

Iberian Studies: A State of the Art and Future Perspectives

I

This volume, and this chapter in particular, are based on two complementary convictions: 1) that there is a need to create or rather to consolidate Iberian Studies as a specific field of knowledge which encompasses a wide set of literary, artistic and cultural phenomena that cannot be properly understood and explained from a national perspective; and 2) that this field, despite the fact that it has not yet been named or epistemologically positioned, has seen a significant development in the last few years through the emergence of a growing number of scholarly publications.

Admittedly, Comparative Studies on the different literatures of the Iberian Peninsula and their mutual interrelations are not new. For instance, there is a long tradition of studies that compare Spanish and Portuguese authors or texts within the general field of Comparative Literature. However and in accordance with our proposal, if we consider Iberian Studies as a specific field or subfield, we see that they consist of something different to this tradition which is, needless to say, extremely valuable and useful. It could be defined as the consistent and deliberate consideration of the Iberian Peninsula as an interconnected, multilingual and multicultural political, identitarian and literary polysystem¹ or semiosphere, to use Lotman's term.² Thus, the literary phenomena that can be analysed

1 Itamar Even-Zohar, 'The Role of Literature in the Making of the Nations of Europe: A Socio-semiotic Study', *Applied Semiotics/Sémiotique appliquée* 1/1 (1996), 39–59.

2 Yuri Lotman, 'On the Semiosphere', *Sign Systems Studies* 33/1 (2005), 205–29.

within the scope of Iberian Studies are pretty much the same as those of comparative – and non-comparative – studies; it is rather the analytical perspective, as well as the theoretical and methodological frame, in which these studies are placed and understood, that has changed.

It might be considered naïve to propose the constitution of a new field devoted to the literatures of a specific European region, especially given the loss of credibility of Area Studies, at least in their traditional configuration from the second-half of the twentieth century which derived from USA foreign interests during the Cold War.³ Secondly, there is an almost unlimited respect towards national boundaries in Literary Studies, both in their academic and scientific manifestations. And thirdly, there is a move in the opposite direction with a strong tendency towards the idea of World Literature, which dominates current Comparative Studies.⁴

However, the need for a coherent set of methodological tools and theoretical frameworks for Iberian Studies has manifested itself in very different academic contexts. It could be argued that there is indeed a crisis in Area Studies, but this has to be understood in the etymological sense of ‘change’ and ‘transformation’; it opens a new epistemological range of options in which Iberian Studies, as we understand them, could be timely. We could propose that national boundaries do in fact have that kind of academic and scientific power which makes them seem almost self-evident and untouchable, but this does not mean that there is no place for supra- or transnational proposals such as this one, especially during a time of crisis of academic systems and programmes worldwide. Furthermore, we would suggest that the advance towards an idea of World Literature points precisely to this overcoming of national boundaries in a radical way, which does not exclude the possibility of simultaneously exploring the specific relations within significant ‘regions’ of that global literature, as is the case of the Iberian Peninsula.

3 David Szanton, ed., *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

4 David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

II

There is in fact some evidence in academic communities from both sides of the Atlantic that support our claim for the establishment of Iberian Studies as a field. From the American academic world, for instance, Joan Ramon Resina has argued strongly for the reconfiguration of the traditional label of Hispanism.⁵ He believes it should be transformed into the more encompassing 'Iberian Studies' which would include all of the literatures and cultures of the Iberian Peninsula. Resina argues that Peninsular Hispanism, with its outdated methodologies and practices and its static canonical texts, is quickly and constantly losing ground in relation to areas such as Latin-American Studies, Chicano Studies, etc. In his view, the constitution of the new field of Iberian Studies, which would translate into new methodologies, new sets of analytical tools and a new and more inclusive canon, could help regain ground and offer an attractive and academically sustainable alternative. Behind this somewhat utilitarian phrasing lies a meaningful and clearly ideological proposal: the abolition of a monolingual Spanish identity by dissolving it into a wider, multilingual and multicultural Iberian space, which, as Resina argues, will also attract more students, more research and, in the end, more funding.

