

APOLOGY OF IMMIGRANT LITERATURE: TOWARD A PLANETARY HOSPITALITY?

Paula Meiss

Phd Student in “Teoría de la literatura y literatura comparada”

Universitat de Barcelona

Recommended citation || MEISS, Paula (2010): “Apology of Immigrant Literature: Toward a Planetary Hospitality?” [online article], *452°F. Electronic journal of theory of literature and comparative literature*, 2, 13-29, [Consulted on: dd/mm/yy], < <http://www.452f.com/index.php/en/paula-meiss.html> >.

Illustration || Carlos Aquilué

Translation || Caroline Hammargren

Article || Received on: 09/10/2009 | International Advisory Board's suitability: 8/11/2009 | Published on: 01/2010

License || Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 2.5 License.



Abstract || This paper suggests the possibility of making use of the narrative of migration as the object of study of a comparatist discipline that takes into account Armando Gnisci's considerations of hospitality, as well as Gayatri Spivak's considerations about the planetarity of comparative literature. In this sense, the paper intends to postulate a possible line of research in comparative literature that does not need to rely on the concept of "national literature" to be developed. The analysis of the narrative of migration, through a series of variables well-recognized in travel tradition, allows both in form and content, a comparatism of the encounter.

Keywords || Travel | Migration | Comparative literature | Gnisci | Spivak | *Weltliteratur*.

0. (in)Dependence of the Nation

The objective of this paper does away with the following premise: though comparative literature as a discipline has accepted its definition, even today, drawing from national literatures¹, long since established and questioned, it is also still possible to look for necessary ways and resources so that this is not a *sine qua non* condition in the function of the discipline as such. So, one of the forms can be derived from the imagological tradition that chose travel narrative as a privileged object of comparative literature (Brunel, 1994: 125; Gnisci, 2002: 255). What the following article suggests is the possibility of updating in the migratory travel narrative, certain lines of investigation already open for the study of travel narrative, understood in the most classic way as that in which somebody *departs, travels* and *returns*. In this way, and taking into account the historical-sociological contextualization that each text claims for itself, it is possible to investigate in which ways the migratory travel narrative allows an approach to literature that does not depend on the nation to become meaningful. We understand that, while the literary text changes nations, a migratory narrative is at once between two, and in none of the two possible national identities that it could be ascribed to. In this manner, it represents, in the double sense that it stages and exemplifies, the transitiveness of this national literary identity that seems so difficult to renounce to.

We are interested in establishing in which way it is possible to place the narrative of the migratory experience within the travel narrative. There is a strongly consolidated tradition of travel narrative that for being so is not any less conflictive at the time of being defined. It is through the analysis of certain elements present in this type of texts, which have been themes for reflection for both writers and critics, that placing the migratory narrative in the widest tradition of travel narrative is possible. In this sense, there exists an extensive production of texts that can be labeled within the concept of “migration”, but even so, cannot be included in this proposal given that they do not contemplate all or some of the variables that we establish as pertinent. Because of this, we will talk of that travel narrative which contains a reflection – although more or less revealed – about the act of actually telling the story; the migratory travel narrative that postulates self-perceptions and visions of the Other that allow a reflection about the construction of identity through literature; the travel narrative that allows a discussion about the autobiographical statute and the literary statute of the narration of experience, if this distinction is valid; finally, the travel narrative that through a conscious relation with the landscape entitles us to reflect upon the relation between the migrant and the place of arrival.

NOTES

1 | All Comparative Literature textbooks include a section about national literatures, either for establishing the discipline as inter-national, or to complicate its status in its supra-national aspect.

1. Isn't Migrating Also Travelling?

From a compilation of the state of affairs in the Hispanic sphere about travel narrative in general, and the theme of “literature and migration” in particular, the absence of articulated theoretical reflections about the membership or non-membership of the migratory narrative to the travel narrative, or of article collections about the theme “travels and literature” that include work on migrant literatures² result, at the very least, surprising. Caren Kaplan (1996: 2-4) makes a series of considerations that are essential to begin to distinguish the different forms that travel can acquire from (post)modernity, and find the status of migration, as a specific form of displacement, within travel as a general concept. The intention is not to decontextualize the object of study in the strive for a superior aesthetic category, which would be the displacement, but rather to recognize that a selection of texts that can be put together under the name of “migratory travel literature” requires the recognition of a will of thematization of the migration within them, since, as Kaplan signals “such a solidarity or affiliation is political, however, and cannot simply be assumed through the articulation of aesthetic principles of literary exile or the deployment of generalized metaphors”(1996: 105).

