analysis (42).

The analysis itself is a model of painstaking and thorough scholarship. The "original Text" in translation is placed (along with "Minimal" and "Literary" translations in English) in the context of translations into German (by Forster, Hirzel, Gerhard, Rückert, Meier, Lobedanz), French (by Brugueire, Bergaigne, Fauche, Chezy), and Italian (by Doria). The "code" is carefully worked out. The numbers, the asterisks, underlining, bold letters, capitalized letters, capitalized bold letters — all meticulously worked out and used for maximum effect. This is the highlight of this commendable scholarly exercise and brings credit to any comparativist-translation expert who is interested in inter-cultural and interpenetrating contexts, covering as it does a wide variety of national and colonial attitudes, cultural differences, and prejudices and individual idiosyncracies.

Dorothy Figueira is such an extraordinarily thorough and painstaking scholar that the moment she ventures an opinion, she documents it accurately and exhaustively so that the reader is left in no doubt about the "source" of information on which her opinion is based and the conclusion drawn, especially in the case of the quotations in German and French. Indeed the NOTES section is a model of thoroughness, precision, and comprehensiveness, and it has to be treated as an integral part of the argument of the author. The last chapter of *Translating the Orient* is entitled "India: A Source of Inspiration or an Alibi for Despair." It is hoped that for Dorothy Matilda Figueira, India will continue to be "a source of inspiration." (S. RAMASWAMY, YALE UNIVERSITY)

*JEAN-PHILIPPE MATHY. *Extrême-Occident: French Intellectuals and America*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 307 pp. \$ 49.00 hardcover, \$ 16.95 paper.

Toqueville's growing disenchantment with American democracy, Duhamel's scorn for popular culture, Claudel's musings on FDR and everyday life in America, Céline's narrative of desire and abjection, Sartre's enthusiasm for jazz and condemnation of Washington, Baudrillard's *Amérique*, all bear witness to the ambivalent vision of America in works by French intellectuals. Another voice, one among many to hail the USA, but, as always, a voice of admitted distress: "Heureusement que l'Amérique existe ... Hélas!" (Pascal Bruckner, *Libération* 30 septembre 1993).

Any analysis of the formative influences of Pascal Bruckner's sigh would be well served by Jean-Philippe Mathy's recent book, spanning two centuries of French perceptions of America. For something like Bruckner's sigh is a typical feature of the French imagination's fascination with America, and the same sigh is no doubt central to Mathy's own take on French representations of America.

In this first sustained discussion of novels, poems, travel narratives, pamphlets and philosophical works on America, Mathy shows how French writers used the New World to pursue their own ideological and literary agenda. *L'Action Française* fuels Céline's call to massacre the Jews (1937) and inspires his description of America as a nation dominated by Jewish capital (10); barely twenty years later, Sartre's views on imperialism begin steering French opinion against America's role in international affairs (154-63); by the 1970s, French intellectuals change political stripes (*Tel Quel's* Mao, Sartre's Marx and Althusser's Marx lose credibility). And not by coincidence, one-time critics of America, theoretically restrained in the past (Lyotard, for example), describe mass culture and mass consumption in ecstatic terms.

An enthusiasm for what had long been vulgar to even America's staunchest supporters (André Maurois and Raymond Aron) becomes a rallying point for what Mathy calls "postmodern readings of American culture" (209). Although early on Mathy argues "that it would be better to talk about various postmodernisms" (10), the sense of postmodernity that comes to dominate his discussion is what Fredric Jameson calls "inverted millenarianism," that is, the by now familiar cries of "the end of this or that" (cited by Mathy, 208). Mathy finds Baudrillard, Kristeva and Sollers in agreement that America may, in its own way, be situated beyond "the end of history" or outside the "evolutionary perspective" of time characteristic of "European categories of thought" (225-27). Paraphrasing Richard Rorty, Mathy claims that American pragmatism coupled with the "Nietzsche-Heidegger-Derrida tradition" ushers in a "postphilosophical culture." Reconciled with Baudrillard's understanding of the differences between the two continents, "such a culture could only flourish on American soil" (248-49).