Be it as it may, it is not difficult to find examples of Departments of Iberian and Latin-American Literatures and Cultures or Departments of Spanish and Luso-Brazilian Studies (terms which seem to be considered as synonyms), especially in the United States and the United Kingdom (there is Resina's Department at Stanford, but there are also others at Columbia University, Richmond University or Queen Mary at the University of London, just to name three prestigious examples).

However, as their various names show, these Departments are not devoted specifically to the peninsular part of the Iberian world, but to

5 Joan Ramon Resina, *Del hispanismo a los estudios ibéricos. Una propuesta federativa para el ámbito cultural* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2009).

both Peninsular and Latin-American Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries. Furthermore, it is impossible not to think that in most cases this fusion of Spanish-speaking with Portuguese-speaking Literary Studies (with the more or less explicit addition of other linguistic and literary areas) into one department does not respond to deep theoretical decisions, but to more practical – even economic – considerations. In my view and in the majority of cases, the Spanish and Portuguese elements of these departments hardly work together towards the constitution of a common space of debate, research and mutual contamination. Moreover, there persists a confusion between the concept of Iberian Studies as merely ‘Peninsular Hispanism’ (in Faber,⁶ for instance) and true *Iberian* Studies which would, by definition, also encompass Portuguese Studies.

In Europe, and especially in Spanish and Portuguese Higher Education programmes, where the division of Language and Literary Studies by national and/or linguistic criteria (e.g. Filología Hispánica [Hispanic Philology], Estudos Portugueses/Lusófonos [Portuguese/Lusophone Studies], etc.) has just recently started to be dismantled as a result of the Bologna agreement – and once again, mainly for practical and economic reasons – initiatives in this direction are still more personal and individual than collective and institutional. For now there does not seem to be any intention of integrating Iberian languages and literatures into any kind of common programme (with the exception of the few remaining Departments of Romance Philology, which are not in fact devoted to Iberia but to Romania – in its classical meaning of ‘Latin-speaking world’).

6 Sebastiaan Faber, ‘Economies of Prestige: The Place of Iberian Studies in the American University’, *Hispanic Research Journal* 9/1 (2008), 7–32.

III

In other less institutionalized aspects of the academic system, the presence of Iberian Studies, as content and not merely as a label, is more easily traceable and offers more promising signs. For instance, the last decade has witnessed a considerable number of symposia and conferences dealing with literary and cultural relations within the Iberian Peninsula, such as the RELIPES Conferences in Salamanca and Covilhã;⁷ the *XXXIVe Congrès de la Société des hispanistes français* under the title *Cultures lusophones et hispanophones: penser la relation*, organized by Maria Graciete Besse;⁸ the annual Forum of Iberian Studies in Oxford, or the annual Conference of the Association for Comparative Iberian Studies.⁹ Once again, we should be careful with the ambiguity with which the term 'Iberian' is used in the titles of some of these meetings and symposia: mere juxtaposition does not equal comparatism. While the RELIPES meetings and the *Congrès de la Société des hispanistes français* clearly stress the idea of interrelation across national and linguistic frontiers, in other cases it could be possible to imagine a conference with 'Iberian' in its title, in which not even one paper would go beyond the established national or linguistic barriers, thus creating the image of the Iberian Peninsula as a mosaic of isolated mono-linguistic pieces that were uncomfortably put together within one room. The Association for Contemporary Iberian Studies, for instance, states its core areas of activity in a non-comparative way. It is merely summative and involves the following:

- 7 Gabriel Magalhães, ed., *Actas do Congresso RELIPES III: 18, 19 e 20 de Abril de 2007* (Covilhã: Universidade da Beira Interior, 2007); Gabriel Magalhães, ed., *RELIPES. Relações Linguísticas e Literárias entre Portugal e Espanha desde os Inícios do Século XIX até à Actualidade* (Covilhã and Salamanca: Universidade da Beira Interior/Celya, 2007).
- 8 Maria Graciete Besse, org., *Cultures lusophones et hispanophones: penser la relation* (Paris: Indigo & Côté-Femmes, 2010).
- 9 Association for Contemporary Iberian Studies (ACIS) <<http://www.iberianstudies.net/>>.