Domenico Nucera (2002: 248) starts from etymological reflections to try to define travel literature, but his classification deliberately excludes the possibility that migration could constitute a form of travel. In fact, he affirms that, as a contemporary event, “el viaje ha terminado” (2002: 280). Such statement implies considering that there is nothing new to discover, that “hoy cualquier lugar está tan cerca y es tan poco imprevisible que ya no ofrece ninguna meta prestigiosa y exclusiva, reservada a pocos elegidos audaces, entonces, para poder ostentar el título de viajero” (281). We can agree or not with this idea of the predictability of any place, and, in fact, we do not while places only become significant when they are circulated through, and this will always be possible to be done once again. In the reasoning that we intend to defend, the act of immigrating to a space that is close to the Western tradition, but that can be travelled by the Other (not as alien as expected), constitutes a possibility for re-signification of the spaces that cannot be left aside with the idea that “travelling is over”. It also allows us to think of the journey in itself, the traveler, the motivations and its objectives. Ignoring this displacement of people that has been taking place since so long ago, and that has been ignored just as long, is not something that favors the development of the humanities. As pointed out by Auerbach³, denying a historical phenomenon is trying to escape it, and this is something that comparative literature cannot allow itself to do.

NOTES

2 | See, for example, Mariño, M. and María de la O Oliva, 2004 and 2006.

3 | «Whatever we are, we became in history, and only in history can we remain the way we are and develop therefrom: it is the task of philologists, whose province is the world of human history, to demonstrate this so that it penetrates our lives unforgettably.” Auerbach, E. (1969: 6).

Nucera also concentrates on the etymologies of the verbs to *leave*, *travel* and *return* to offer, through his interpretation of the meanings that we today give these terms, a definition of the literary genre, and his starting point can be useful to us. Through the verb to *leave*, he establishes the double meaning of separation and conjunction with the future that each act of these characteristics disposes of. With the verb to *travel*, he stresses that this act implies more than displacement; travelling constitutes “cómo ha sido recibida y transformada la experiencia del viaje, es decir, el descubrimiento del ‘lugar otro’” and because of this, a “re-nacimiento bajo una forma distinta, dada la experiencia del ‘lugar otro’ y el encuentro con el ‘otro’” (248) is expected. Up to this point, nothing would impede including the narrative of migration within the broadest genre of travel literature. But he also adds the verb to *return*, and for Nucera this would mean that a narrative of migration could not be considered travel: “Llegar a un lugar y quedarse allí no es viajar. Es más bien lo que en una biografía sería clasificado como un simple traslado, cambio de residencia” (250). Around this process that is defined as “simple” is where we find all the possibilities of this kind of narrative. We believe that to a certain extent all migrant literatures can be understood as the transformation of this *return*, which does not stop being perceived as necessary, into something else. The return will never be something that is ruled out. We will have to consider then what happens if this postponed return makes that, on one hand, travelling actually never ends; and that, on the other hand, one has to find ways to finish the travelling that do not imply the return to the point of departure, since as Nucera himself suggests “siempre se parte para volver, también en el caso en que la meta no coincida geográficamente con el punto de salida” (2002: 250).

1.1 Nostalgias

The element that mediates this impossible return, according to what is reiterated in the consulted bibliography, is nostalgia. The word etymologically contains the meanings “return” and “pain”. One of the possible interpretations of this combination is the pain that is produced by the delayed return. Another, perhaps more productive, has to do with knowing that the return does not guarantee the end of pain: once you have left you will never come back to the same place. This event within the journey – the conscience that simply returning is impossible – will allow its narration, in an act of narrating the event that concludes and defines the event itself. We can assume that this *knowing that upon returning nothing will be the same* will work in a conservative way with a force greater than the possibility of deconstructing inherited discourses, and re-establishing a new identity in the literary game through this narration of the event. Elleke Boehmer indicates that:

Migrant literatures represent a geographic, cultural, and political retreat by writers from the new but ailing nations of the post-colonial world back to the old metropolis, the literatures are a product of that retreat; they are marked by its disillusionment. (1995: 237)

and with her we would like to recognize this historical specificity that does not allow considering the migratory movement happily and unconcerned. It is not about celebrating an experience that might have been traumatic, but rather identifying, and comparing what might emerge in the form of literary text. In this way, neither is it about reassessing a literature that is little or not at all known in the society from which the author departs, and little recognized in the society of arrival, to reemphasize its belonging to one or another national tradition. It is about, in spite of how bad the word sounds, a *utilization* of these texts to begin to think about literature in a different way.

