

## Reviews

Villalba, Estefanía. *Claves para interpretar la literatura inglesa*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1999, 211 p.

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Once read through, *Claves para interpretar la literatura inglesa* leaves the reader with the impression that the author has indeed granted what the title promises. The book does meet its prefatal advertisement, a survey of the traditionally established periods and authors of English literature. This is done concisely, and with order and clarity. However, a work's fitness depends on its purpose and objectives, and how these are met. As it happens, this manual both ails and benefits from the plan to which it was destined and its execution. Which is a way of saying that the book is a mixture of lesser failures and rewarding successes.

As would be expected from a textbook aimed at a non-proficient audience – Villalba's addressees are those with a general interest for English literature and beginner students as, possibly, those reading '2ª Lengua y su Literatura' – its length is reduced, and its critical apparatus limited and sometimes inconsistent (examples of my latter claim appear below). On the other hand, *Claves* offers at the beginning of each chapter an evaluation of the confluence of interdisciplinary areas – history, sociology, economy – conducive to textual and authorial interpretations on more than just the literary level. The selection from the canon, while acknowledging its traditionalism, does fulfil the author's aim: period and author representation, universality and atemporality. This is by no means the whole stock of the book's virtues, as I point out further down.

Yet one of Villalba's pleas in the Preface strikes my attention as a discordant note. Her *excusatio non petita* on the need to include some feminist criticism (p. 10) is justified since, she says, it will allow the reader to bring literature closer to his or her personal world. But then I believe that whatever the critical approach one takes before a literary production, the reader as such is decoding that text as forming part of her or his imaginative world. In other words, one does not necessarily *have* to abide by the feminist contentions to come close to a text. Readers have been doing this for centuries before post-modern feminism was even envisaged.

Far from my intention to vindicate here one particular critical discipline over others. But scientific rigour must rule over personal preference. It is of particular relevance in a work such as *Claves* to eschew partiality, unless it is made clear in the preface or advertisement that the selection and commentary of works will be executed according to one specific critical fashion. Otherwise by definition, the reader who takes up a book such as *Claves*, will *a priori* seek an impartial, encompassing attitude towards English literature.

The danger of favouring one particular *-ism* over others is that some may be left neglected. Of Post-colonialism, for instance, Villalba says little in the closing chapter, an otherwise synthetic and comprehensive survey of the latter critical attitudes towards the

literary canon. She offers a sound analysis of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, but misses the opportunity of connecting the coloniser-versus-colonised issue with the current zeal for the so-called 'new literatures'. The amateur student should be given adequate advice, if only for the proliferation of studies on ethnic, marginal, silenced and minority literatures, on the type of discipline that Post-colonialism is becoming. My point here is that all critical modes should be mentioned, but none given preference on the grounds of personal bias, however scientifically committed, as the book vouches for a general view.

It is true that Villalba's concessions to feminist interpretations are limited in number and length. Yet not all of them are fitting. Gilbert and Gubar's protest against Milton's treatment of Eve in *Paradise Lost* (pp. 91-92) seems articulate enough. But it does not seem reasonable to grant a writer like Aphra Behn a separate subsection (pp. 114-16) in the chapter dealing with Dryden and Swift (chapter 5). Not that she should be ignored, far from it. Her prominence as the first English professional female writer is uncontested. But a sense of proportion is needed. As it happens, there is not one allusion, for instance, to Sir Walter Scott. My mention of him is due to the customary concurrence of criticism of his *Waverley* novels with those by Austen: choice of authors in concise reference works is always problematic. But if one must stick to one's guidelines – universality, atemporality, typicality – then one must be consistent. Similar notable absentees, for the same or other reasons, come to mind: Burke, Lord Byron, Gibbon or Tennyson, to give a few examples, are given scanty mention or none at all.

In this light the last chapter poses a clear problem: 'Del Modernismo al Posmodernismo' (pp. 184-204) is an enormous label. In the space of twenty pages, Villalba makes a difficult choice. She sacrifices the mention and interpretation of prominent authors and their works, with the above mentioned exception of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for an overview of the development and proliferation of critical schools over the last hundred years. Her assessment is detailed and rich, but unavoidably, a long array of authors are forgotten, especially as regards Britain's prolific output in the last thirty-odd years.

It is understood that in textbooks of these characteristics space rules over detail, and it is impossible to include each and every one of the authors and philosophers of every single discipline. Yet there are literary and scientific figures that demand a place in every history on their own right. And although Villalba argues, convincingly so, that the novel is the easier and more representative genre for a student's approach to literature (p. 10), it is also true that a reference to first rate authors of all disciplines is essential in all histories.

Other discordant notes are struck with some of Villalba's unfortunate comparisons: equating George Eliot's agnosticism with that of Unamuno's *San Manuel* (p. 178) would be plausible in a reasoned essay on comparative literature, but reads somewhat lamely if mentioned *en passant*. Similarly, one of Villalba's roundest essays, that on Romanticism (pp. 141-54) at some points tends to imprecision. Her account of Shakespeare as one of the 'great romantics', sustained on the grounds that the movement reflects "a series of characteristics that do not fall within one specific period" (my translation; p. 144) is also simplistic. The connection of Heathcliff with King Lear on the grounds of their asocial affective capacity remains as bitty, in spite of its potential cogency, as the parallelism

between the beginnings of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* (pp. 54-55). The latter comparison closes the chapter, and is brought to an end before the author has provided proof of its viability. Similar abrupt endings wind up the majority of chapters. An opportunity is missed in them to round off the periods under study, and connect them to the new scene that the following chapter opens.