1. Geographical limits: Spain and Portugal and their dependent territories. International relations involving either country are included.
2. Historical period: approximately the past 100 years, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present. This is not meant to exclude references to an earlier period, where appropriate.
3. Language: the Spanish and Portuguese languages, especially contemporary usage; the minority languages of the Iberian Peninsula, especially in their social and political context ('About', ACIS website).

The comparative and supranational or transnational spirit which, in our opinion, should characterize Iberian Studies is evidently and strongly present in the growing number of publications which deal with Iberian literatures and their interconnections. In Portugal, for instance, after the seminal efforts by Maria Idalina Resina Rodrigues (in such works as *Estudos Ibéricos – Da Cultura à Literatura*),¹⁰ we can see the birth of more systematic and co-ordinated efforts, both in the research group directed by Maria Fernanda de Abreu at the New University of Lisbon, whose study on *Cervantes no Romantismo Português*¹¹ is a major contribution to Iberian Comparative Studies, and the research project 'Diálogos Ibéricos e Iberoamericanos' [Iberian and Ibero-American Dialogues], at the Centre for Comparative Studies of the University of Lisbon, directed by Ângela Fernandes,¹² as well as a considerable number of publications from individual researchers that

10 Maria Idalina Resina Rodrigues, *Estudos Ibéricos – Da Cultura à Literatura: pontos de encontro, séculos XIII a XVII* (Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1987).

11 Maria Fernanda de Abreu, *Cervantes no Romantismo Português: cavaleiros andantes, manuscritos encontrados e gargalhadas moralíssimas* (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1994).

12 Ângela Fernandes et al., eds, *Diálogos Ibéricos e Iberoamericanos: actas del VI congreso internacional de ALEPH* (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Comparatistas da Universidade de Lisboa/Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2010); Santiago Pérez Isasi, 'Imágenes de la Península Ibérica en la historiografía literaria romántica', in María Jesús Fernández García and María Luísa Leal, coords, *Imagologías ibéricas: construyendo la imagen del otro peninsular* (Mérida: Gabinete de Iniciativas Transfronterizas del Gobierno de Extremadura, 2012), 181–98.

deal with Spanish-Portuguese literary relations.¹³ Two more recent collective publications that have dealt with Iberian relations as a research object are the journal *Colóquio/Letras*, which published a special issue entitled *Siglo de Oro: relações hispano-portuguesas no séc. XVII*,¹⁴ and the *Revista de História das Ideias* from the University of Coimbra which devoted its 31st issue to the idea of *Ibéria*.¹⁵

On the Spanish side, the majority of projects and publications that interrelate Iberian literary and cultural phenomena come from the periphery of the system: either the academic periphery (for instance, the very few Departments of Romance Philology left, such as the one at the Complutense University of Madrid) or from the geographical periphery (Galicia, Catalonia, Extremadura). An example of the first kind of peripheral location is the work being developed by Juan M. Ribera Llopis at the Complutense University of Madrid (e.g., Ribera Llopis and Arroyo Almaraz¹⁶); as for the second, an outstanding example is the work developed at the University of Santiago de Compostela by the team co-ordinated by Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza, Anxo Abuín and César Domínguez, with groundbreaking contributions such as *A Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula*;¹⁷ the studies carried out by Víctor Martínez

13 Among others: Gabriel Magalhães, *Garrett e Rivas. O Romantismo em Espanha e Portugal*, 2 vols (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional–Casa da Moeda, 2009); António Apolinário Lourenço, *Estudos de Literatura Comparada Luso-Espanhola* (Coimbra: Centro de Literatura Portuguesa da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 2005); Teresa Araújo, *Portugal e Espanha: diálogos e reflexos literários* (Lisbon and Faro: Centro de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários da Universidade do Algarve/ Instituto de Estudos sobre o Romancelo Velho e Tradicional, 2004).