1.2 Exiles and diasporas

We believe that the distinction that is usually made between *exile* and *migration* or *diaspora* does not only contain an element of willingness and election, for absence in the first, for presence – at least initially – in the second, without including a necessity for also incorporating, as Nico Israel shows “how issues of class and of post-(or neo) colonialism inflect both the experience of displacement and the reception of texts written about displacement” (2000: 13). Exile has a recognized status as a literary theme, while migration is still a quite marginal theme, especially in the Hispanic field. If in the Anglophone environment the concept of diaspora is developed to speak from postcolonialism about migrated writers, we believe that this concept helps to continue playing down the presence of these writers in the socio-cultural host environments. In this way, the concept of *diaspora*, since it refers to a community of writers displaced from a common birth place which is always given presence in their texts, contributes to the compartmenting according to national literatures that the present work tries to avoid. On the other hand, the concept of *francophonie* is used to group all writing produced in the French language, but there are criticisms with respect to possible new colonialisms through the feigned universalism of the term, that if not deconstructed could remain hidden⁴. Likewise, the narration of migratory travel to France depends on the country of origin to create interest within criticism, more focused on the production of the descendents of those immigrants, according to Hargreaves (1995: 89). Consequently, as models of treating the migratory theme in literature, the Anglophone and Francophone sides of literary analysis do not resolve the problem of trying to leave aside the national identity to talk about migratory displacement in the Hispanic context.

NOTES

4 | «the adjective ‘francophone’ has to be decolonised, since it is often used in France for everything that is written in French but that is not French, reinstating an imperial dichotomy between France and ‘the rest’» Milhaud, O. (2006)

However, we ask ourselves what alternative way there is of dealing with this literary material that does not consider the nation in its study. In this case, we consider the object of study as the literary story of the experience of a meeting between an outsider, who comes to stay, and a community, understood both in its spatial (a place), and personal (a group of people) sides. For that, the starting point of the analysis is based on the postulations of Georg Simmel, who poses that “the relation with the place is only, on one hand, the condition, and on the other, the symbol of the relation with people” (1988: 318-319). Thus, the migratory narration does not only allow us to analyze the representation of identity in the process of definition in relation to the Other, but also the representation of the relation with the space that is condition and symbol of this encounter.

It would not be an indispensable requirement that the author of this narrative had gone through the migratory experience. On the contrary, we consider it important to distinguish between the narrative produced by immigrants, from the narrative that includes immigrants in its representations and constructions, and the narrative that thematizes the motive of the encounter of the migratory travel experience in a literary way. It is the latter that attracts us as object of study that would allow avoiding the national identifications to proceed to comparison. So, according to Guillén, by theme is implied “una parte de las experiencias o creencias humanas que en determinado momento histórico cierto escritor convierte en cauce efectivo de su obra y, por ende, en componente del repertorio temático-formal que hace posible y propicia la escritura literaria de sus sucesores” (1985: 53). In this sense, exile finds, as thematization, a much broader tradition than migration. This work forms part of the intent to establish a theoretical framework for approaching this process, which is progressively taking form in the Hispanic area, of founding migration as a literary theme. In this paper, when we talk about migrant literatures we are referring to the narration of the migratory travel experience, that contains some type of reflection, explicit or not, about the relation between the immigrant and the new circulation space mediated by writing and reading.

2. The trip to the metropolis of the empire-that-no-longer-is: Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?

This theme of the migratory travel experience to the metropolis of the Empire that no longer is one, is understood then, as the epiphenomenon of two great ways of considering the contemporary: on one hand, postmodernism and, on the other hand, postcolonialism. It is beyond the objectives of the present work to exhaustively analyze these two labels, but we are interested in choosing a few coordinates that we believe the literature of the migratory travel experience allows

us to study.