What about postphilosophy in America and elsewhere? Not unlike Rorty, Mathy gathers "Nietzsche and James, Heidegger and Dewey (and their contemporary epigones)" under a common banner of "postmodern distrust for the metaphysics of presence, the proclamation of the death of philosophy" (249). Is Derrida a proper name in a philosophical tradition and a fellow traveller at the same time, a "contemporary epigone" of Nietzsche & company? Does Derrida's "distrust for the metaphysics of presence" qualify as postmodern in any sense of the term? Does Derrida align his thought with "the end of this or that," let alone, "the end of philosophy"? (Derrida repeatedly, and as recently as 1993, distances his thought from *endspeak*. See, among others, *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* [Paris: Galilée, 1993]).

Perhaps postmodern analysis is also synonymous with speaking too soon. Thus Mathy's reading of the postmodernization, under American influence, of French society: "The end of French exceptionality, however, means not only that the French have accepted the 'alternance' (power changeover) between the Right and the Left ... or that most people no longer care about the old battles over the

public funding of Catholic schools" (my italics, 259). Observers of the French political scene will know that recent proposals to reform *la loi Falloux*, the 1850 decree governing the financing of Catholic schools, sparked angry debates and demonstrations throughout the country (an eight page discussion of the issue appears in *Le Monde*, 16-17 janvier 1994). Something will have suffered in the resurgence of "the old battles," and its name, Mathy all but admits at the conclusion of his book, is the "haste" of certain theorists of the postmodern (272). (STEPHEN STEELE, SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY)

*BERND LENZ. *Factifiction. Agentenspiele wie in der Realität. Wirklichkeitsanspruch und Wirklichkeitsgehalt des Agentenromans*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1987. 291 pp. DM 112.00

Die vorliegende Monographie ist die überarbeitete Fassung der Münchener Habilitationsschrift des Autors, die beim Carl Winter Verlag mit der gewohnten Qualität gedruckt wurde. Die theoretische Perspektive der Arbeit, die sich als ein Beitrag zur Analyse des Agentenromans versteht, folgt dem Problem der "Überlappungen zwischen Wirklichkeit und Fiktion," und zwar im Zusammenhang der "Grenzüberschreitungen zwischen dem Bereich der Geheimdienste und dem des Agentenromans" (17). Mit anderen Worten, es geht dem Verfasser um die wechselseitige Durchdringung von "Wirklichkeitsbild und Fiktionalisierung" (16), oder anders gesehen, um die aufeinander eingespielte Reflexion der beiden scheinbar getrennten Diskursformen der Wirklichkeitsbeschreibung und Fiktionsgestaltung. Für das auf diese Weise identifizierte Phänomen prägt Lenz als Analogiebildung zur wissenschaftlich-technischen Phantasie-Erzählung des Utopischen Romans, der Science Fiction, den Begriff "Factifiction."

Zunächst muß sich der Leser allerdings eines klar machen. Mit dem Untertitel der Monographie, *Wirklichkeitsanspruch und Wirklichkeitsgehalt des Agentenromans* ist nicht, wie es den Anschein hat, die "naive Opposition zwischen Fiktion und Wirklichkeit" gemeint, so Paul de Man in "The Resistance to Theory," die die traditionelle Unterscheidung zwischen Fiction und Non-Fiction oder Literatur und "non-literature" impliziert. Das Forschungsobjekt stellen vielmehr Dokumente der Zeitgeschichte und "politischen Erfahrungswirklichkeit" (105) im Kontext berühmter Spionagefälle, z.B. Rudolf Abel, Kim Philby, Günter Guillaume *et al.* In dieser Hinsicht, also in ihrer zeitgeschichtlichen Verknüpfung, werden im zentralen Abschnitt der Arbeit bekannte Agentenromane von Ian Fleming, John Le Carré, Graham Greene, Gerhard Zwerenz *et al.* untersucht, wobei es darum geht, die wechselseitigen sprachlichen Unterwanderungen zu erfassen, also begriffliche Übernahmen, Beeinflussungen, Zitate, Clichés und Leserwartungen, die zwischen den Agentenromanen und Zeitdokumenten oszillieren. Die im Essay "La mort de l'auteur" von Roland