The author is right in addressing her book to amateurs with an interest in English literature and beginners in the field. Villalba's prose is never complex, and the reader feels grateful for her efforts to elucidate the literary, critical, social and even political and economic terminology she employs. This is also kept to a well-balanced minimum. It is gratifying to read a literary history that does not indulge in unnecessary over-luxuriant sentences that both obscure the author's intentions and clot the reader's mind.

Chapters are clearly divided into broad chronological and stylistic periods, and subdivisions deal with specific authors or groups within one movement or period. The chapters are also introduced by tasty surveys of the socio-political and economic factors that contributed to the appearance and development of the works and writing conventions under scrutiny. In this view the studies of both Chaucer (pp. 33-42) and Shakespeare (pp. 56-68) in their respective contexts, two of many examples, are enlightening and lively. In the like manner, explanations of specific terms – *kenning*, *heiti*, understatement, epiphany, stream of consciousness, etc. – are given and contextualised.

Quotation conventions are loose, as in general longish prose quotations are written in a separate paragraph in smaller type, but for example on page 156, the famous dictum from *Emma* should have been incorporated in the text, as the rest of the shorter quotes. An inconsistent use of italics and quotation marks gets in the way of systematisation when the author uses critical or literary terms, or even authors' names and works. All this variation could have been avoided if the author had chosen to stick to a neutral variant, or better still, the Spanish translation when possible. She should, in my opinion, have stuck to the language in which she chose to write her book. More traditional compilations of English literature in Spanish (e.g. Bestard, J. et al. 1980: *Introducción a la literatura inglesa*, or Pérez, C. 1978: *Temática de la literatura inglesa*) avoid the mixture of languages, even when referring to a term that was born with, and makes specific reference to, a work of literature in English. I acknowledge the untranslatable nature of certain names, and also the usefulness of giving both the English and Spanish variants of a term for the benefit of the reader. But if 'stream of consciousness' (pp. 137 and 188), 'mock heroic' (pp. 100 and 106), 'uncle Toby' (p. 138) or 'happy ending' (p. 164), to give but a few, have perfectly valid and recognised variants, as is the case, there is no reason to shift languages.

Errata of the type '*Gulliver Travels*' (p. 128) and also '*Gulliver Travel*'s' (p. 107) would probably pass unnoticed by the inexperienced reader, but indicate a lack of commitment in the proof-reading process. Similarly, Dryden's *Stanzas to Cromwell* become '*Herioque*' (p. 97). Misspellings occur also in some common Spanish words, a taint which should have been put right before the press phase. Poor translations are scarcer, but still evident. 'Gloriosa Revolución' is bad word order, but still worse is its placement in the year 1668 instead of 1688 (p. 77). An easy slip, but one which should have been detected.

No footnotes or endnotes are included in the book's critical apparatus. In addition, both the citation system and the bibliography are an assortment of things. It is understandable that the author would not want to offer an exhaustive list of the works she has drawn on for her research. But then the section called 'Bibliografía' (pp. 205-11) should have been called List of References and Further Reading. It is a useful list as such. The works chosen are representative, and most fall within the critical output of the last fifteen years. But one major problem ails this compilation. The main text has been composed with an English-unskilled reader in mind. By definition, the target readership will not be able to read much of what is recommended, as all of the suggested bibliography, with the sole exception of Bernárdez's works, is written in English.

The citation system is inconsistent. Villalba never makes up her mind as to whether she is going to cite through author, editor, work, or none of the above. We can take for instance the two quoted extracts on page 54, one from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and the other from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In the former, the extract carries the citation format '(Chaucer, 1987: 1)', whereas Eliot's extract is cited as '(The Waste Land, 1-4)'. Furthermore, Shakespeare's sonnets are cited as '(Soneto X)' (pp. 62-64), where the Spanish term is preferred, but which gives no indication as to the page in the reference volume used.

Two items are missing as complements to the contents: a chronological table and an index. Both are extremely useful to the neophyte, the latter is essential to any work of study, be it compilation or research. It is all right to make a work accessible to the general public by presenting ideas in an unsophisticated way and keeping the laborious critical apparatus to a minimum. But it is necessary to provide the scholar and student, whether experienced or not, with the adequate tools.

I am aware that the above are basically technical faults. I am aware also that the author's intention was not to comply to exactness to *MLA* or such other editorial requirements, but her main concern was with the contents, and an approach attractive to a specific readership looking for a chronological literary survey. This, *Claves* achieves with success. The work's greatest virtue is its user-friendliness. Since it seems aimed at those with little or no proficiency in the English language, it is an advantage that the quotations up to the Renaissance period are noted mostly in contemporary English, that is, linguistic modernisations of the originals.