The possibility of incorporating the study of this type of literature is granted by the double link between certain postulations on postmodernism that the immigrant subject responds to from an outsider position that Simmel defines: at once within and outside of the circle of special relations (1988: 319). As a post-metaphysical definition of identity it fits perfectly with the ideas of postmodernism. In the same manner Homi Bhabha proposes that his conviction is that

the encounters and negotiations of differential meanings and values within 'colonial' textuality, its governmental discourses and cultural practices, have anticipated, *avant la lettre*, many of the problematics of signification and judgement that have become current in contemporary theory: aporia, ambivalence, indeterminacy, the question of discursive closure, the threat to agency, the status of intentionality, the challenge to 'totalizing' concepts. (2004: 248),

we could think that the statute of migrant literatures corresponds to the problem of postmodern literary theory, as long as it hinders a rapid assignment to a national literature; as long as it obliges us to reconsider the differentiation between autobiography and fiction, between narration of the experience and conformation of the narrated experience, a problematic that has thrived in the last years; as long as it opens new perspectives to continue thinking the relation with the landscape through literature, from a position that basically is established from a non-place but that provokes strategies of appropriation of space that correspond to the supermodernity of Marc Augé (1993). It is also possible to add the ideas of Kristeva with respect to the identity of the foreigner:

Y es tal vez a partir de la subversión de este individualismo moderno, a partir del momento en que el ciudadano-individuo deja de considerarse unido y glorioso y descubre sus incoherencias y sus abismos —sus "extranjerías", en suma— cuando la cuestión se plantea de nuevo: fin de la acogida del extranjero en el interior de un sistema que lo anula para dar paso a la cohabitación de los extranjeros que todos reconocemos ser. (1991: 10).

Though this proposal may sound utopian, we believe it essential to emphasize as a possibility of migrant literatures the fact of setting into scene new forms of identity that are related to hybridization (Bhabha), *métissage*⁵, creolization (Glissant), terms that the theory has been incorporating in the work of different authors. These characteristics of postcolonial identity are also found in the postmodern definitions of identity. Now then, the theory, in its intent to describe and create hypotheses about the possibilities of displacement and uprooting, do not necessarily find their correlation in the literary production that emerges from the migratory experience⁶. This, which first would

NOTES

5 | "Celle-ci permet au métissage d'avoir une fonction culturelle et sociale globale: il contraint, dans le cadre de l'hégémonie idéologique moderne européenne, occidentale, en Europe, en Occident, hors de l'Europe, hors de l'Occident, de penser le possible d'une culture, d'une société, dans la reconnaissance de déterminations croisées et dans l'invention culturelle et sociale que constitue ce croisement." Bessière, J. (2005:19)

6 | See, for instance, Casolla, A. (1995: 178); Petric, J. (1995: 170); Mertz-Baumgarten (2004: 288).

seem to break this postmodernism-postcolonialism association, should help us continue considering both concepts. Although both cannot be juxtaposed without conflict, and in fact that is not the intention, the comparison can always help with the redefinition and reformulation of their meanings. As proposed by Caren Kaplan, it is about evaluating how the metaphor of displacement is used in postmodernism, and in what way the theorizations about the diasporic subjectivity destabilize, or not, the Western discourse on exile (1996: 103), which is strongly related to Western modernity.

In our understanding, what results attractive about this type of texts is the possibility to see how identities are negotiated in a context that is not the original, but becomes habitual; that begins as an exception and becomes everyday. To perform this movement it is not necessary to come from a postcolonial country, but what is certain is that explorations of this type from the narrative of authors with ex-centric origin are more commonly found, because there is a certainty that is absent in most of them with respect to national identity, that becomes conscious with more force when making a migratory journey.

