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SANTIAGO PÉREZ ISASI AND ÂNGELA FERNANDES

Looking at Iberia in/from Europe

This volume focuses on some key theoretical, methodological and historical questions related with Iberian literatures and cultures, privileging a strong European component and a comparative approach. The essays gathered here are the main outcome from the Exploratory Workshop 'Looking at Iberia from a Comparative European Perspective: Literature, Narration and Identity' funded by the European Science Foundation and held at the Faculty of Arts from the University of Lisbon, on 13 and 14 October 2011. This workshop was organized in the frame of Project DIIA – Diálogos Ibéricos e Ibero-Americanos [Iberian and Ibero-American Dialogues], from the Centre for Comparative Studies, University of Lisbon, and it brought together twenty-one scholars from eleven European countries with common interests in Iberian languages, literatures and cultures, along with a shared comparative perspective towards them. The papers presented then and the lively discussion that ensued led to the common wish to transform all of our questions and reflexions into a volume that might offer a theoretical and methodological threshold for future investigations on Iberian literary and cultural phenomena.

The field of Iberian Studies, which could be defined as the methodological consideration of the Iberian Peninsula as a complex, multilingual cultural and literary system, has known an exponential development in the last years; however, it still lacks solid theoretical and methodological reflections that may guarantee its validity and its independence as a scientific area. This volume aims at contributing towards filling that void by analysing some of the key issues in Iberian Studies from a comparative European perspective. It is intended as a wide-range panorama of current Iberian Studies, with a coherent approach to literary and cultural objects that often remain hidden, marginalized or unexplored within the

traditional, national and monolingual 'philological' studies. It is not our intention to propose a new metaphysical, extra-historical Iberian identity, but to question the established political or epistemological barriers which have often distorted the appreciation of cultural and artistic phenomena in the Iberian Peninsula.

This volume is characterized by its broad theoretical approach and its wide European origin and perspective. It brings together more traditional historical overviews and some cutting edge contemporary analysis of reception and translation issues, focusing on literature, film, editing and cultural markets, academic policies and new trends in the humanities. With its several contributions, *Looking at Iberia* offers a comprehensive outlook on a set of historical and contemporary cultural productions that testify to the inter-dependencies, conflicts, overlappings, similarities and contradictions among Iberia's linguistic, political and artistic domains. With their multiple perspectives and methodologies, the essays collected here question the concept of 'Iberia' itself: its scientific accuracy as a starting point for scientific and academic work; its relation with other, more established terms, concepts and identities, such as Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Basque or Galician, but also Romance, European or Western; and, more specifically, its relation with the mythical, historical or artistic (both literary and cinematographic) narratives created to support or represent such collective identities, especially since the nineteenth century up to the present.

The essays are organized around three different axes: firstly, the theoretical grounds and methodologies of Iberian Studies, and the discussion about the location of this field within the general epistemological configuration of Comparative Literature, World Literature, Area Studies or Cultural Studies; secondly, the historical images of Iberia, regarding the configuration of this geographical, political and cultural space, as viewed from the inside and from the outside, with special attention to literary and philosophical perspectives on Iberian identities and the place of political and cultural 'Iberism'; and thirdly, contemporary Iberia, with its plural identities and their artistic representation, namely in literature and cinema. These axes constitute the centre of the three sections of the book.

In the first section, all contributions consider the new theoretical grounds and methodologies of Iberian Studies. The arguments for this new field of studies stem from the realization that there are still numerous literary and cultural phenomena that need to be studied from an Iberian relational perspective, namely multilingual authors, plural identities, and frontier cases; moreover, an Iberian point of view can be applied with promising results to an even wider set of data, most of which have traditionally been considered only from a monolingual, national(ist) perspective. Iberian Studies, in this sense, should be regarded as part of Comparative Cultural Studies, in relation with the latest European approaches to Area Studies and with the idea of World Literature. They have grown on the base of Comparative Literary Studies, but increasingly encompass a wider scope of objects and cultural objects such as artworks, historiography, journalism or cinema. The critical, methodological and theoretical tools and frames developed for and within this Iberian context may therefore be reusable for other fields and geographical areas, thus contributing to a redefinition of Comparative Studies and a better understanding of the construction and representation of plural and multilingual identities through literature and the arts.

