452ºF   LANGUAGES

Journal of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature
four hundred and fifty-two degrees fahrenheit

buscar ...   ✖

452ºF #19

The Artists' Library: Uses of Literary Thought in Film and Visual Arts (1975-2015)

1. Pasolini's library-laboratory and the origins of the project.

This monographic issue is framed by the research being carried out by the group *GLiCiArt. Grup de Recerca sobre Literatura, Cinema i Altres Llenguatges Artístics* at the Universitat de Barcelona, on the uses of literary theory in contemporary artistic creation and the circulation of its critical paradigms (http://www.ub.edu/gliciart/).

Our starting point, as indicted in the Call for Papers for this issue, was Pier Paolo Pasolini's inclusion of an "essential bibliography" in the opening credits of his film *Salò* (1975), which does not include the *The 120 Days of Sodom, or the School of Licentiousness* (1785) by the Marquis de Sade, but rather Pierre Klossowski's (1847), Maurice Blanchot's (1949), Simone de Beauvoir's (1955), Philippe Sollers' (1968) and Roland Barthes' (1971) studies on the work of the Marquis which the filmmaker incorporated, in a fragmented and self-interested way, in his cinematographic project, primarily in the formal and aesthetic planes.

We owe, in large part, this rupture of the paratextual space, this gesture which declares the inseparability of literary thought and cinematographic writing, our attention to the artist's library, and, concretely, to that of the filmmaker, understood as a "laboratory" (as Pasoloini called his library)[1] where books are "both an object of study and active instruments in visual creation", as occurred in the case of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (published by Einaudi in Italy in 1956) which Pasolini read on location in Nights of Cabiria (Fellini, 1957) and that lay the foundation, along with the essays on Dante by the German Philologist, for the new forms of realism in cinematographic practise by the filmmaker, inspired in the figurative system (cfr. Patti, 2016 and Chiarcossi-Zabagli, 2017).

2. The artist's library: Notes on a concept

Based on some of the work undertaken in the last four decades, and taking into account Pasolini's lesson and studies on the circulation of ideas and the paradigms of art, Bourdieu ([1989] 2002), Sapiro (2009), Heinich (2014), Aguilar (2015), and Garramuño (2015), this monograph aims to offer a collection of proposals for theorising, understanding, and naming the presence of literary thought in cinema and visual arts.

We are particularly interested in studying a form of presence that cannot be redirected toward adaptation, which overflows the limits of intertextuality, and that does not self-identify as re-writing. Rather, it is the partial inscription of the literary that does not aim to account for a totality and where the literary has been subjected to changes, appropriations and/or interventions determined by the artist's creative project.

In order to clarify the nature of the problem that our project poses to the conceptual arsenal on the relationship between literary thought and the arts, it is useful to give an example: in her text "**Notas sobre *Zama***", the article commissioned for this monograph, Nora Catelli reminds us that, for the character

of Diego de Zama, Lucrecia Martel declared that she was inspired more by Félix de Azara than in the character from Di Benedetto's novel (1956).

From where can we think and how can we name the presence of the text *Descripción e historia del Paraguay y del Río de la Plata* (1801) by Félix de Azara in Martel's work? We cannot properly consider it a *hypotext*, nor a source, as this is the space occupied by the novel, because Azara and his text do not serve Martel as a way of thinking through the filmic project in its totality, but instead as a means of solving a concrete problem in the project: the staging of one character. Furthermore, it helps her to think about how to convert a literary character into a cinematographic one. Thus, what emerges here is the use of literary thought to resolve a filmic problem, a migration, a modulation (Deleuze) of the literary in the filmic.

To name these uses, these modulations, migrations or flights of the literary in cinematographic creation, this monograph proposes the concept of the "library": Félix de Azara's text belongs to the *library* of Lucrecia Martel's *Zama*. This is not about the library of motivations, the plots or storylines, which, from the beginning, film has used with a variety of goals and results. Instead, it is about Martel's case, the library of language, of form, of aesthetic solutions, the library that Nora Catelli, in another text (2010), has called "the library of perplexity": a library that comes after the "library of initiation" and after the "library of consciousness" of the form, which in the case of cinema also means the consciousness of the irreality of the image.

