Introduction.

Europe: Literary Liminalities

The political and linguistic diversity of the European continent - which challenges the uniqueness of a global language - induces a multifocal and multilingual approach in literary creation concerning the European issue.

Moreover, the current conjuncture of the Old Continent is confronted with dangerous populist drifts and the temptation of a nationalist closure. The fictional concern of writers focusses on this complex problematic to be addressed by, on the one hand, the still significant sequels of the conflictual History inherited from the 19th and 20th centuries and, on the other hand, the prospective idea of an institutional construction. This idea is essentially focused on the economy and finance, which Europe cannot be reduced to.

The tension between these two perspectives - which raises many questions and debates, as the attempt to write a European “constitution” has revealed - appears nevertheless to be the focus of a discussion about Europe, below and beyond the European Union. In fact, it often takes the form of a subtle narrativization and fictionalisation of our continent as a topic, a theme, a concern, and even an obsession in many European authors’ work.

Besides that, due to globalisation, the rapid displacement of representations and the projection into (re)invented peripheral spaces give rise to literary liminalities that catalyse writings and fictional readings from Europe’s peripheries, and in languages belittled in the context of global communication. These literary liminalities, which look to Europe retrospectively and/or critically, coincide with various geographic peripheries (Nordic, Baltic, Slavic, Hellenic, etc.). Others refer to minor linguistic statutes in the context of the great European nation-states.

Authors who publish in these minor languages might be brought together with writers who publish in a wide circulation language, but do not fall into the literary mainstream. Both groups are subject to the logic of an editorial market that is often circumscribed to very specific thematic and market niches.

Hence the relevance of a proactive European policy towards the promotion and dissemination of these literary liminalities that question, evoke or thematise Europe. Such a policy is namely developed by the establishment of literary prizes such as the European Book Prize. Under the pretext of “making Europe attractive” and rewarding positive views of our continent, these prizes often award liminal European writers.

In short, the approach of the European literary liminalities raises two key questions. On the one hand, it presents the multipolar and peripheral views of the post-1945 European problematic as the central theme of comparative literary studies. On the other hand, it mobilises a reflection on this vast narrative of Europe by works published in minority languages (in a European context) and to their circulation, as well as on the editorial, translational and educational policies that favour or hinder their diffusion.

The first essay published in this volume, by José Domingues de Almeida, analyse the role of the European Book Prize as a promoter and relay of literary liminalities, and identifies certain thematic constants, such as liminalities, postmemory, interculturality, etc.

In the second article, the Swiss writer Martin R. Dean speaks about his dream of Europe, which he imagines linked to the idea of the big city in which the Enlightenment and the liberal thought produced a culture of progress, liberality and tolerance.

The following articles specifically point to European geographical and cultural liminalities, or refer to European authors outside the mainstream. That's the case of Vita Fortunati. In the first part of her work, she focuses on the importance of Transnational Studies, considering that Comparative, Gender and Translation Studies are in a transitory phase marked by a global perspective. In a second part, she presents some women writers from different countries who, in a real transnational attitude, have chosen to write their fiction in Italian. Teresa Martins de Oliveira's paper starts with a short introduction to Menasse's ideas about the European Union and then concentrates on the novel *The Capital* (2016). It focusses on the idea that a detailed analysis of three moments of the novel will show the importance of topics like migrations, terrorism and islamophobia, which critics tend to consider as subsidiary or absent in Menasse's text.

Anikó Radványzky considers that Central Europe today is a literary concept rather than an economic, political and spiritual reality, kept alive by writers such as Claudio Magris and Peter Esterházy, among others, whose works *Danube* and *The Glance of Countess Hahn-Hahn* respectively she analyzes as experiences of transfrontality. Marta Skwara, finally, examines some umbrella terms used in Poland and abroad to define Polish literature (such as European Literature or as Eastern European and Slavic Literature, respectively) and warns of the risk of discussing European literature under outdated political concepts.

Therefore, it is clear from the contributions of this publication that the issue of European geographical and linguistic liminalities not only challenges but is reflected in various ways both in literary creation and criticism.

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