



### **Fronteras de tinta: Literatura y medios de comunicación en las Américas.**

#### **Una bibliografía comentada**

(Borders of Ink: Literature and Communications Media in the Americas. An Annotated Bibliography)

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In 2008, the “Borders of Ink” research seminar began working as a project. Three years and two publications later, its annotated bibliography appeared, clear proof that time brings wisdom and, above all, a recognizable academic identity. None of its other products embody the seminar’s concerns like this one, offering a multi- and interdisciplinary vision of the intersections of the humanities and the communications media. Seminar participants have training in different academic disciplines (communications, history, literature) and work in different university areas and levels (teaching, research, and undergraduate and graduate studies). This achievement is due to the collaborative nature of the book, which brought together the pens and specific interests of all its members.

*Fronteras de tinta: literatura y medios de comunicación en las Américas. Una bibliografía comentada* (Borders of Ink: Literature and Communications Media in the Americas. An Annotated Bibliography) is a compendium of reviews of books important for cultural border studies. According to the ed-

itors, gathering them played a dual role: developing didactic support materials and constructing a common theoretical framework for the research project. With that in mind, they picked recent texts that showed a state of the topic in question, that contributed a multidisciplinary point of view about the relations between literature and communications media, that theorized about dissolving borders as a symptom of today, or that were, in and of themselves, examples of these mixes, contacts, overlaps, etc.

The reviews are organized into seven sections. The first two (“Fronteras intergenéricas” [Inter-generic Borders] and “Postmodernidad” [Postmodernity]) look at the dissolution of borders from a general perspective, whether as a phenomenon that brings literary, journalistic, audiovisual, and political discourses dangerously close together, or as an ideology whose goal is to dismantle the parceled-out forms of knowledge of modern rationalism. The five remaining sections deal with the problem of limits based on conceptual pairs. These may be two crafts centered in writing or two narrative languages (journalism and literature or cinema and literature, for example) with a longstanding love-hate relationship; hybrid expressions in which various disciplines converge (like scripts); or the ties that the media establish with human reality (cinema and culture or history and the media).

In accordance with this, the largest most varied section is the first, “Inter-generic Borders.” The other sections are presented as introductions to more specific books. One of these is *La incómoda frontera entre periodismo y literatura* (The Uncomfortable Border between Journalism and Literature), in which writer-journalists of the Latin American and English-language traditions review the specificity of their occupation. *Máscaras de la ficción* (Masks of Fiction), for its part, traces various narratives, both literary and audiovisual, seeking a typology of emblematic characters. The last example is *Literatura y política* (Literature and Politics), a paper presented by Mario Vargas Llosa in 2000. The text explains the Peruvian writer’s position regarding writing literature as a social activity with reverberations in all aspects of life.

The “Postmodernity” section includes reviews of texts that deal with this concept from a Latin American perspective. *Los vertederos de la postmodernidad. Literatura, cultura y sociedad en América Latina* (The Drains of Postmodernity. Literature, Culture, and Society in Latin America) states that certain geographical areas are spaces where the centers of political, economic, and cultural power throw away surplus materials. Therefore, regions like Latin America live in a state

of “garbage-ization,” and so cultural products that have a meaning in their culture of origin lose importance in receiving societies. In the same way, in *De Macondo a McOndo. Senderos de la postmodernidad latinoamericana* (From Macondo to McDeep. Paths of Latin American Postmodernity), the reader will find a confrontation between the most polemical topics of postmodernity and the way in which Latin American culture concretizes them. The author’s incisive analysis demonstrates, for example, that some recent writers’ post-colonial attitudes hide dangerous affinities to neoliberal, globalizing thinking.

The following three sections are noteworthy for their reviews of texts that mostly follow a single thematic axis, manifesting the academic interests of some of the members of the seminar. In “Cinema and Literature,” this is predominantly the theme of adaptation. Different kinds of books respond to key questions regarding this phenomenon: Is it correct to evaluate a film as a function of the book it is based on? How many kinds of adaptations exist? Is cinema

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more closely related to theater or to narrative? Are adaptations specific to the cinema-literature relationship? Can adaptations be made between other artistic languages or disciplines? Is accuracy a valid criteria for judging an adaptation? Lastly, the section includes a review of Lauro Zavala’s well-known text *Elementos del discurso cinematográfico* (Elements of the Cinematographic Discourse), a kind of map for analyzing the narrative dimension of films from multiple theoretical perspectives.