Barthes diskutierte These — "la vie ne fait jamais qu'imiter le livre" — scheint hier ihre vortreffliche Begründung zu finden.

Die Arbeit ist in drei Teile gegliedert. Im ersten werden nach der Entwicklung des Problemansatzes und einem ausführlichen Forschungsbericht zum Agentenroman die theoretischen und methodologischen Grundsatzfragen behandelt. Dabei geht es im wesentlichen auf der Ebene des gegenwärtigen Reflexionsniveaus um die ausführliche Diskussion der Arbeitsgegriffe "Fiktion" und "Wirklichkeit," deren "dialektisch begründetes Verhältnis" (30) und um die Darlegung des Analyseplans. Nach zwei Modellanalysen der Romane *Casino Royale* (1953) von Ian Fleming und *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) von John Le Carré "als Paradigmen verschiedener Variationen" der Gattung (56) untersucht der zweite Teil die "Konstitution des Wirklichkeitsanspruchs im Agentenroman" (79 ff.). Dieser "vergleichsweise unproblematischen Untersuchung" steht im dritten umfangreichsten Teil "eine wesentlich kompliziertere Analyse des Wirklichkeitsgehalts" gegenüber, und zwar die Erhellung des "Verhältnisses von Agentenromanen zu ihrer (der zweigenös-sischen) Wirklichkeit" (57).

An dieser Stelle sollte bemerkt werden, daß sich die Untersuchung mittels der methodologischen Vortüberlegungen sonderbar selbst im Wege steht, was jedoch — und auch dies muß festgehalten werden — ihr beachtliches Gewicht nicht verringert. Angesprochen sind die Begriffe "Fiktion" und "Wirklichkeit" in ihrer Funktion als Arbeitstermini der Analyse, denn die Gründe, die nach der Verwendungs dieser konturenlosen und fragwürdigen Konzepte verlangen, sind keineswegs einsehbar. Auch werden sie nicht erklärt. Sie konfrontieren den Leser vielmehr als ontologische Vorgaben, die dem Scheine nach nicht mehr zu hinterfragen, bestenfalls neu zu formulieren sind, was aber bekanntlich nicht der Fall ist.

Es geht mir nicht darum, für einen Fiktions- und Wirklichkeitsbegriff einzutreten, die sich nur dadurch auszeichnen, daß sie, verglichen mit dem des Verfassers, verschieden sind. Mich interessiert vielmehr die Frage, ob diese Termini überhaupt notwendig waren? Läßt sich vielleicht mit Verfahren der modernen Text- und Diskurstheorie die vorliegende Problematik nicht sehr viel eleganter behandeln? Ich glaube schon, daß der Standpunkt vertretbar ist. Besonders der dritte Teil unterstützt diese Fragestellung, und zwar mit dem gelungenen Nachweis der materialreichen und hoch interessanten Vernetzung vialliterarischer und zeitgeschichtlicher Texte. In gewisser Weise jedoch gelangt Lenz selbst zu dem hier vorgeschlagenen texttheoretischen Ansatz, denn er schreibt in seiner Schlubbetrachtung:

Fiktionale Welt und Erfahrungswirklichkeit sind, wie wir uns überzeugen konnten, nicht hermetisch voneinander zu trennen.... Die Unbestimmtheitsstellen der von einer geheimnisvollen Faszination umgebenen Erfahrungswirklichkeit und die Einsicht, daß sich Wirklichkeit und fiktionale Welt oft kaum unterscheiden, führen zu Angleichungs-

tendenzen zwischen nichtfiktionalen und fiktionalen Texten.... Nichtfunktionale und fiktionale Texte als oppositionell zu begreifen, muß deshalb nach unseren Ergebnissen als äußerst fragwürdig angesehen werden. (268-70)

Die vorliegende Arbeit ist eine grundlegende Untersuchung, die im umfassenden, über den Agentenroman hinausgehenden Diskurs trivialliterarischer Fragestellungen unbedingt zu berücksichtigen sein wird. Als Lektüre ist sie einer breiten Leserschaft zu empfehlen, also nicht nur dem Fachgelehrten. Forschungsbericht, eine umfangreiche Bibliographie und Index erleichtern die Arbeit mit dem Band im Zusammenhang neuer Fragestellungen. (HOLGER A. PAUSCH, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*STEPHANE MALLARMÉ. *Poésies. Traduction ukrainienne avec préface et notes par Oleh Zujewskij*. Edmonton: Éditions Institut Canadien d'Études Ukrainiennes. Edmonton: Université de l'Alberta, 1990. 190 pp. \$ 24.95.

Jean-Paul Sartre called him "the poet of nothingness," while other critics defined him as "the poet of darkness," thus alluding not only to the difficulty of understanding his poetry but also indicating the depth of his *Weltanschauung* and poetic vision, hidden behind new formal experiments. Whatever generalizing term one would use, Mallarmé has been commonly acknowledged, beside Baudelaire, as the forerunner of twentieth-century modern poetry. Translations of his poems into other languages often fostered new avantgardist currents and their significance could hardly be limited to "yet another example" of someone's translatory activity; in a different national ambience they tended to play an inspiring and important cultural function.

The first translations of Mallarmé's poems into the Ukrainian language appeared at the beginning of this century. Preoccupied with the preservation of the national heritage threatened by the tsarist policy of Russification, Ukrainian writers did not always receive Mallarmé's poetry with admiration. Its experimental, abstract and pessimistic nature seemed to be remote from and ill suited to the needs and "pragmatic" demands put on Ukrainian literature at that time. Ivan Franko, for example, accused Mallarmé of pushing the symbolist principle of "art for art's sake" to the absurd, and maintained that his poetry is devoid of thought. In spite of this initially negative assessment, interest in Mallarmé continued to grow. It reached its climax in the late twenties, when the official bosses of Soviet cultural policy, moving closer to the imposition of socialist realism as the only acceptable literary doctrine, qualified Mallarmé as an "anti-revolutionary" who was unworthy of popularization; sporadic translations appeared later but they never presented the full scope and richness of his poetry.

Oleh Zujewskij is the first to offer a complete collection of Mallarmé's poetry in Ukrainian translation. He is, indeed, qualified to fulfill such a task as only few are. Being himself an outstanding Ukrainian poet whose poetry was

also often characterized as "difficult," he distinguished himself as a brilliant translator of such American and European poets as Emily Dickinson, Stefan George, Paul Valéry, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and many others. His monumental two volume edition of translations of Stefan George into Slavic languages (which includes his own translations) published with the collaboration of the late Eaghor Kostetzky, attained international fame and recognition.

To say that the translation of Mallarmé into another "target language" poses special problems is, of course, a banality but it can hardly be avoided when it comes to asking the question about translatory strategies applied in relation to his poetry. Such a question is, probably, even more relevant in the case of the Ukrainian language than, for example, English. A contemporary English translator has many antecedents to choose from or to improve upon due to the existence of a rich and long tradition of Mallarmé's reception in England and the United States; a Ukrainian translator of today must still pave the way in what is basically a trackless terrain. In short, the task of a Ukrainian translator is incomparably more difficult than that of an English one.