In the beginning of this first section, Santiago Pérez Isasi (University of Lisbon) offers an overall view of the field of Iberian Studies, revising tentative definitions and sketching a 'state of the art', which shows the growing interest in recent years for this area of research. He also proposes a set of future objectives for the field, such as gaining institutional and scientific recognition, and developing deeper reflections about the epistemological location and the political implications of Iberian Studies – this volume aims precisely to meet some of these points. Teresa Pinheiro (Chemnitz University of Technology) then discusses the concept of Area Studies and examines its potentialities for Iberian and European Studies, as new epistemological fields that have emerged in recent years. Remembering how the Iberian Peninsula has been studied in Germany since the nineteenth century, she points to a cross-cultural and comparative perspective that may now be privileged, eschewing a traditional national focus and opening up new possibilities of analysis for a broader range of social and artistic discourses. Considering the question of Iberian national identities,

John Macklin (University of Glasgow) proposes a new look at Iberian Modernisms, taking into account contemporary cultural and ideological concerns. He argues that this revision of modernisms, as multiple and complex processes, may be a touchstone for a more accurate study on the intertwined processes of artistic production, cultural memory and political debate in such complex cultural spaces as Iberia. The following contribution, by Gabriel Magalhães (University of Beira Interior), presents a reflection on the implications of Iberian Comparative Studies for European Studies, stressing the necessary role of the Peninsula, as a complex cultural cross-roads, in forging a counter-argument to the dominance of scientific and economic thought in contemporary academia and political life.

This first section continues with an essay by Roberto Vecchi (University of Bologna), who argues that there is a need for a revision of the traditional outlook towards Iberian 'specificities'. Evoking Gramsci's reflection on the 'South', and considering Portugal as a 'case study', he proposes a new vision of Iberia as a relational concept, which may also help a more comprehensive reconfiguration of the relationships between space and power in Europe. Then, Jüri Talvet (University of Tartu) proposes a reflection on contemporary problems of Comparative Literary Studies, noticing some lack of theoretical reflection on the complex contacts between literary products and processes. He stresses the need for some renewed perspectives on translation practices, especially when considering very distant historical and/or linguistic contexts that may envisage Iberian literary heritage as the 'other'. Finally, César Domínguez (University of Santiago de Compostela) explores the connections between the concepts of Iberian, European and World literatures. He stresses the importance of further research into the dynamics of literary edition, translation, teaching and canon formation, in order to clarify the political and cultural transfers that have occurred and keep occurring within the Peninsula and between Iberia, Europe, and a broader worldwide context.

In the second section, the essays deal with images of Iberia, regarding the historical configuration of this geographical, political and cultural space, as seen from within and from the outside, especially from other European contexts. Since Iberian Studies intend to avoid creating new mythological or ontological definitions of Iberia, thus criticizing any ideas of specificity

or exoticism, the contributors in this section propose, instead, their vision of a complex cultural Iberian polysystem, in which all discourses are considered within its cultural and institutional context of production, and in relation with the difference(s) that they include, elude, hide or represent. Through the analysis of literary and philosophical perspectives on Iberian identities, be they Catalan, Galician or Portuguese, it is possible to identify different layers of cultural relationships and perceptions of 'otherness'. Moreover, it also becomes clear that some historical periods and problems have been more frequently considered from an Iberian point of view, namely the Golden Ages and, above all, the political and cultural 'Iberism' of some authors from the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. A new critical outlook on these issues may open the horizon to further research the topics implicated in building these 'images of Iberia'.

This second section opens with the essay by Maria Fernanda de Abreu (New University of Lisbon), who takes José Saramago's *The Stone Raft* as a starting point to discuss the concept of Iberia as 'an identitarian mega-frame' whose singularity has been shaped in both historiographical and literary discourses, in Portugal and Spain, especially since the nineteenth century. The author describes this process of building an Iberian identity, facing both the inner diversity of the Peninsula and the wider European context, as the consequence of both 'an anxiety of difference' and 'an anxiety of unity'. Then, Ferenc Pál (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) explains how the image of Portugal and Portuguese history was widespread in Hungary during the nineteenth century thanks to the reading of the Portuguese Renaissance epic poem *The Lusiads*, by Camões. The literary representation of the Portuguese at that time offered an important model in central Europe. Derek Flitter (University of Exeter) deals with the opposition between North and South as a key motive in Romantic identitarian discourses developed in the Peninsula. He argues that mediaeval and early modern Spain became a locus for the rehearsal of Iberian identities within the prism of northern European Romantic theory, and states their evocation as a means of testing aesthetic limits.