On the other hand, the perspective suggested by postcolonial studies to understand not only these identity questions but also the literature that produces and transforms them, cannot be left aside either. To a certain extent, the words of Kristeva cited earlier can also be used to refer to the study of literature according to national affiliations, modern and canonical. We could consider the Western canon a “united and glorious” construction that more and more reveals its “incoherencies and abysses”. Beyond the wills of a certain part of criticism, of keeping this bastion above those incoherencies that can be found, the incorporation of the study of the abyss – understood as a place to explore, and not as an absolute emptiness – can cause a “strangerization” of the canon that only ends up benefiting it. In this place, in the abyss, within the study of literature, migrant literatures are situated for this proposal. Not only because the immigrant is an estranged figure, someone “from outside”, who has the makings of a traitor (has already left once, could do it again), but because, as Boehmer says “their work has drawn criticism for being a literature without loyalties” (1995: 236), and in this it complicates, as we say, the assignment to a unique national tradition. If one should fight against globalization in some way, in our understanding this cannot work through the reinforcement of nationalities the way they are established, if they are understood as fixed, clearly defined in the past, and which have to be respected even in aesthetic-artistic terms. Why it should be the postcolonial work that breaks these relations between literature and nation is something we think is given away by the fact that it is from the West that such an association between nation and literature emerges (Brennan, 1990). In the process of integrating migrant literatures into the canons of world literature, the Western

world could initiate the movement towards the decolonialization of Europe that Gnisci (1996), among others, mentions.

3. Universal literature or literature of the world

It is consequently within the problem of the corpus of comparative literature, understood as method of study of the *Weltliteratur*, where we seek to register our proposal. Although the concept of “universal literature” has been in question for years, it still seems to be a solution to the dilemma of how to overcome the national to talk about literature. We follow the considerations of Rene Wellek, Henri Remak and Joseph Lambert, to arrive to Armando Gnisci and his ideas about the question, the understanding migrant literatures as a new *literature of the world*.

The affirmations of Rene Wellek in his famous conference advocate that “current literary investigation needs, in the first place, to become conscious of the necessity of defining its matter and the object of its interests” (1958: 86). While the present work cannot continue other lines raised by Wellek in this same conference, it seems necessary, at least, to refer to this premise. For that very reason, and also following the postulations by Henry Remak, we aim to propose the study of migrant literatures as a form of synthesizing the study of *Weltliteratur*: “Debemos disponer de síntesis, a menos que el estudio literario quiera condenarse a sí mismo a la fragmentación y el aislamiento externos” (1971: 90). We also believe that the incorporation of this narrative, that is generally not worked on in the canons of study, functions as José Lambert explains (1989), as a way of opening the range of possibilities for the theory itself: if we want a renovation of literary studies, it would be paradoxical to continue working the same texts, authors, genres, conventions and cultures through which these studies that we seek to overcome were first established.

3.1 A possible line

A comparatist work that takes into account the texts produced in the act of moving from one country to another, from one culture to another, destabilizes the study of literature from a national perspective. The text is susceptible to being adopted by the culture of departure as the culture of arrival. In this time, it covers an arch that cannot be ignored when studying the belongings of a text. Even if it is the representation of the migratory journey (not the transformation of a personal experience) what we find in the literary text, this implies an imaginary attempt to move between two cultures. There is an objection that is usually made to this type of incorporations to the Western canon, like that suggested by Rey Chow⁷, which basically implies that the comparative interest is understood as a new form of imperialist Euro-

NOTES

7 | «the integration of non-Western texts into the comparative literature canon may just mean confronting a new class of ‘Eurocentric’ specialists in remote cultures: there is no guarantee that exposure to the alien canon will teach anyone to see it as the locals see it» (1995: 109).

centrism that will never be able to truly understand these *foreign* texts. As an answer, we can add the idea of crosscurrent reading, to a certain extent analogous to the practice of deconstruction. If Chow, among others, understands that a comparatist can never read a culture (and thus a text) the way a local would read it, the objective is not to refute him, but to agree with him: the *foreigner's* reading can be an enriching way to read. It is clear that we are not exclusively postulating this type of reading for texts from non-Western traditions, but to a certain extent this corresponds to the re-reading of the Western canon that postcolonial studies started. If these studies showed that it is possible to find in the same texts that have been read since centuries ago conformations and representations that criticism has ignored, it will be necessary to give emphasis to them once again, reading these texts as a *foreigner*. The distinction that some critics make between political-ethical value and the aesthetic value of a text is important. It is possible to reject and denounce one without necessarily failing to recognize the contribution from the other perspective.