This library of perplexity that the artist shares with the critic "is forced, made of fragments"; in it, "diverse circuits are located, diverse separate circles" from which we can think about a work "without ceding to the temptation of eclecticism, […] without erasing hierarchies, without falling into the fusion of the circuits" (Catelli, 2010).

Understood as a concept more closely linked to the artistic practise than to the combination of the work's sources, the "library" allows us, on the one hand, to think of the artist as a reader, and on the other, to access the operations that sustain the visual representation displacing the question about the sense of the work. The library does not supply a hermeneutic apparatus; it is not a bibliography, nor an instruction manual.

The "library" also enables us to study from a different angle the circulation of literary thought in creation, considering the first as inseparable from the second. That is, to consider circulation like traffic that does not precede the artistic practise but rather that occurs in it, in the readings that accompany and participate in the definition of the creative project and in its execution.

Finally, the "library" suggests theorizing about how the works and the artistic practises themselves circulate literary thought independent from academic circles. The artist's library is not built in the academy, it is not built by the academy and neither does it circulate within the academy. In it, there are no disciplines. On the contrary, it is a library that depends on concrete secular circumstances (publications, translations, availability of texts), as well as on personal whims, on meetings and friendships, attendance at festivals, on biographic chance.

The artist's library is not a compilation of material documents in their totality, rather it is a constellation of fragments (insisting on the partial nature) of texts that reverberate in the works and whose formal and aesthetic incorporation responds to the intrinsic needs of the creative project.

Thus, studying the library does not mean recreating it; this is almost always impossible[2], and is not helpful for our research. The warning by Roger Chartier continues to be valid here: the library, when it is the order of knowledge

cannot be anything but immaterial. Conversely, every library installed in a particular place and made up of works that are quite real, ready to be consulted and read, can only offer, regardless of its riches, a truncated image of the entirety of accruable knowledge (2017: 89).

Thus, it is about conjecture, about postulating a *possibility* or a *plausibility*. The question is, what for? Is it in order to think through the contemporary critical problem that could be summed up as "the non-systematic circulation of theory" – from thought to creation, from the theoretical tradition to the artistic practise, and also from one artistic language to another. Without the pretension of vouching for an historical event. Rather, along with Miguel Dalmaroni (2005)[3], we can say that postulating the *possibility* is a means by which the critic can read a lineage, a presence, the use of literary thought in a work of art which is revealed as undeniable. In this way, the concept of the library allows us to think about "a type of problem that does not demand an historiographic solution" (Damaroni, 2005: 9) while also not excluding one.

3. The texts included in this monograph

In the article that opens the monograph **"Huella (des)calzadas: Rastros y desplazamientos de la teoría estética heideggeriana en *Atrabiliarios* de Doris Salcedo"** Romina Weinberg (Stanford University) uses as her starting point the postulation of plausibility as a means of studying the hypothetical intertextuality between "El origen de la obra de arte" (1935-1936) and the work of the Colombian artist:

This [postulated] plausibility is an inference that can be extracted from the constellation of the artist's prints that can be traced in her work, in her interviews, in her photographs, in her educational trajectory and/or in the accessible manners of her domestic and interpersonal relationships. In the contemporary configuration of Doris Salcedo's prints (Bogotá, 1958), not one suggests that Heidegger was part of her library. However, the fact that her education included attendance at universities whose outlines included courses on history and art theory, suggests that it is plausible to assume she was exposed to Heidegger's aesthetic theory.

The plausible *exposition* of the artist to modern aesthetic theory allows the article's author to assume the challenge of studying the marks of Heidegger in Salcedo's work, not in order to apply the categories of the philosopher to *Atrabiliaros* but rather to analyse the effects of a theoretical presence that does not imply an iteration but a critical distancing, that is, a movement in terms of this same theory which serves as a foundational point for the aesthetics and poetics of the Colombian artist.

In "**El archivo barroco de *La muerte de Luis XIV*"**, Virginia Trueba Mira (Universitat de Barcelona) considers how the films of Albert Serra, an author who has been pierced by literary theory, takes advantage of the Baroque archive not in order to stage an historical era but instead to rethink the formats of cinematographic representation through the Baroque. This means incorporating into the scenography the conditions of visibility (and discursivity) of Louis XIV's France and assuming his image of the world. Deleuze's concept of the fold serves the author as a means of thinking through the forms and modalities in which the archive is activated in the film.