By way of conclusion, I would recommend this manual to the readership to which it is addressed, and to any scholar with the intention of freshening up his or her grasp of the development and formation of the English literary canon. Villalba's command of the field is comprehensive in her choice of authors, both of the literary and critical corpora. She is particularly good at selecting contemporary critics' opinions on earlier authors, such as in her partiality for C. S. Lewis, David Lodge, Gilbert and Gubar or Virginia Woolf to give a few examples. Her exposition of concepts and ideas is clear while approaching her subject from an interdisciplinary point of view. Her chapter endings are somewhat abrupt, but her progression within specific movements is swift, and although by design the work does not afford ample commentary, her synthesis capacity is remarkable. As indicated above, her

manual is deficient in mostly editorial and typographic matters. Those readers in search of keys for the interpretation of English literature will put down her textbook more than satisfied.

### Works cited

- Bestard, J. et al. (1980): *Introducción a la literatura inglesa*. Madrid: Sociedad General Española de Librerías.  
 Pérez Gallego, Cándido (1978): *Temática de la literatura inglesa*. Zaragoza: Librería General.

**Dieter Stein & Rosanna Sornicola (ed.) *The Virtues of Language. History in Language, Linguistics and Texts*. Number 87. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Pub. Co., 1998**

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The book reviewed here is part of the series Studies in the History of Language Sciences, established as a companion to the journal *Historiographia Linguistica* and contains thirteen papers. These papers are organised into four different sections. The first section is dedicated to the memory of the Austrian-born British scholar Thomas Frank and to his scientific and academic work. The second section includes three papers about the 'History of the English Language' based on literary texts. The author of the first paper, Susan Fitzmaurices, deals with the progressive aspect in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and with other related topics such as grammaticalisation and subjectivity. This paper offers an interesting insight into the origins and development of the progressive aspect during Old English besides providing a textual analysis of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Nicola Pantaleo, author of the second paper analyses the concept of wit in *Piers Plowman* through the dichotomy *scientia/sapientia* which he defines as 'rational acquisition' and 'intuitive grasp of the truth' respectively. The author also comments on some lexical associations with the terms wit and wisdom and provides a morphological classification (un-forms, root manipulation, affix-based and compound-based terms) of the vocabulary used in this literary work. The third paper of this section, 'Relative Sentences in Middle English' by Dieter Stein, is based on a syntactic analysis of relativisers in the *Cely* and *Paston Letters*. This article focuses on the change of relativisers from Old into Middle English, showing through several examples taken from these *Letters* how 'pe' was replaced by 'that' in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and finally by the wh-series of relativisers such as *which*, *whom*, *whose* and *who*. Stein focuses on the 15<sup>th</sup> century as most of the research done up to now concentrates on the later stages of the development of the English system of relativization. The author provides an in-depth analysis of over a thousand examples of relativisers in the *Cely* and *Paston Letters*, from which he concludes that the most important relativiser in both documents is 'that', closely followed by 'which'. Stein also checks and examines the occurrences of three specific relativisers in both documents from the syntactic point of view, showing some interesting differences such as

the predominance of 'that' in the *Cely* corpus as a restrictive animate subject, whereas in the *Paston Letters* it usually plays the function of a restrictive inanimate object and that 'who' is mostly used as a subject in the *Cely Letters* as opposed to the *Paston Letters*, where it is used as a direct or oblique object. This author finally suggests that the widely accepted theory nowadays about the emergence of nominative 'who' as the last wh-item to enter the English language needs to be revised as it is not clear, according to him, that 'who' is the standard animate subject relativiser.

The third section (Part III) of the book deals with 'Studies in the History of Linguistics' and contains three articles. The first paper is about the interpretation of Historical sources focusing on 'Word-order in English Rhetorical and Grammatical Treatises of the XVIth and Early XVIIth Centuries'. In this paper, Sornicola argues that different criteria are needed in order to analyse the diachrony and synchrony of a given language, as linguistic phenomena based on both synchrony and diachrony depends on 'data interpretation'. She comments on how relevant rhetorical and grammatical works of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries are to the diachronical study of English Word Order. The author believes that Word Order in rhetorical treatises and grammars of this period cannot be considered a clearly-defined phenomenon without specific representations of the time. This way her paper criticises some of the conclusions previously reached by other scholars such as Kohonen and she even questions his approach. Sornicola analyses some treatises of that time such as Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* and others, and compares them with some Latin-based grammars such as the one written by Quintiliano. Sornicola's conclusion is that both innovation and tradition are essential in the history of 'descriptions' of a language and that it is difficult to construct a diachronic typology as historical written sources do not always give direct answers to some essential questions on word order, flexibility, etc as opposed to a synchronic approach. In the second paper of this section, Gabriella Di Martino deals with the 'New Science' and the 'New Language' in Seventeenth Century England. Di Martino explains how the discovery of new territories and especially a new science affected the English Language and changed the prose written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when English had to struggle with Latin as the language of science. The initial approach of the author follows the traditional and sometimes excessively two-sided debate about the types of style used in England at that time: 'the ornate sermon' and 'the plain and simple style', and provides some features and names of famous scholars and institutions who participated in it: Bunyan, Bacon, Locke, Glanvill, The Royal Society, etc. This traditional view leads the author to assume that style had to focus on communication rather than expression. But the most interesting and relevant part of this paper comes at the end, when Di Martino provides an analysis, together with English examples of several linguistic processes traditionally used to solve the problem of lack of an appropriate terminology in science: nominalization, conversion, affixation, etc. The last paper takes us back to Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*. E.F.K. Koerner reflects here on the comments made by Otto Jespersen about Saussure's book and compares the cultural and scientific background of both linguists, Jespersen and Saussure, as a clue to understand the criticism made by the first scholar about some of the ideas contained in the *Cours*, such as the distinction between

*langue* or system and *parole* or speech which Jespersen thought could not be clearly distinguished.