Considering intra-Iberian issues, Juan M. Ribera Llopis (Complutense University of Madrid) focuses on the discourses about the Catalan linguistic and literary Regeneration produced by Castilian authors from

1877 until 1939, and identifies a general process of neutralization of any Catalan difference. His analysis shows how the concepts of 'centre' and 'periphery' define important cultural and political categories in the Iberian context. The following essay, by Leonardo Romero Tobar (University of Zaragoza), presents the main aspects of Juan Valera's theory of Iberism, in the late nineteenth century. The discrepancies between Valera's private and public writings in what concerns the project of an Iberian political union show both the inner contradictions of Iberism and the deep literary and artistic background of this movement. Finally, Maria Graciete Besse (University of Paris IV Sorbonne) proposes a reading of Portuguese reconfigurations of Iberism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, taking as her theoretical frame Eduard Glissant's concept of 'relation'. She notices that most literary representations of Iberian inter-relations seem to sway between utopian views of a future peninsular union and the repetition of national identitarian commonplaces, thus building a conceptual opacity that obstructs any dialogue.

The third section of the volume is devoted to contemporary Iberia, considered as a space of plural identities, where artistic representations of difference play an important role. Literature and cinema became privileged fields to depict and question the multicultural and plurilingual Peninsula. And, as the essays in this section demonstrate, contemporary Iberia cannot be seen as a closed or isolated cultural space, but should rather be regarded as a rhizome of internal and external relations: it is indeed a complex 'semi-sphere' which creates multiple centres and peripheries, insularities and exiles, but which also has a strong internal coherence and cohesion that allows for its consideration as a consistent scientific object.

In the first essay of this section, Ângela Fernandes (University of Lisbon) proposes a reflection upon the place of an Iberian cultural identity within the Romance world, remembering the status of the Peninsula as a borderline location since the time it was a part of the Roman Empire. She analyses some Portuguese twentieth-century narratives and argues that the historical and mythical role of Iberia as the Western margin of Europe makes it a privileged scenery in the literary representation of cultural crossroads. In the following contribution, Jon Kortazar (University of the Basque Country) proposes a reading of *Bilbao–New York–Bilbao*, the 2008

novel by the Basque author Kirmen Uribe. Considering the complex issues dealt with in the narrative, this reading highlights the novel's 'post-national' perspective on identity, with extraterritoriality and trans-nationality being the key elements in this new kind of national identification. Helena Buffery (University College Cork) analyses the importance of translation and self-translation in the process of revival and redefinition of Catalan culture since the 1970s. She argues that, since Iberia is a multilingual zone, the attention to translation practices enables a deeper insight into the dominant moves towards collective (self)identification and (self)recognition, and this may be one of the most relevant fields of research in Iberian studies. In the last essay, Esther Gimeno Ugalde (University of Vienna) presents a panorama of contemporary Iberian cinema, noticing that there seems to be a growing interest in films that represent the Peninsula's cultural and linguistic diversity. She mentions several recent films that reflect Iberian multilingualism, and considers it worth analysing the relation between the language choice in film productions, often sponsored by regional institutions, and the will to consolidate local identities.

The rationale of Iberian Studies, as developed in this volume, may therefore be described as the constitution of a new way of looking at the Iberian complex, based on comparative methodologies, and thus aimed at overcoming binary structures as well as any sort of established frontiers. Iberian Studies deal with the cultural and artistic representations of a multiple-layered space, with a long and complex history. It is beyond doubt that more (and renewed) research needs to be done in order to bring to light not only the Iberian complexity but also the relation of the Iberian case to the global contemporary context. Being a privileged crossroads, in space and time, Iberia asks today for a new approach and hints at a new concept of cultural community, where more complex (and eventually weaker) bonds demand for a stronger and more conscious commitment from all those belonging to it.

We would like to end this brief introduction by thanking the people who made this volume possible. First of all, we thank all those who participated in the ESF Exploratory Workshop in Lisbon in October 2011, and all the contributors to this volume for their enthusiasm, generosity and committed

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