On the other hand, we are particularly interested in the movement from the periphery toward the center, which is developed in a continuous way from the second half of the 20th century. It is for this reason that the migration narrative that we consider is that which implies a movement from the ex-colonies to the old metropolis. This proposal does not focus on migratory movements from Europe to America or Australia, for example, which took place especially at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. We understand that the particularities that both movements (center-periphery and periphery-center, to simplify) present, concretely with respect to the self-perception and vision of the Other, and also in relation to space, constitute spheres that should be analyzed from perspectives that take into account these particularities, and because of this, are different. It is evident that they also share many other characteristics, but the idea of studying this narrative from the travel narrative perspective does not imply forgetting that the specificities of the cultures of origin and arrival inevitably find place within the narrative. We are interested in massive migratory movements toward a metropolis that have occurred since the second half of the 20th century, and that continue today, and the literary production that is constituted from this collective perspective. In this manner, the problem of continuing to always read the same canon is avoided, despite the changes in theoretical perspectives.

The decision to explicitly attribute this work to comparative literature as an academic discipline connects very well with Linda Hutcheon's considerations regarding the question. If a work of these characteristics can aspire to some sort of justification, this will have to do with the idea that we also believe that comparative literature is

“inherently contrarian”⁸. If comparative literature through the habit of self-examining is the discipline that is always dependant on change and open to rethinking assumptions, this is where we include our work. It is in this state of affairs, which considers that comparative literature fulfills a function within the academic environment, where the relevance of risking a possibility for the interpretation and analysis of the *Weltliteratur* seems inevitable. This is so while it is still necessary to use the master’s tools to deconstruct its academic construction, during so many decades centered on an oblique version of the meaning of *Welt* –in the German word. And inevitable also in a much broader context of the relation between Western culture and the Other, that now, as always, returns.

The present work intends to construct a theoretical articulation that gives a possible answer to the question about *how to*, that appears recurrently between the questions that should be defined within comparatism (Moretti, 2000: 65; Tötösy, 1997: 223; Greene, 2006: 221; Saussy, 2006: 22). In the first place, following the proposals of Eric Auerbach in his article “Philology and *Weltliteratur*” from 1952, we are interested in defining the narrative of migration as epiphenomen that allows us to depart from a relatively concrete objective to dedicate ourselves to this infinite study of World literature. In this way, Auerbach extends in the explanation of how it is possible to aspire to study such an extensive object, starting from a point that radiates in meaning and implications.

For him, a good critical work, “is not a mere agglomeration of many items, but a radiation outwards from a few items. (...) Only by the discovery of a phenomenon at once firmly circumscribed, comprehensible and central enough to be a point of departure will the execution of the plan be possible.” (1952: 13). With this ambitious pretension we propose the study of the narrative of migration as a point of departure for the study of universal literature within the framework of the 21st century. It is our purpose to briefly demonstrate in the development of this work, and through the posterior applications, that the narrative of migration can function as a starting point for the analysis of a series of variables that literary theory has been occupied with in the last years. This proposal does not intend to exhaust the possibilities, but simply base itself on its necessity and appropriateness within the framework and problem planted.

On second hand, it is also important to get ahead of the possible criticism with respect to the impossibility of a study of these characteristics. Following the suggestions of Franco Moretti (2000: 68) we embark on this development with the conviction that trusting in work of academic colleagues allows us to dedicate ourselves to such broad objects of study. More and more essays are written (in relation to the past decades) about migrant literatures in the comparatist

NOTES

8 | “To be contrarian is to oppose or reject popular opinion, something comparatists have done quite regularly” Hutcheon, L. (2006) p. 224.

area, but few articles are dedicated to looking for the thematization of migration in the production they analyze: in the majority of cases, it is about studies of authors, nationalities, concrete texts, that fall within the framework of the diaspora label, or, more generally, the postcolonial. We believe that parting from these works it is possible to unite the conclusions from their and our study, in a way that they constitute a new conceptualization of migration within literature.

4. Planetary hospitality

With respect to the question from where it is possible to incorporate literature produced in the periphery into the Western canon, we believe that it is possible to situate the study of migrant literatures in an enriching crossroads. On one hand, initiating the perspective of study of literature from a postnational conception – if not a-national – that this type of literature favors, but that we could conceive as extendable to all literature. Although it is common to reject the methodological utilization of non-Western literatures in postcolonial criticism as examples of other possible ways of thinking literature (Spivak, 2003), we believe that in reality it is worth making the intent, to avoid falling into more and more planetary constitutions of national literatures to proceed to their study. Associating the particular characteristics in the conformation of this type of literatures, that with difficulty are similar to those of Western literature according to the established canon, with the new conditions of the globalized world, it is possible to try the development of a new paradigm in the study of universal literature, without forgetting the difficulties of this term, but making use of them. Recognizing the difficulties of the task of the comparativism has always been one of the defining characteristics of this discipline (Farinelli [1925]; Greene, [1994]; Moretti [2000]; Gnisci [2002]; Saussy [2006]).