Finally, four papers make part of the last section of the book (Part IV), 'Studies on History in Literary Texts'. In the first article, Stefano Manferlotti deals with the figure of the director in Elizabethan theatre and focuses on *Macbeth*, providing several examples taken from this literary work where becomes evident the absence in Elizabethan theatre of a director in a modern sense as the whole text becomes a script and the actors have to perform spontaneously with just the directions implied throughout the text. In the second article, Uwe Baumann comments on the model set by Elyot in his book *Speculum Principis*, a model to be imitated by princes all over the world as represented in that book by Severus Alexander. The third paper deals with the images and metaphors about the union of England and Scotland taken from Ben Jonson's *Hymenaei*. The author of this paper, Anna Cataldi, examines the role played by James I as a peacemaker between the English and the Scottish peoples and the images and metaphors about this union desired by the king between England and Scotland contained in Ben Jonson's masque. In 'How-to Literature', the fourth and last paper, David Hart provides a brief outline of the history of medical texts written in the vernacular language from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and compares the style and the expected audience of nine of them. Hart thus exemplifies the shift from the more personal narration and involved character of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century texts to the more 'information' style of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ones. This shift is clearly manifested in the differences of clause structure between all those texts, with a progressive increase of nominalisation and different clause-structuring forms, predicative adjectives, etc.

This book contains a wide range of topics written by several scholars working in Historical Linguistics. The result is a collection of well documented papers, which provide plenty of examples and pave the way for future research on those topics. There is a General Index at the end of the book which, despite not being very extensive, has several keywords or entries that may be very useful for those who are only interested in some particular aspect. Students and scholars will find it very helpful as it is an excellent source of information on very specific aspects of Historical Linguistics and other related fields related, Comparative Linguistics, English Literature, etc.

**Antonia Sánchez-Macarro and R. Carter (eds.) (1998): *Linguistic Choice across Genres: Variation in Spoken and Written English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.**

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The book reviewed here represents a very interesting and relevant contribution to the field of text linguistics and text analysis from the systemic functional grammar perspective. The volume brings together a number of papers presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Systemic Functional Workshop held in Valencia, Spain, in July 1995. As the editors mention in the

foreword, the workshop and its subsequent publication focus on the study and analysis of linguistic choices and variation in spoken and written genres. This notion of choice, basic in a systemic functional grammar perspective, enables the linguist to analyse the potential expression of meaning in a myriad of socio-cultural contexts. These contexts vary from well-established academic texts to popular swear words, covering among others: academic articles on philosophy, scientific research papers, emergency telephone calls and casual conversations. Undoubtedly, one of the main achievements of this volume is that the editors and authors have succeeded in presenting an exhaustive corpus of genres covering written and spoken texts. Thus, they offer, at the same time, interesting insights into the relationship between text and context.

*Linguistic Choice across Genres* contains three sections: an introduction by Gunther Kress, a section devoted to written genres and, finally, a section on spoken genres. The introduction, entitled "Meaning as Work: Individuals, Society and the Production of Representational Resources", considers meaning as the outcome of choice, assuming that choice not only consists of the selection of a possibility from existing resources, but also of the actual process of meaning-making when we have a context of available semiotic resources. This conception of choice is underpinned by notions such as the transformative action of meaning-making, the type of actors and the kind of context involved. This idea is, in fact, the theoretical basis underlying the research undertaken in the following articles, in which the analysis of different written and spoken genres is based upon the particulars of the contextual situation.

The second section contains ten articles which attempt to cover the study of choice in written texts. The first article, written by Geoff Thompson, is a theoretical and practical analysis of two sample texts. From his analysis the author concludes that choices are not made independently throughout the texts, but they have a marked influence on each other even across sentence boundaries, a phenomenon called *resonance*. The section on written texts also includes articles by Thomas Bloor (on conditional expressions across two different genres: economic forecasts and articles on linguistic philosophy), Michael P. Jordan (on constraints and limitations of choice in cause-effect logical relations), Vicente López-Folgado (on variations and possibilities of choice in NG premodifiers), Angela Dowing and Julia Lavid (on variation and thematic progression in English, German and Italian administrative texts), Eija Ventola (on choices in academic writing), Louise J. Ravelli (on the consequences of the choices made in art-related written texts), Meriel Bloor (on choice and innovation in computer science), Pilar Garcés-Conejos and Antonia Sánchez-Macarro (on choice of politeness strategies in scientific articles: popularisation versus initialisation), and Katja Pelsmaekers, Chris Braecke and Ronald Geluykens (on the question of choice for L2 writers when using subordinate clauses).