Scriptwriting as a discipline is explained from two different but complementary points of view. Some of the books reviewed were written by scriptwriters—this is the case of Doc Comparato’s and Madeline DiMaggio’s texts—and are presented as manuals for writing and promoting scripts. Others are more didactic and systematic (*El libro del guión. Fundamentos de la escritura de guiones* [The Script Book. Fundamentals of Scriptwriting]; *Arte y ciencia del guión. Una completa guía de iniciación y perfeccionamiento para el escri-*

*tor* [The Art and Science of the Script. A Complete Writer’s Guide to Starting Out and Perfecting Scripts]), which makes them extremely useful tools in the classroom. The section opens and closes with two texts that stray away from scripts to center on cinematographic plots. The first, *La semilla inmortal Los argumentos universales en el cine* (The Immortal Seed. Universal Plots in Cinema), follows the typological intention of *Masks of Fiction*, and listing a total of 121 basic plots in film fiction, each linked to a universal oral, mythical, or literary tradition. Finally, *El arte de la adaptación. Cómo convertir hechos y ficciones en películas* (The Art of Adaptation. How to Turn Facts and Fictions into Films) focuses on this phenomenon from the perspective of the scriptwriter.

“Cinema and Culture” ponders the field of horror films, and its three texts review the genre from different perspectives. Its relationship with literature is established in terms of its origins: the aesthetic conventions of horror literature were later adapted to cinema. This establishes parallel and at the same time independent roads for both forms of expression. Another point dealt with is using horror in world and Mexican film traditions, looking at emblematic filmmakers in this genre like John Carpenter, Carlos Enrique Taboada, Darío Argento, José Mojica Marins, and Alejandro Amenábar. Lastly, the articles analyze the figure of the monster through its most representative embodiments (Frankenstein’s monster, the vampire, the Werewolf, the double or *doppelgänger*). The section includes one more text, which touches on the representations of Mexico City down through several decades of Mexican cinema.

The next section, “History and the Media,” deals with three different thematic topics. One proposes the use of audiovisual means (image and cinema) as a valid source for doing historiography: this includes *Visto y no visto. El uso de la imagen como documento histórico* (Seen and Unseen, The Use of Image as Historical Document) and *Diez lecciones para la historia del siglo XX* (Ten Lessons for the History of the Twentieth Century). Another reflects on the role of the press in the digital era and what competencies this implies both for journalists and readers. This is dealt with in the texts by Concha Edo and Manuel López. Finally, two volumes coordinated by Celia Palacio Montiel deal with two concerns: the press as a historiographic document, focusing on journalism in Mexico’s interior and how this contributes to writing a non-centralized national history.

*Borders of Ink* closes with “Journalism and Literature.” The common denominator of the books reviewed is the fic-

tional configuration of journalistic genres. Some authors dismantle the idea of objectivity using theoretical tools taken from literature to analyze journalistic products. Others use hybrid models of expression like the “chronicle,”<sup>1</sup> to question the way in which we conceive of and interpret the autonomy of discourses. Another book centers on a novel, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, to unravel the ambiguity of the text in terms of its relationship to journalism or to literature. A work by Sergio Ramírez that ventures outside the main topic is also included: a guide for writers, plus an account of the author’s personal experience in the exercise of his craft.

In addition to the 43 books reviewed, the final bibliography contains a list of more than 100 important sources for the study of the media, literature, and inter-generic borders. For all the reasons mentioned above, this is a timely, necessary book. The careful selection of its texts, together with the effective work of each of the reviewers, make up a work useful for students, professors, and researchers. It is useful precisely because it saves the reader having to gather and evaluate impor-

tant references about the relations between literature and the communications media. Anyone interested in dissolving the borders between different points of view will find illumination for moving through a terrain whose topography can sometimes be rather hazy. In this sense, the publication establishes the conceptual bases for a Mexican tradition of cultural border studies. **MM**

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#### NOTES

1 In Spanish-language journalism, a “chronicle” is a detailed report of an event, as differentiated from a straight news story. It can include a chronological summary, but is more of a feature story. [Translator’s Note.]