Víctor Escudero Prieto (Universitat de Barcelona) explores a further use of literary thinking within cinema in "***Tristram Shandy* y la biblioteca de Michael Winterbottom"**. As the author of the article shows, the English filmmaker supports his work through a long genealogy of literary studies that *dehistoricize* Sterne's novel in order to *re-functionalize* its formal mechanisms in cinema and thereby recover, through the filmic medium, a commitment to traditional cinematography, and respect for the visual material all the disruptive potential of the literary work.

In **"Los libros de la buena memoria. Escenas de lectura sobre el pasado militante en el nuevo cine argentino: *Los rubios*, de Albertina Carri y *M*, de Nicolás Prividera",** Diego Peller (Universidad de Buenos Aires) analyses the *spectral* presence of the literate (rather than the literary) in the work of young Argentinian filmmakers who include in their films scenes of condensed reading of the printed word through the representation of the past as well as its persistence, in the form of inheritance, ruin, or remains – as strange or inevitable as this may be – in contemporary creation.

The spectral presence of the literary is also the object of study in the article **"Fantasmas de la palabra. Puestas de escena del texto en Jacques Rivette, Manoel de Oliveira, Rita Azevedo y Matías Piñeiro"** by Alex Pena Morado (Universitat Pompeu Fabra), who, through diverse processes and films, suggests the existence of a common model for those filmmakers which consists, according to the author, in the use of the word as cinematographic material capable of provoking the *appearance* of an image.

The monograph on the artist's library closes with two articles that demonstrate how the circulation of the literary in the filmic can also generate new literary forms that are inseparable from artistic practises or the reformulation of their genres.

In the article **"Del arte expandido a la literatura expandida. Una aproximación a la posibilidad de la expansión de lo literario en las artes visuales contemporáneas"**, Paula Juanpere (Universitat de Barcelona) analyses the notion of expanded literature and reconstructs its conceptual link to new ways of writing and new processes of production between the textual and the visual in those which, as the author aptly points out, the emphasis "Is on the production and not on the reading" and in those in which the notion of expansion "implies a certain *spatial* quality – real or virtual", such that, without abandoning the literary, these modes of writing are also brought about in the exhibition space.

Finally, in **"Versiones y conversiones del asesino serial. Escenas del museo gótico en *The Fall*",** Ariel Gómez Ponce (CONICET-Universidad Nacional de Córdoba) introduces us to a modality of circulation of the literary in the visual in which "market forces" intervene as productive forces. While it is undeniable that the serial format, due to its very structure, requires the reformulation not only of the concept of the library as we proposed at the beginning (as a constellation of fragments conceivable in a closed work) but the very idea of literary production, because the inheritance of the serialized novel is hard to separate from the television series. Gómez Ponte's article offers an interesting argument by postulating the possibility of a two-way journey to the library: if the literary can sustain a visual genre it can also be altered by the *aesthetic operations* that mass media impose on the genre, transforming, as the author contends, its roots and modifying its "memory" (Bajtin).

4. Miscellanea

In the Miscellanea section, the article **"El discurso amoroso y la dimensión del imaginario: una teoría sobre el lenguaje y la escritura en la obra de Jacques Lacan y Roland Barthes"** by Maider Tornos Urzainki (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana) considers the construction of two divergent theories through the conceptualisation of the dimension of the imaginary. Rafael Andugar Sousa (Universitat de Barcelona) in **"Barthes y la escritura ensayística: teoría del ensayo en *Roland Barthes por Roland Barthes*"** explores the overflow of the limits of the genre in the work of the French theorist.

Further, in **"Configuraciones del instante, de las artes plásticas a la literatura: Lessing, Diderot y Flaubert",** Nicolás Martín Olszevicki (Idaes/UNSAM-UBA-CONICET) and Jorge Luis Caputo (UBA-USAL) consider the representation of the fleeting in plastic arts and literature.

Finally, the article by Isabel González Gil (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), **"Retórica de los libros de autoayuda",** explores the configuration of the self-help genre through the study by Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot, and in so doing contributes to the critical work on this genre that has been undertaken by David Viñas Piquer in Spain (2012).