The third section of the book contains articles on spoken genres, which is a highly significant contribution to the academic study of genres and text analysis, as not much research on spoken materials has been carried out to date. In this section the reader can find articles by Gordon Tucker (on quality and adjectival choice and its lexico-grammatical consequences), Adrienne Chambon and Daniel Simeoni (on the choice of modality in



therapeutic dialogues), Luis Pérez- González (on the relevance of choices in conflictive calls for emergency assistance), Karen Malcolm (on differentiating choices in dialogues between strangers and friends), Robert Veltman (on the analysis of swearing as a paradigmatic example of language as choice) and finally Martin Hewings (on intonation choices in the case of non-native speakers of English).

In conclusion, it should be stressed that this collection of articles provides new models for the study of Texts Linguistics and Genre Analysis, apart from clearing the way for future research into new perspectives and developments. In this regard it is worth mentioning the innovative didactic perspective, opened by Katja Pelsmaekers, Chris Braecke and Ronald Geluykens in their article on L2 writing and Martin Hewings in his study of non-natives intonation. These articles emphasise the alternatives, relationships and restrictions determined by choices in a given context. Consequently, genres are characterised by all the choices that are possible in a particular context limited by the constraints made by the interpersonal relationships of individuals, lexical and grammatical aspects, power differences between actors, previous choices, the purpose and the function of the text, cohesion, coherence, register, and some others. The articles imply that there is still a need for further research, but also present models of approach to different texts that may prove useful when trying to analyse variation across genres.

**Milagros Fernández Pérez *Introducción a la Lingüística*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1999.**

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The book written by Fernández Pérez is an excellent introduction to Linguistics. This work is divided into two different sections, each one containing three chapters. The first section focuses on language whereas the second concentrates on different aspects of modern and historical Linguistics. In the first section language is analyzed from distinct perspectives: social, symbolic and neuropsychological. Thus in the first chapter Fernández deals with language as an object of study from different viewpoints: language as a system, variations within a language, national and official language, worldwide linguistic typology, etc. The next chapter within this section examines language from a symbolic perspective, describing it as a means of communication between human beings where different codes are involved. Consequently, different Semiotic aspects of language structure are here explained, such as the concepts of 'cognition' and 'communication' in Spanish. The last chapter within the first section analyzes language from a psychological perspective. Here the author recalls some of the most important theories on the process of language acquisition, describing and illustrating several stages and problems throughout this process.

The second section deals specifically with Linguistics. In a very structured way the author takes us from the original objectives and theories of historical linguistics to a much more modern conception of linguistics. Taking as her main reference some of the concepts

previously analyzed in the first section, Fernández offers an overview of the origins of Linguistics, and provides helpful illustration of some important approaches and traditions still current in the field. She reflects on some traditional key concepts from a comparative point of view, which allows her to explain the reasons for the modern division in contemporary Linguistics in the second chapter in this section. This chapter deals with several branches of Linguistics such as phonology, grammar and lexicology. But the author also finds and explains a number of important links between other branches of the field, as some of them have common aims and ideas and can be better explained through a comparative analysis, for instance: Sociolinguistics and Anthropology, Psycholinguistics and Neurolinguistics. This chapter is completed with a very comprehensive introduction to some of the latest advances in Applied Linguistics: language teaching and learning, problems in translation, etc. The last chapter in this section is dedicated to Linguistics from a more philosophical perspective. Here Fernández applies the concept of epistemology to some of the linguistic theories and doctrines previously described, stressing that this epistemology is not prescriptive.

This book is a very comprehensive guide to some of the major problems in contemporary Linguistics and it is very well organized into several chapters, distributed over two coherent sections. This represents a clear advantage for the reader, as all concepts and theories described throughout the book are very well correlated. Furthermore, at the end of each chapter Fernández includes a number of texts, questions and practice material relating to the content provided in each chapter, so this work definitely serves as a very worthy and necessary introduction to historical and contemporary Linguistics.

**Agustín Coletes Blanco, *Pérez de Ayala, bajo el signo de Britannia*. Serie Literatura, 39. Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Valladolid, 1997. 154 p.**

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The present book completes a trilogy devoted to the English sources in Pérez de Ayala's literary and non-literary works. It had started with the publication of *Gran Bretaña y los Estados Unidos en la vida de Ramón Pérez de Ayala* (Oviedo: Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, 1984) and continued thereafter with *La huella anglonorteamericana en la novela de Pérez de Ayala* (Murcia/Oviedo: Universidad de Murcia y Universidad de Oviedo, 1987). In this case, its author, Agustín Coletes, writes about the presence of this influence in Ayala's "minor" works, that is to say, his poems, short stories and essays. On the whole, we have a very clear picture of Ayala's readings and opinions on many English and American authors from Shakespeare to Joyce or T. S. Eliot. Agustín Coletes demonstrates his extensive knowledge of the writer, whether when he refers to the contents of his library, or when he quotes the main critical reviews of his literary works. He has studied the character and his writings thoroughly and patiently, and his conclusions are the

result of an elaborate work and a sharp mind. The style of his prose is precise and vigorous and does not contain -something that should be praised for- any unnecessary reiteration or pedantry. The reading of his book becomes, then, an easy and pleasant task and, at the end, we have a whole view of Ayala's philiias and phobias and the main English sources of his books. The position of the scholar towards the figure of Pérez de Ayala shows real admiration on many occasions, but it does not lack the necessary criticism when he cannot share his points of view about women, his strong dislike for the so-called "psychological novels", especially those written by Joyce or, finally, when he sets aside the main trends in modern British and American literature.