14 *Colóquio/Letras. Suplemento – Siglo de Oro: relações hispano-portuguesas no séc. XVII* 178 (September–December 2011).

15 *Revista de História das Ideias. Ibéria* 31 (2010).

16 Juan Miguel Ribera Llopis and Antonio Arroyo Almaraz, eds, *Literaturas peninsulares en contacto: castellana, catalana, gallega y vasca* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense/ Editorial Complutense, 2008).

17 Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza, Anxo Abuín, and César Domínguez, *A Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula*, 2 vols (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010).

Gil¹⁸ at the University of Barcelona; the book series *Relaciones literarias en el ámbito hispánico*, co-ordinated by Ricardo Lafarga and Luis Pegenaute from Barcelona, which so far consists of five volumes, three of which are specifically devoted to the internal and external relations of Iberian literatures;¹⁹ or the consistent work developed by Antonio Sáez, from both sides of the Spanish-Portuguese border, with the publication of the volume *Suroeste* as its key bibliographical reference.²⁰

Publications on Iberian issues have also proliferated outside the Iberian Peninsula in these last years, both in Europe and the United States. Apart from *A Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula* (which has Spanish editors, but is integrated in a wider European project), other extremely valuable contributions have been published, such as the volume co-ordinated by Helena Buffery, Stuart Davis and Kirsty Hooper, entitled *Reading Iberia*, in which methodologies and concepts from Queer Studies, Memory Studies, Translation Studies or Film Studies are applied to a varied set of texts in the wider sense of the word.²¹ Brad Epps and Luis Fernández Cifuentes's *Spain Beyond Spain*,²² and Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini's

18 Victor Martínez Gil, *Portugal y Cataluña ante la modernidad: intercambios artísticos y literarios* (Badajoz: Sociedad Cultural de Conmemoraciones Culturales/MEIAC, 2010).

19 Francisco Lafarga, Luis Pegenaute, and Enric Gallén, eds, *Interacciones entre las literaturas ibéricas* (series 'Relaciones literarias en el ámbito hispánico: traducción, literatura y cultura') (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010); Luis Pegenaute, Enric Gallén, and Francisco Lafarga, eds, *Relaciones entre las literaturas ibéricas y las literaturas extranjeras* (series 'Relaciones literarias en el ámbito hispánico: traducción, literatura y cultura') (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011); Enric Gallén, Francisco Lafarga, and Luis Pegenaute, eds, *Traducción y autotraducción en las literaturas ibéricas* (series 'Relaciones literarias en el ámbito hispánico: traducción, literatura y cultura') (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011).

20 Antonio Sáez Delgado and Luis Manuel Gaspar, eds, *Suroeste: relaciones literarias y artísticas entre Portugal y España (1890–1936)* (Madrid: MEIAC, 2010).

21 Helena Buffery, Stuart Davis, and Kirsty Hooper, eds, *Reading Iberia: Theory/History/Identity* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007).

22 Brad Epps and Luis Fernández Cifuentes, *Spain beyond Spain. Modernity, Literary History and National Identity* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2005).

New Spain, New Literatures,²³ although less 'Iberian' in spirit, also point out to the same questioning of established (national) discourses of identity from within and outside the Peninsula.

IV

This growing bibliographical record is promising, and shows that there is, in fact, a rich set of questions and problems yet to be resolved regarding Iberian literatures and cultures. However, as encouraging and extremely valuable as these contributions may be, they are still for the most part isolated and disconnected individual efforts with different cultural, academic and epistemological backgrounds. They therefore cannot be considered as having any kind of scientific unity. In the second part of my contribution, I would like to address a series of aspects which are, in fact, still open for debate on the field of Iberian Studies and which are the subject of discussion in other chapters by other colleagues in this same volume.