The perennial question which haunts the translator of poetry, and Mallarmé's poetry in particular, remains: should "literal" translation take precedence over so-called "free" translation or should "form" prevail over "content"? Zujewskij does not seem to hold a doctrine, inflexible stand on this matter and his method of translation can be described, perhaps, as "practical" or "pragmatic": in rendering Mallarmé's texts he strives for accuracy but at the same time he does not hesitate to deviate from verbatim faithfulness in order to claim his own poetic rights, to apply his own poetic license. His status as a poet balances, as it were, his chores as an ordinary craftsman who is obliged to make Mallarmé accessible to the Ukrainian reader while staying as close as possible to the original. This procedure is most conspicuous in the translation of the title "Petit Air." These three poems ["Quelconque une solitude," "Indomptablement a du" and "Petit Air" (guerrier)] acquire under Zujewskij's pen the heading of "Arieta"; in English they are known as "Little Air" or "Little Tune." What prompts such a difference in the translatory approach in the two languages? Most probably it is motivated by the difference in the ways in which "poeticity" in both languages might be achieved. The literal translation of "petit air" would sound in Ukrainian quite prosaic, not to say pedestrian. The noun "Arieta," an onomatopoeic imitation of the original title, creates not only a poetic sublimity but also lends to the poem a touch of ambiguity so typical of symbolist poetry. There is yet another point which ought to be mentioned in connection with this title: "arieta" or "little aria" also offers another meaning, namely, that of a little song, which is precisely what "Petit air" seems to imply.

Thus, the aim of Zujewskij to achieve accuracy (at times by taking roundabout ways) ought to be qualified. He avoids the unconditional imposition of a word by word translation whenever he deems it to be detrimental to the

artistic value of a poem or where it may offend our sense of aesthetic pleasure. What he really wants to accomplish is to render as adequately as possible the very *essence* of Mallarmé's poetic genius. This is not an easy task to pursue and even less so to carry into effect. Yet this principle remains at work throughout the whole volume and is clearly demonstrated, for example, in four sonnets where the mastery of Zujewskyj's translatory skills is most evident and successful. The translator's effort is backed up by his firm command of the Ukrainian language. It has been said in the past that the grammatical structure and lexical resources of Ukrainian are still in flux and marred by uncertainty as far as the consistent usage of its linguistic rules are concerned. Zujewskyj's translation does not display such weaknesses. He is firm in his beliefs of the present use of the language and avails himself with confidence and ingenuity of its multilayered sources.

Whatever criticism might be expressed about this translation (at times some critics will probably reproach him for the eagerness to be a poet rather than a translator), it will serve for many years to come as an unsurpassed model for future attempts to "ukrainianize" Mallarmé's poetry. In the age of deconstruction, metatextual correlations in the art of translation have become much more relaxed and by far less programmatic or prescriptive. Zujewskyj not only keeps pace with the times as a translator and sets an example to be followed, but once again he gives proof of his great poetic qualities. (EDWARD MOŽEJKO, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA)

*HANS R. RUNTE et ROSEANN RUNTE, éd. *Oralité et littérature / Orality and Literature* (Actes du XI^{ème} Congrès de l'AILC). New York: Peter Lang, 1991. 257 pp. US \$39.80

Cet ouvrage rassemble les contributions du Congrès de l'Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée qui se tint à Paris en août 1985. C'est dire qu'il peut sembler, vu sa parution tardive, arriver après la bataille, mais aussi bien *avant*, si l'on considère la date d'élaboration des textes où il est fait très peu référence aux travaux à présent classiques d'Ong, de Finnegan, de Zumthor, de Goody, de Derrida, de Meschonnic, etc. Mais s'il date, il peut aussi faire date, en ce sens qu'il intéresse l'histoire des représentations de l'oralité qui ont cours chez des "littéraires" soucieux de, comme il est dit dans le prière d'insérer, "réhabiliter l'oral." Cependant cette réévaluation, naguère sans doute nécessaire, ne va pas sans risques.