The most interesting aspects of the book include his well-documented comparisons between Ayala's works and his English sources, of great relevance for the study of both his poetry and prose. In my opinion, as Coletes rightly observes, Ayala stands out as a keen and sensible literary critic when he reveals the influence of Byron in Espronceda, something then unknown and only thirty years later studied in depth by Esteban Pujals; and, especially, that of Cervantes in Fielding and Dickens (possibly due to the excellent translation of *Don Quixote* done by Smollett in the Eighteenth Century and which had exerted so great an influence on the England of the time). They all gather to make up a comprehensive and brilliant study of comparative literature and anticipate a series of further research on the matter. Ayala's opinion on Shakespeare and the creation of English National Theatre are also remarkable when compared with the Greek Theatre of the classical tragedy and with the Spanish Theatre of Lope de Vega and his contemporaries. He also dates the origins of the psychological novel, personalised in Joyce or Proust, to Richardson's epistolary novels of the late Eighteenth Century. Other interesting comments from Coletes are those referring to some biographical aspects of Ayala's life and about his compromise with realism in literature, showing his preference for Galdós or Dickens to Benavente or Zola, for example. A rigorous study, in short, very useful for those scholars interested in Pérez de Ayala or in comparative literature, but also for anyone who wants to increase their knowledge of Spanish and English literature in general. The passion of the researcher for his character is combined here with the necessary and dispassionate distance when he gets to analyse the different aspects of his artistic development and the strong and permanent English influence on his literary and essayist world.

**Vilar, Mar** *El español, segunda lengua en los Estados Unidos*. Universidad de Murcia: Servicio de publicaciones, 2000, 669 p.

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It is well known that the Spanish language has proliferated in its use in the last five centuries and that it is presently the second language of the United States. However, the teaching of Spanish and its progressive use in the U.S. had not been as extensively studied and recorded until Mar Vilar published *El español, segunda lengua en los Estados Unidos* (Spanish as a Second Language in the U.S.). This book takes a historical perspective on the advance of

the Spanish language in the United States. It begins with the introduction of the study of Spanish in the thirteen colonies in 1776 and it progresses chronologically until 1848. The significance of this period (i.e., from the founding of the nation to the annexation of part of Mexico) corresponds with a transition in the educational system. The traditional English education of classical studies was replaced by a more practical and open one. This new system permitted the study of the Spanish language along with other modern languages.

Each of the ten chapters of this book deals with the teaching of Spanish in the schools and universities of the East Coast, which later served as models for the institutions across the nation. In reviewing the events which led to the incorporation of the Spanish language in the North American educational system, Mar Vilar makes reference to the role of several founding fathers (e.g., Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson), countless scholars of the Spanish language (e.g., Félix Varela, Mariano Velazquez de la Cadena and Mariano Cubí) and numerous prestigious colleges and universities (e.g., University of Pennsylvania, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, etc.) in the advancement of the Spanish language.

Chapter 1 begins with Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where the use of two languages-English and German- paved the path for the introduction of the teaching of modern languages, including Spanish. In addition to Benjamin Franklin's influence, a Spanish-speaking colony with commercial interests living in Philadelphia also promoted the publication of newspapers and books written in Spanish. Subsequently, Chapter 2 deals with Thomas Jefferson's efforts to reform the Virginia educational system. Among his achievements are: the establishment of the first university department of modern languages, the secularization of the curriculum as well as the establishment of an elective system which allowed students to design their own study program. Spanish became one of the first three languages chosen by students.

Chapters 3, 4 & 5 deal with Harvard, the oldest college of the U.S. founded in 1636, which played an important role in initiating trends later followed by other institutions. The author carefully reconstructs and examines the evolution of Harvard from its traditional stand to a more innovative one influenced by the thoughts and principles of the successive rectors and presidents. Although French was introduced in 1787, it was not until 1817 that Spanish was taught through the "Abiel Smith" professorate. The work of the successive professors: Ticknor, Longfellow and Lowell, who chaired the position, is examined in detail to determine their role as teachers, structural innovators and world renowned researchers of the Spanish language and its literature. Harvard was the most notable center for Spanish investigators during the period of study.

In contrast to Harvard, Yale maintained its traditional view and focus on classical languages and theology as is demonstrated in chapter 6. Nevertheless, French and Spanish became optional courses for students as of 1826.

Chapter 7 is reserved for New York, the great metropolis which, then just as now, marked the rhythm of the times, in so far as culture and education were concerned. Here she points out the influence of the Sephardic Jews, newspapers such as *El Redactor* and *Mercurio de Nueva York* and the incorporation of Spanish into the curriculums of King's College (later named Columbia), City University of New York and Union College.

Chapter 8 deals with Maryland, especially Saint Mary's College, the first Catholic college of the U.S., which served as a model for future colleges. Vilar shows how St.

Mary's gave special attention to the Spanish language, partly due to the number of Hispanic and Spanish students. Not only does she trace the importance of Spanish in St. Mary's, but also everything connected to the organization, administration and staff of the institution.