On the other hand, the study of literature of migration opens up for the production of non-Western literature from a place where otherness is not total, but partial. From this space that configures writing from a place “inside but outside” it is possible to begin to create a space that integrates differences without erasing them. Spivak’s proposal, which aims at a definition of planetarity, can be useful (2003. 74). For her, the fact that there might be elements in a text that are unknown as specimens of alterity is not problematic: this is the characteristic of a planet overwritten on the globe, where the ominous (*unheimlich*) is an integrant part of the construction of meaning. Obviously, the political reach that a perspective like this would have does not escape us. It implies a change in the perception of migration as a marginal phenomenon, towards one that is structural to culture. If the pretensions of universality emerge as a European – if not French-concern, then it would be good to recognize these contributions to

the understanding between peoples, objective criticized by part of criticism, but that cannot be left aside in our opinion. Then, we make Armando Gnisci's words our own:

¿no es la literatura el discurso común que las culturas intercambian entre sí para traducirse todas ellas recíprocamente y para que las traduzcamos dentro de nosotros y entre nosotros, para traducir y desplazar continuamente hacia el futuro —y no solo hacia los museos del pasado— todo lo humano, con todas sus historias y todas sus formas simbólicas? (2002: 12).

It also allows us to think that an incorporation of the foreign to the culture can be easier than an incorporation of the foreigner to society. It is not clear what should occur first. But as an idealist objective of this work we can postulate the will that through, in the first place, a recognition of the production of the Other that lives among us, and, in the second place, a reformulation of the categories used until now, and that to a great extent exclude it, can foment the accepting and incorporation of the stranger in a new society that includes everyone. For this we bring up again the use that Gnisci makes of the concept of hospitality. In centering the analysis on migrant literatures, we can consider a double hospitality: in a literal sense, of accepting the arrival and presence of the Other at home; as in one more metaphorical, which is what Gnisci claims for comparative literature “comparing means studying and working together with respect for differences to create a new communicative dimension: one of reciprocal hospitality” (1996: 190).

It is because of this will for non-absorbing incorporation, not assimilatory, of the production of what is traditionally seen as the Other, for which the figure of the foreigner is vindicated, without necessarily being forced to remain a foreigner. The double hospitality will be related to the intent to make the encounter with the Other legible, from a place that recognizes all cultures as foreign.

While this theoretical framework allows the analysis of the status of the narrative of migration within the study of comparative literature in any place in the world, there underlies the will to show what survives of Euro-centrism in this humanistic discipline. In spite of the progress with respect to the past that this discipline has achieved, a need for the study of world literature remains an essentially Western-European objective, that does not cease in considering non-Western productions as annexes to a very serious and established tradition, unique and Western. As Gnisci indicates “‘universal literature’ [...] continues to be a dream of the Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism. Today we work rather, in a worldwide literary discipline” (1996:190); that is: it is not about pretending universalism in a matter that cannot be controlled, such as the literary production, but rather that the ways of

access to this subject should be as universal as possible. It continues to be a dream of the Enlightenment. But there is nothing that makes us reject this rational basis when establishing the framework for a theory. In an empirical framework of relation with the discipline, Gnisci reminds us of “the approval by the world’s intellectuals of comparative literature” (1996: 191), and from this verification it is that we propose that the search for universality focus not only on the encounter of academics before a common horizon, but also in the empirical-textual manifestations of the mentioned encounter in front of what we have in common. The narrative of migration functions as an object of this rapprochement, both in a literal and figurative sense.