Et d'abord celui de tomber dans les ornières du Grand Partage, et bien sûr de les creuser encore un peu plus au passage. Ce risque est particulièrement sensible dans la deuxième section consacrée à l'Afrique. Celle-ci est considérée comme "un cas privilégié," ce qui se manifeste non seulement par la quantité (cette section contient à peu près le double de pages et de contributions par rapport aux

trois autres) mais aussi parce qu'au fossé entre l'oral et l'écrit s'y ajoute celui qui sépare la tradition et la modernité, le populaire et le savant. Que ce soit à propos du roman (A. Chemain et E.C. Nwezeh), du conte (B. Dieng), de la poésie (N. Ngijol), du théâtre (B. Kotchy), il s'agit toujours d'enfoncer le clou de l'oralité dans un écrit qui lui serait a priori réfractaire, et de s'émerveller qu'il s'enfonce si facilement dans un texte, pourtant si authentiquement "africain." L'étonnant serait plutôt qu'il n'y fût pas logé dès l'origine, surtout s'agissant de genres aussi ouverts, ayant partie liée de manière aussi intime avec l'oralité, en Afrique comme partout ailleurs. Il n'est donc pas sûr que les traces d'oralité que l'on recherche et que l'on trouve, bien sûr, en abondance, dans tout *texte* africain (Kotchy oppose ainsi l'oralité au "textuel") soient imputables au *privilège* de sociétés récemment venues à l'écriture, car elles sont inscrites aussi bien dans la vulgate évolutionniste (la loi serait qu'on aille inéluctablement, comme le (re)dit ici A. Chemain, "de l'oralité à l'écrit") que dans la logique générique elle-même. Celle-ci s'avère en fait plus déterminante que celle-là, comme l'a montré récemment Eileen Julien, à propos du roman, dans *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (Indiana University Press, 1992). La question est déjà soulevée ici avec une remarquable lucidité par Jacques Body dans un article polémique qui ouvre cette section africaine, et dont la chute serait encore à méditer: "Mais enfin on ne peut à la fois déplorer que la mort d'un vieillard, en Afrique, soit comme une bibliothèque qui brûle et rêver en Europe, ô Nathanaël, de brûler tous les livres." Dès le titre, non moins iconoclaste, "De l'oralité de l'écrit ou de quelques contradictions dans la théorie et la pratique de l'oral et de l'écrit en Afrique et en France," il semble par avance rendre impossible et vaine l'idéologie de la littérature africaine comme pèlerinage aux sources.

Le projet affiché de rendre à l'oral sa place dans la littérature couvre donc bien des voix discordantes, à tout le moins hétéroclites. Le risque est alors de trouver réunies sous une même étiquette des travaux qui n'ont en commun que cette étiquette, plus ou moins arbitraire. La troisième section le reconnaît, qui s'intitule "voix diverses." En fait, elle est une sorte de pot-pourri où sont versées toutes les contributions dont le champ n'est plus africain, tout en étant défini selon le même critère géographique et, pour ainsi dire, "ethnique": domaine arabe, suisse-allemand, brésilien, américain, slave. En revanche, le principe de classement de la première section — qui précède donc immédiatement celle dévolue à l'Afrique — est d'ordre temporel. Intitulée "des aèdes aux mystiques," elle se propose de remonter jusqu'à deux strates archéologiques de l'oralité européenne. De sorte que, ainsi encadrée par un temps et un espace *autre*, l'oralité africaine semble d'autant plus flotter dans un espace-temps sans commune mesure.