Finally, chapters 9 and 10 complete the panoramic view of the teaching of Spanish and other modern languages within North America prior to 1848. In chapter 9 she refers to colleges in the north, such as Princeton, Rutgers, Dartmouth etc. and the development of their traditional curriculums that made room for modern languages. Then she goes on to the institutions of the Upper Midwest, which gave preferential treatment to French and German due to their cultural tradition in the area. Similarly, many institutions of the Lower Midwest, such as North Carolina State University, also taught French and German. However, others included Spanish, for example, the University of South Carolina, the University of Georgia and many other private universities which followed the model established by St. Mary's. The last territories she refers to in chapter 10 are Florida, Louisiana and Texas, those with a direct connection with Spain. Here she deals with the linguistic and cultural manifestations of the Spanish and French settlements. She studies the 'anglisation' suffered by Louisiana, Florida and Texas before, during and after the annexation of the territories by the United States in 1804, 1819 and 1845, respectively.

The summary provided above does not do justice to the comprehensive study this book entails. Each chapter carefully examines the institutions, curriculums, scholars, books, and communities that played a role in the advance of Spanish as a second language in the U.S. It fills the gap in recorded history of the period within which Spanish began to be taught. The precision with which the book encompasses such a vast area of study and the extensive research undertaken has produced an outstanding historical and applied linguistic reference book.

**Wharton, Edith. *La carta*, 1999. Selection, translation and epilogue by Teresa Gómez Reus. Barcelona: Clásicos del Bronce. 176 págs.**

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The compilation of short narrative pieces titled *La carta* puts together for the first time in Spain some of Edith Wharton's best well-known short stories, which, surprisingly enough, had not yet been translated into Spanish. If we consider this fact surprising – even unbelievable – it is because, although Edith Wharton's fame is based on her novels, such as *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Ethan Frome* (1911) or *The Age of Innocence* (1920), her short narratives are an essential part of her literary output. She published a total of eighty five short stories, and no less than twenty of them have been highly acclaimed by Anglo-American critics. Hence the need for this anthology, which contains some of her most memorable pieces.

In her epilogue, the editor and translator, Teresa Gómez Reus, regrets "esa pérdida que supone traducirla" and comments that it is not always possible to translate "de manera satisfactoria todo el contenido de las vivencias sabrosas, sutiles ironías y evocaciones

misteriosas de que están llenas las páginas de Edith Wharton" (pp. 161-162). It is true that translation is interpretation, and that any translation whatsoever is only able to show the original through a sort of mist, hoping that the content is kept sufficiently "intact". I do not, nevertheless, agree that this unavoidable vicissitude of the art of translation implies necessarily a loss, for even through the mist of translation the reader of these short stories can perceive clearly what Jung called the *anima*, the exclusive individuality of a person; in this case, of a certain worldview inextricably linked to a style. This selection of tales has successfully "translated" Edith Wharton's *anima*, her stylistic and thematic nuances.

*La carta* contains five stories, written in different periods of the author's life, belonging to different genres and narrative styles. Thus, the comic style of "Los otros dos" ("The Other Two", 1904) and "El último recurso" ("The Last Asset", 1908) contrasts with "El grano de la granada" ("Pomegranate Seed", 1936), a ghost story. But it is precisely the almost impossible mixture of difference and similitude that characterizes this book what makes it so fascinating. What seduces the reader is its variety and, at the same time, its coherence –in my opinion, the experience of reading *La carta* can be compared to the reading of a certain type of postmodern novel, in which chapters do not follow a straight line but whose overall effect is one of a deep unity of intention.

Indeed all the tales in this anthology are linked by various elements that produce the effect of an essential coherence. One aspect that is specially noticeable is Wharton's rejection of external realism; what her contemporary Virginia Woolf called "material realism", which reduces the complexity of life to its external aspects, easily noticed and, therefore, easily represented. In this sense, "Su capacidad de fijar la mirada sobre las personas y el modo en el que se relacionan entre sí para buscar lo que hay más allá de las apariencias" is, in José María Guelbenzu's words<sup>1</sup>, one of the dominant features of these short pieces. In a more ostensible way, the stories in this collection all share the presence of one or several letters that have the power to start or decide their dramatic development.

Early in the XXth century epistolary communication was very usual: a quick and practical way of sending messages; the equivalent of a phone call or an email nowadays. This apparently trivial element is what Teresa Gómez has chosen as the support that lends structural unity to the book. All the letters that appear in the stories are short messages: an appointment with a lover (in "Las fiebres romanas"), legal notifications regarding divorce matters ("Los otros dos", "Almas tardías"), a note announcing someone's arrival ("El último recurso") ... The only exception are the nine letters in the last story, "El grano de la granada", whose content is never revealed due to their supernatural origin. But even these ghostly letters are intuitively felt by the reader as being short messages. No letter in *La carta* contains self-analysis or narration of current everyday life. Yet, in the ironical way that characterizes Edith Wharton's writing, these brief and prominently practical messages open a window into the inner life of the characters, allowing the deep, intimate psychological representation typical of today's letters. Every letter in *La carta* is unexpected and produces disconcerting effects, in the reader as much as in the characters, despite their succinct nature. They allow the reader to make out, in Edith Wharton's words, "ese breve destello de interiores iluminados que un mensajero pudiera percibir a través de una puerta entornada".<sup>2</sup>

In "Almas tardías" the plot is apparently conventional, telling the story of the

elopement of an unhappily married woman with a writer, searching for a life away from the rigid codes of the society to which they belong. For her – an honest person, able to rationalize her emotions – love is inextricably linked to freedom as much as to emotional closeness, but the concrete situation where the lovers find themselves (in a Swiss hotel, registered under false pretences as a married couple) forces her to reassess her predicament: on the one hand she desires free love; on the other hand, she is convinced that marriage helps to protect the couple from excessive introspection. Facing this dilemma, she feels alone, experiencing an inner sense of catastrophe.