Works cited

- ANDRES-SUÁREZ, I. (ed.) (2004) *Migración y literatura en el mundo hispánico*. Madrid: Verbum.
- AUERBACH, E. (1952) "Philology and *Weltliteratur*", trans. by Maire and Edward Said., in *The Centennial Review*, 13.1, 1969, 1-17.
- AUGÉ, M. (1993) *Los no lugares: espacios de anonimato: una antropología de la sobremodernidad*, Barcelona: Gedisa.
- BERNHEIMER, C. (ed.) (1995) *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.
- BHABHA, H. (1990) *Nation and Narration*, London & New York: Routledge.
- BHABHA, H. (2004) *The Location of Culture*. London & New York: Routledge.
- BRENNAN, T. (1990) «The national longing for form» en BHABHA, H. *Nation and Narration*, London & New York: Routledge.
- BOEHMER, E. (1995) *Migrant Metaphors. Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures*. Oxford & New York: OUP.
- BRUNEL, P. y Ives CHEVREL (eds.) (1994): *Compendio de literatura comparada*, México: Siglo XXI.
- CHOW, R. (1995) «In the Name of Comparative Literature», en BERNHEIMER, C., *o.cit.*, 107-116.
- FARINELLI, A. (1925) *Petrarca, Manzoni, Leopardi. Il sogno di una letteratura 'mondiale'*. Torí: Fratelli Bocca ed.
- GUILLÉN, C. (1985) *Entre lo uno y lo diverso*, Barcelona: Crítica.
- GNISCI, A. (1996) «La literatura comparada como disciplina de descolonización» en VEGA, M.J., 1998, *La literatura comparada: principios y métodos*, Madrid: Gredos, 188-194.
- GNISCI, A. (2002): *Introducción a la literatura comparada*, Barcelona: Crítica.
- GREENE, R. (2006) «Not Works, but Networks. Colonial Worlds in Comparative Literature» en SAUSSY, H., *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 212-223.
- HARGREAVES, A. (1995) «Perceptions of Place among Writers of Algerian Immigrant Origin in France» en KING, R. *Writing Across Worlds. Literature and Migration*, London and New York: Routledge, 89-100.
- HUTCHEON, L. (2006) «Comparative Literature: Congenitally Contrarian», en SAUSSY, H., *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 224-229.
- ISRAEL, N. (2000) *Outlandish. Writing Between Exile and Diaspora*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- KAPLAN, C. (1996) *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- KING, R., J. CONNELL y P. WHITE. (eds.) (1995) *Writing Across Worlds. Literature and Migration*, London and New York: Routledge.
- KRISTEVA, J. (1991) *Extranjeros para nosotros mismos*, Barcelona: Plaza&Janes.
- LAMBERT, J. (1989) «En busca de mapas mundiales de las literaturas», en BLOCH DE BEHAR (ed.), *Términos de Comparación*, Montevideo: ANL.
- MARIÑO, M., María de la O OLIVA (coord.) (2004) *El viaje en la literatura occidental*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial.
- MARIÑO, M., María de la O OLIVA (coord.) (2006) *El viaje concluido. Poética del regreso*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial.

- MILHAUD, O. (2006) «Post-Francophonie?», *EspacesTemps.net*, 31/08/08, <http://espacestemps.net/document2077.html>.
- MORETTI, F. (2000) «Conjeturas sobre la literatura mundial» en *New Left Review*, 1, 65-76.
- NUCERA, D. (2002) «Los viajes y la literatura», en GNISCI, A. (2002) *Introducción a la literatura comparada*, Barcelona: Crítica, 241-289.
- REMAK, H.H.H. (1971) «La literatura comparada: definición y función», en VEGA, M.J., 1998, *La literatura comparada: principios y métodos*, Madrid: Gredos, 89-99.
- SAUSSY, H. (ed.) (2006) *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP.
- SIMMEL, G. (1988a) «Digressió sobre el foraster», en *Sociologia: Investigació sobre les formes de socialització*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 318-324.
- SPIVAK, G.C. (2003) *Death of a Discipline*, New York: Columbia UP.
- TÖTÖSY DE ZEPETNEK, S. (1997) «La literatura comparada y la aproximación sistémica a la literatura y la cultura», en VEGA, M.J. (1998) *La literatura comparada: principios y métodos*, Madrid: Gredos, 215-229.
- VEGA, M.J. y Neus CARBONELL (1998) *La literatura comparada: principios y métodos*, Madrid: Gredos.
- WELLEK, R. (1958) «La crisis de la literatura comparada», en VEGA, M.J. (1998), *La literatura comparada: principios y métodos*, Madrid: Gredos, 79-88.