First of all, as stated above, the specificity of the field of Iberian Studies lies in its consideration of the Iberian Peninsula as a single but complex cultural and literary space. Needless to say, this definition of the Iberian Peninsula does not have any identitarian or political agenda, nor does it assume any essentialist definition of its object. It is not, in any way, a surreptitious reconfiguration of historical, mostly nineteenth-century, 'Iberism'. Iberian Studies is a scientific field which configures a scientific object, although it also considers historical or political 'Iberism' as a part of that same set of phenomena which it studies. In fact, a possible criticism to this new-born field is that it erodes or undermines some identities, in order to construct a wider one. In other words, it may be argued, as many nationalistic orators often do, that Iberian Studies exposes some identities

23 Luis Martín-Estudillo and Nicholas Spadaccini, eds, *New Spain, New Literatures* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2010).

(like national ones) as being historically constructed and therefore arbitrary, while on the other hand it proposes a different – an Iberian – identity which is presented as essential and ahistorical. This criticism would be justified if we were, in fact, proposing a new ‘Iberian’ identity to substitute the previous ones, but this is not the case. This consideration of the Iberian Peninsula as a cultural and literary continuum is more methodological than ontological. It serves to question received historiographical traditions and to illuminate phenomena that usually lie in their margins or in their in-betweens. However, it does not invoke metaphysical or extra-historical entities to do so.

To put it another way, the Iberian perspective we adopt stems from the identification of a strong internal link and the cohesive literary historical background which, if not strictly common to all of its parts, are so intertwined that it is almost impossible to dissociate them. Yet these links and this complex net of relations are considered to be historical and not essentialist. They are perceived after analysing the literary and cultural objects at hand, and not imposing on them *a priori*. They also do not exclude the possibility of the existence of other kinds of links or bigger or smaller cultural identities that challenge and question them.

V

As far as we know, the study of literature(s) within the Iberian Peninsula has been until now strongly mediated by the division of Literary Studies, with their respective canons and historiographical traditions in separate national and linguistic entities (in the case of Iberia, mainly Spain, Portugal, Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country). The idea that each nation, a concept that eludes definition but at the same time seems self-evident to most scholars, creates its own literature in accordance with its national character, and therefore merits its own specific literary criticism (often with its peculiar traditions and even methodologies) originated, expanded and

triumphed during the nineteenth century, and is still considered valid by a great deal of contemporary Literary Studies.

This division, which may have been useful and productive in the past two centuries, is unable to respond to literary phenomena, which not only transgress boundaries, but also originate in the frontiers between different languages and 'nations'. In the context of multilingualism or multiculturalism, or in the context of identitarian or political articulations this cannot correspond to the divisions established in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. The Iberian Peninsula, considered as a whole, is in fact inapprehensible by purely national and monolingual criteria, and offers plenty of examples of such dislocation: the Luso-Galician poetry of the Middle Ages; authors from Catalonia or Valencia who abandoned their mother tongue to write in Spanish; or bilingual writers between two Iberian languages like Luís de Camões, Boscán or Gil Vicente, among others.

However, Iberian Studies should not be limited to dealing with this type of phenomena. The consideration of the Iberian Peninsula as a multilingual cultural continuum, within a general and fundamental theoretical principle, can be applied to the study of many other texts, authors or events which manifest the inherent correlation of the different linguistic and cultural areas that constitute the Iberian Peninsula. We have, for instance, the use of Portuguese topics in Spanish Golden Age drama; the complex and varied network of affections and projects that link Portugal with Catalonia, Galicia or the Basque Country during the second half of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century; or the contemporary efforts of Basque, Galician and Catalan writers to create a literary system apart from, or as a part of, the Spanish one. It could be argued then and quite paradoxically, that Iberian Studies are-and-are-not a part of Comparative Literature. They are, in the most traditional sense of the concept, 'Comparative Literature', whenever literatures in two or more languages are contrasted with each other. However, from an Iberian perspective, when they deal with matters of identity and representation, which may very well belong to 'just' one linguistic or literary system, they cannot be considered as Comparative, at least in the more traditional sense of the word.