The letter that the protagonist gets (referred to as "la cosa") is what gives impetus to the plot. Although it announces her divorce, the reader is disconcerted by its effect on her: she receives it with a feeling of anguish for it makes her aware that society demands as the price for her rehabilitation that she goes from one man to another (as "a thing", as a letter that goes from one hand to another), and this realization leads her both to the perception of the injustice of her predicament and to the conviction that only the repression of her emotions is able to protect her. Besides the subtle expression of psychological nuances in the mind of the protagonist, the author's great artistic skill is shown in the way she constructs the way out of her heroine's conflictive situation: at the end of the story, it is from the point of view of her lover that the reader sees the result of the woman's decision – naturally, to marry him, for she needs the social acceptance that is rejected by her on ideological grounds. As in the novel *The House of Mirth*, the heroine's desire to get out of the rigid mould imposed by a conventional society is curtailed by reality: a part of her self is still tied up to convention, to appearance. The self that chooses to marry her lover is "external", social; nevertheless, in a subtle way, Wharton makes the reader see that the barrier between the external and the internal self is blurred, that, to a large extent, we are what we do. Therefore, the pressure of the social environment overdetermines the psychological portrayal of Wharton's female characters.

In "Los otros dos" there appear themes repeated in "Almas tardías": again, the heroine aspires to social recognition through marriage; again, a letter of legal nature will act as a catalyst of the characters' feelings and as the impetus to the plot. The letter – concerning the visiting rights of the protagonist's first husband, her daughter's father – causes a turmoil of feelings and doubts in her third husband, whom the twice-divorced protagonist has just married. As in "Almas tardías", Wharton reveals in a subtle and ironical way the husband's lack of knowledge of the woman he thinks he loves. In this context, the letter, which eventually lets him meet his two predecessors, is seen by him as the key that opens the secret chamber of a woman he believed he knew and possessed. But here the letter does not only act as the key that allows him access to his wife's past – showing him previously unseen aspects of her personality –: it will also be the torch that throws light in the inner space of his own feelings of disappointment in the face of a marriage that, ironically, he had represented in terms of exclusive possession.

In "Las fiebres romanas", there reappears the theme of how little we know about the people we share our lives with. The new element in this short piece is that the protagonists are two elderly women who, despite having been "close" friends since childhood, fifty years later come to the realization that they hardly know each other. There reappears the theme of social respectability, of the empty conventions that limit the human being, above

all women, and that are again the target of Wharton's ironical attack. In this short story, two American ladies, who have a casual encounter in Rome after having lost contact for several years, remember the past together sitting opposite the Coliseum, and in the process of remembrance, there come to the surface virulent feelings that time has not managed to erase. In this story, the letter does not act as the impetus to the plot, but as its dramatic climax, revealing a passion that had been kept secret for decades.

"El grano de la granada" is the only story with more than one letter – there are nine, in fact – but, as the heroine remarks, "eran tan iguales en apariencia que se habían confundido todas en su mente, convirtiéndose en una sola: 'la carta'" (p. 131). Although this short piece is quite different from the four previous ones, belonging to the genre of the ghost story, besides containing numerous letters, it is linked to the others in one important way: these letters, like the others in this collection, fulfil the function of opening a window into the characters' psychology. Furthermore, as in "Las fiebres romanas", this story represents relations between women (while men are absent) that are not stereotyped. Here the relation between the protagonist and her mother-in-law is excellent: there is love, they get on and understand each other exceedingly well and are even portrayed as being in complicity. In other words, the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship in this tale is at the opposite extreme of the usual cultural representations of this type of relationship.

But the most surprising aspect of "El grano de la granada" is that, through the motif of the letter, what the reader makes out is not only the psychology of characters involved in complex interpersonal relationships, but the unconscious itself, what Virginia Woolf called "the dark places of psychology", which, precisely for being so badly lit, for having such difficult access, lend themselves well to be treated in the genre of the ghost story. It seems rather appropriate that this should be the closing story of the collection, for, as I see it, it constitutes the climax of the exploration of the darkest and most invisible elements of the psyche; in fact, the content of the letter remains invisible, inaccessible, even when at the end of the story the protagonist decides to open the last of the disturbing letters addressed to her husband and finds that the writing is illegible, ghostly. Like the protagonist, the reader is left only with a number of hypothesis about the content of the letter, as in the interpretation of the unconscious.

To conclude, *La carta*, as the rest of Edith Wharton's work, shows what the author called "the underground currents of existence", above all regarding women's subjectivity, which, until the turn of the XIXth century had not been sufficiently represented.

### Notes

1. See José María Guelbenzu's review of *La carta*, "La maestría de Edith Wharton", *El País*. Literary supplement *Babelia*, 6th November 1999

2. This quote belongs to one of the short stories in this anthology, "El ultimo recurso", page 61.