Pour la littérature mystique, l'oral est traité comme une source, avec toute l'érudition qui est celle, précisément, de la critique des sources. Au contraire les

deux études critiques sur les travaux fondateurs de Lord et Parry relèvent de la poétique, et ont des conséquences théoriques qui dépassent largement le cadre strictement homérique puisqu'il s'agit de remettre en question — pour reprendre les formules titre — "The Aesthetics of Oral Composition" (H. Clarke) et "The Problem of Oral Poetics" (R. Friedrich). Il est d'ailleurs significatif que ces auteurs se trouvent tous deux répéter la même citation de Lord, extraite non de son livre fameux, *The Singer of Tales*, mais d'un article programmatique plus tardif: "Surely one of the vital questions now facing Homeric scholarship is how to understand oral poetics, how to read oral traditional poetry. Its poetics is different from that of written literature because its technique of composition is different" (14 et 19). Cependant, selon Clarke et Friedrich, si le programme de fonder positivement à partir du texte homérique une véritable poétique de l'oralité tourne court, c'est qu'il a pris trop systématiquement le contre-pied de la poétique aristotélicienne, trop vite accusée d'être "Procrustean." Lord et ses disciples auraient ainsi tenté de faire régner une nouvelle Terreur dans les Lettres, pas moins procrustéenne que la précédente. Il conviendrait donc, sans aller jusqu'à forcer le pendule à revenir jusqu'à Aristote, de relativiser la spécificité de poésie orale, notamment en fonction de l'histoire et de la structure des genres qui enjambent la frontière entre l'oral et l'écrit. Ainsi l'épopée, pour être une oeuvre qui partage nombre de traits typiques avec la poésie orale, n'en est pas moins aussi un texte narratif, justiciable, à ce titre, de la poétique du récit.

C'est à ce recadrage plus complexe que s'emploie la quatrième et dernière section de l'ouvrage, sous le titre "Genres et oralité." Outre deux études sur le conte traditionnel (R. Robert et A. Boivin), et deux autres sur des genres modernes — le roman policier (A. Peyronie), "Postmodern Dramatic Writing" (R. Usmiani) — elle contient pour finir une réflexion qui nous ramène à notre point de départ: la poétique d'Aristote. En suivant en effet ce qu'il appelle "les cheminements du récit," A.-M. Boyer trouve de multiples points de comparaison, de passage et même de contact entre littérature orale et paralittérature; bien qu'elles soient situées *a priori* de part et d'autre de la ligne de démarcation oral / écrit, leurs procédés et leur mode de consommation les rapprochent de façon troublante, de façon à troubler les certitudes du Grand Partage, à émousser son tranchant.

Il est vrai que ce rapprochement se fait essentiellement sur la base du récit, du mythe levi-straussien, du *muthos* aristotélicien: un dénominateur commun qui exclut par définition, structurellement, la poésie lyrique — celle dont justement Aristote n'a pas voulu entendre parler, qu'il n'a pas *entendue* ni, donc, comprise dans sa *Poétique*, et qu'au contraire les Modernes, les Romantiques, ont réhabilitée au point d'en faire le paradigme de la Littérature, pure, originale, intraduisible, intranscriptible, etc.

Il se pourrait donc que le Grand Partage en cache un autre, ou plutôt qu'il croise celui que Benveniste a institué entre deux modes d'énonciation, Histoire et Discours. D'un côté, les arts du Récit, de l'autre, ceux de la Voix. On conçoit dès lors que les premiers (l'épopée, le roman) se laissent volontiers attirer, traiter et, pour ainsi dire, récupérer par la poétique aristotélicienne, et les seconds (le chant, le poème) par la critique romantique. Pourtant un genre comme le théâtre, qui de par sa situation doublement mitoyenne est bien implanté tant dans l'oral et l'écrit que dans le récit et le discours, devrait nous rappeler que toute littérature se reconnaît à sa capacité, sinon d'abolir, au moins de déplacer les bornes frontière, bref, qu'elle est une affaire de degrés. Sans compter que le dosage de l'oral dans l'écrit, du discours dans le récit — et l'inverse — échappe difficilement au jugement de valeurs qui s'attache à l'un ou à l'autre, c'est-à-dire à la littérature. (NICOLAS MARTIN-GRANEL, UNIVERSITÉ DE BRAZZAVILLE)