This definition of the field is still tentative, nonetheless, one thing is clear: a conference, publication or department labelled as 'Iberian' should not consist in the juxtaposition of Spanish, Portuguese and (if that is the case) Galician, Basque or Catalanian Studies, but deal with interrelations among them, with affinities and differences, with attractions, mutual exclusions, influences and intertextualities; with their reciprocal translations and their effects in both literary systems. Iberian Studies could therefore encompass a wide range of works dealing with issues of identity, language, multiculturalism, and cultural or literary relations beyond linguistic or national boundaries within the Peninsula. For instance, the formation and representation of (national) identities in the Iberian Peninsula from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries has obvious interest for the constitution of this field since it is almost impossible to explain the formation and evolution of each of the identities of the Iberian Peninsula without understanding the way it relates to others, or at least to some of them.

From a historical and critical perspective, it is obvious that the geographical or linguistic boundaries imposed on any project of literary study are essentially questionable: the label 'Basque literature' is no less, and no more, equivocal than the labels of 'Spanish', 'European' or 'Western' literature, some of which are often used with the alleged univocity of all things that are self-evident as long as you do not think too much about them. The same can be said about the term 'Iberian Literature': while it defines its limits in what seems to be a fairly self-explanatory way, there are still many questions that need to be answered. For instance, how do these studies of Iberian literatures deal with its insularities, or with what in earlier times were Iberian colonies, including Latin America or the Lusophone world? Is this Iberian division strong enough to justify the exclusion of Basque literature written in Iparralde, the French part of the Basque Country? How about Latin, Arab or Hebrew writers in the Peninsula? Are writers from modern-day Gibraltar British, Iberian, or both?

So far, most of these questions have been avoided by scholars dealing with Iberian literary relations by focusing on unproblematic cases of modern and contemporary texts and authors (especially nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary relations between Portugal and other parts of the Peninsula). Of course, there are some extremely suggestive studies

devoted to previous centuries (for instance, the aforementioned special issue by *Colóquio/Letras*, or the work by Maria Idalina Resina Rodrigues). However, I propose that it would be most fruitful to conduct research into this continuity of the Iberian Peninsula in times when no modern identity had yet been formed; periods in which the anachronism of national divisions in literature is more obvious.

In short, we need to be aware that any geographical or linguistic cut in the stream and turmoil of literary relations will be polemical and that the Iberian Peninsula, as we envisage it, is indeed a complex and relatively unitary system. It is not isolated, but should be considered in the light of wider constructions to which it belongs: the Romance continuum, from Lisbon to Constanța; the European and Western literary system, or the vast field of World Literature. The concept of 'South' applied to the Iberian Peninsula and other Southern Peninsulas reminds us that, even if Iberia is a specific and unique literary space, its conceptualization and ideological reconfiguration can and should be contrasted with that of other areas which may have followed similar paths.

Something must also be said on the type of cultural objects with which Iberian Studies deal: are they restricted to Literary Studies, or do they belong to the wider field of Cultural Studies or to the recently reformulated Area Studies? I think this is a key question at the present time that has yet to be resolved. It is one which will be addressed in the successive chapters of this volume. Even a cursory glance at the relevant bibliography cited above reveals an image of division around two poles: while most of the key publications²⁴ are strictly devoted to linguistic and literary aspects, others, such as Buffery, Davis and Hooper, Sáez Delgado or Martínez Gil, supersede the limits of Literary Studies to include wider historical, cultural and artistic elements. This volume, on the other hand, navigates these uncertain waters: while primarily focusing on literary texts and authors, some chapters will undertake the analysis of historical, artistic or cinematographic objects which would not be included in a more traditional approach to Literary Studies. This decision is crucial to our purpose: we are not just

24 Magalhães, *RELIPES*; Cabo *et al.*, *A Comparative History of Literatures*.

talking about including some topics and scholars and excluding others from this new field, but determining its epistemological location and filiations.

If Iberian Studies are to have a future existence as a scientific field, there are three essential requirements: theoretical reflections on their specificity, their methodologies, and the specific set(s) of phenomena with which they work; networks of communication that allow scholars working in this area to communicate with each other; and some level of institutional or academic recognition. This publication aims at contributing to fulfil these requirements.

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