5. Reviews

Some of the reviews included in this monographic volume allow us to return to the questions taken up in the monograph, as with the presentation of María Josefina Vega Jaimerena of the work by Santiago Fillol, *Historias de la desaparición: El cine desde Franz Kafka, Jacques Tourneur y David Lynch*, and the analysis that Pierluigi Manchia offers of the text by Jacques Aumont, *Límites de la ficción. Consideraciones actuales sobre el estado del cine*. In the field of fiction, we find the compilation of articles by Javier García Rodríguez, *Literatura con paradiña. Hacia una crítica de la razón crítica*, reviewed by Sheila Pastor. Belonging to the field of poetry, two reviews round out the section: that by Fernando Candón Ríos about the volume edited by José Jurado Morales, *Naturaleza de lo invisible. La poesía de Rafael Guillén* and that of Obed González Moreno who discusses the work of Fernando Corona, *Arqueopoéticas: Tres cantos primitivos sudamericanos*.

6. Critical Note

The critical note by Max Hidalgo Nácher (Universitat de Barcelona) **"O dispositivo de leitura de Haroldo de Campos e os usos da biblioteca"** takes us back to the library as understood as "a living and mutating organism in the service of criticism and creation" which, as in the case of the library-laboratory of Pasolini, does not only possess a fundamental value in critical work, but also permits the reconstruction of circulation between periphery and centre, the study of reading devices, and the theorising of new modes of producing textualities.

Annalisa Mirizio
Universitat de Barcelona

Works cited

AGUILAR, G. (2015): *Más allá del pueblo. Imágenes, indicios y políticas del cine*, Argentina: FCE.

BOURDIEU, P. ([1989] 2002): "Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 145, 3-8.

CATELLI, N. (2010): "Mi biblioteca de iniciación, conciencia de la literatura y perplejidad", *El ciervo*, <http://www.elciervo.es/index.php/archivo/3080-2010/numero-708/779-alias_870>.

CHARTIER, R. (2017): *El orden de los libros. Nuevo prólogo "Veinticinco años después"*, Barcelona: Gedisa.

CHIARCOSSI, G. y ZABAGLI, F. (eds.) (2017): *La biblioteca di Pier Paolo Pasolini*, Florencia: Leo S. Olschki.

DALMARONI, M. (2005): "Historia literaria y corpus crítico (aproximaciones williamsianas y un caso argentino)", *BOLETIN/12 del Centro de Estudios de Teoría y Crítica Literaria*, 1-22.

GARRAMUÑO, F. (2015): *Mundos en común. Ensayos sobre la inespecificidad en el arte*, Argentina: FCE.

HEINICH, N. (2014): *Le Paradigme de l'art contemporain. Structures d'une révolution artistique*, Paris: Gallimard.

MIRIZIO, A. (2018): "La 'ab joy' en la poética de Pier Paolo Pasolini: usos de la herencia provenzal y construcción de la imagen de escritor", en Simó, M., Mirizio, A. y Trueba, V. (eds), *Los trovadores: creación, recepción y crítica en la edad media y en la edad contemporánea*, Kassel: Edition Reichenberg (En prensa).

PATTI, E. (2016): *Pasolini after Dante. The "Divine Mimesis" and the Politics of Representation*, Oxford: Legenda.

SAPIRO, G. (2009): *L'espace intellectuel en Europe: De la formation des États-nations à la mondialisation. XIXe-XXIe siècle,* Paris: Éditions La Découverte.

VIÑAS PIQUER, D. (2012): *Erótica de la autoayuda. Estrategias narrativas para promesas terapéuticas.* Barcelona, Ariel.

[1] On the uses of the library in the construction of the "image of the writer" of Pasolini, please see Mirizio (2018).

[2] An example of this impossibility can be found in the the absence of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* from Pier Paolo Pasolini's library, despite its centrality in the poetics of the filmmaker, as we pointed out at the beginning (Cfr. Chiarcossi and Franco Zabagli, 2017: xv-xvi)

[3] My thanks to colleague and friend Analía Gerbaudo for this suggestion.

FaLang translation system by Faboba

index