



## REVIEWS

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Gómez-Moriana, Antonio. *Discourse Analysis as Sociocriticism: The Spanish Golden Age*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. viii + 179 pp.

*Discourse Analysis as Sociocriticism* combines a clear description of the socio-critical method of literary analysis with a series of incisive observations on the literature of the Golden Age. Thus, for those hispanists not familiar with sociocriticism, this book should be of considerable interest. Given Gómez-Moriana's use of a rather specialized terminology, however, the language may be a bit vexing for some readers. Nonetheless, both the author's critical conceptions and his specific commentaries on the texts dealt with are insightful and suggestive. The basic elements of Gómez-Moriana's sociocriticism owe much to the theoretical works of Bakhtin, Foucault, and Kristeva, among others. To the concepts of these theorists, the sociocritical method adds a more extensive study of the discourses—the textual practices of non-literary languages, but also discourses understood more broadly, including such phenomena as ritual and spectacle, carnival, etc.—of the society and culture out of which the work of literature grew and to which it is inseparably bound.

Despite the breadth implied by the subtitle (*The Spanish Golden Age*), the major texts selected for commentary are limited to just a few. In the first two thirds of the book Gómez-Moriana deals mainly with *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quijote*, with some lesser attention to *El burlador de Sevilla*. In the latter part of the book, the author deals with several issues, of which the most interesting may be the "creation of the Indian" in Spain's encounter with the New World. In this section he discusses Columbus's diaries and letters, along with other documents of the sixteenth-century debates on the human nature of the New World peoples and the legitimacy of Spain's imperial mission there. In effect, *Discourse Analysis as Sociocriticism* outlines a possible program of further study, giving brief but incisive examples of the critical method, rather than attempting a comprehensive treatment of *siglo de oro* literature. It is, in other words, a plan for further study rather than a comprehensive work of literary history.

After a brief introduction ("Semiotics and Philology in Text Analysis"), in which Gómez-Moriana presents his critical method and goals, there follow ten chapters and an epilogue. Chapters 1 through 3 deal with the *Lazarillo* ("The Subversion of Ritual Discourse: An Intertextual Reading of *Lazarillo de Tormes*,"

"Intertextuality, Interdiscursiveness, and Parody: On the Origins of the Narrative Form in the Picaresque Novel," and "Autobiography and Ritual Discourse: The Autobiographical Confession before the Inquisition"). A rather short fourth chapter ("Narration and Argumentation in Autobiographical Discourse") considers the distinctive elements and ends of historical narration as opposed to autobiographical discourses. Needless to say, given the considerable attention paid to a work of supposedly fictional autobiography (the *Lazarillo*), Gómez-Moriana reminds us that whatever neat distinctions the orderly critical mind might try to ascribe to one type of discourse or another, in the texts that most powerfully attract our interest, typologies and discursive norms tend to break down, or fall to intentional or unintended but inevitable subversions, more often than they hold true to form.

Chapters 5 and 6 ("Evocation as a Literary Procedure in *Don Quijote*" and "Discourse Pragmatics and Reciprocity of Perspectives: The Promises of Juan Haldudo [*Don Quijote* I, 4] and of Don Juan") deal most directly with Cervantes. Chapters 7 through 10 ("The Antimodernization of Spain," "Narration and Argumentation in the Chronicles of the New World," "The Emerging of a Discursive Instance: Columbus and the Invention of the 'Indian'," and "The [Relative] Autonomy of Artistic Expression: Bakhtin and Adorno"), Gómez-Moriana investigates both the problems treated by literary study, in general, and the sociocritical approach, in particular. What emerges most clearly in these final chapters—as well as in the epilogue—is a reiteration of the ideological implications of literary and non-literary texts, as well as the inescapable theoretical-ideological nature of our own activity of reading and analyzing literature.

In presenting the essentials of his method and critical assumptions, Gómez-Moriana begins by recognizing the inherent conflict between the philological (diachronic) and the semiotic (synchronic) approaches to the study of literature. In principle, he seeks to synthesize these two contrary perspectives. Yet, as he indicates, the sociocritical project goes beyond this synthesis. The exposition and specific articulation of the basic ideas merit quotation at length, and thus I would like to let Gómez-Moriana's text speak for itself. Concerning the critical program, the author states the following:

What I propose here is a twofold functional study of the sign—as a system and as a (historical) process—within diachronically, diatopically, and diastatically marked subsystems (dialects, sociolects, and jargons) and within the interaction of those subsystems (intertextual borrowings, interdiscursive calques), and all uses or abuses of what Bakhtin calls "the other's discourse" (*chushaia riech*).

The issue here is no longer one of mere historicist pleasure or of a return to scholarly positivism. Over and above the satisfaction provided by erudition in revealing the origins of something (a purely historicist satisfaction characteristic of the traditional search for sources), what is at hand here is a study of the text that focuses on the mark or semantic load carried by the text's components and that can thus account for the inflections or mutations to which these components are possibly subjected in the new entity or text.

It is a matter, then, of duly considering the twofold referentiality postulated by the two dimensions—system and process—of all semiosis, but particularly of literature. Aside from enhancing our knowledge of the historical evolution of the elements concerned (the object of traditional philology), the consideration of this double referentiality (to their original mark and to the new text; to the associative relations of the paradigm or paradigms from which they proceed, and to the syntagmatic relations established by the new text that integrates them) allows us to understand any work in that dynamics of signification that historically organizes it as an intersection of texts and discourses in (often conflictual) dialogue, rather than as the finished product of a particular author. (3)

What Gómez-Moriana proposes is “nothing less than a synthesis of diachrony and synchrony” (3). This new method—along with the perhaps daunting challenge that such a strategy sets for itself—is, once again, best understood in the author’s own words:

What the new philology—what diachronic semiotics—must study is the dialectic interaction between what is intrinsic and extrinsic to every text considered as a kind of transtextual anaphora, inasmuch as it is a dialogue with stimuli of various origins. The study of the text as a dialogical space, to use Julia Kristeva’s . . . expression inspired by Bakhtin, thus appears as a true challenge to both philology and semiotics, which must henceforth account for the manner in which the text both reads history and is inscribed in it. This is what I call interdiscursive reading, and this is the object of sociocriticism and discourse analysis as I intend to apply it in the field of literary criticism. (5)

The basic suppositions of Gómez-Moriana’s method, then, are simultaneously commonsensical and dauntingly all-inclusive. It is hard to imagine a contemporary reader-critic of *siglo de oro* literature who would dispute the indispensable significance of a profound knowledge of the historical context, cultural preoccupations, and various discourses of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. The notion that a text is an autonomous, self-contained entity fully understandable merely in its own words may be only, at best, held here and there as a nostalgic relic of the Anglo-American New Criticism and a few other theoretical schools. Most readers these days would, instead, probably concur with Gómez-Moriana’s general view, if not with all of his particular emphases and judgments. At the same time, an approach that not only assumes the necessity of a knowledge of all of a text’s contemporaneous discursive practices, but also requires that a study of a given text include an analysis of all such elements, sets for the scholar of literature a rather extreme challenge. In essence, a sociocritical perspective already informs much contemporary critical and scholarly writing that, in practice and for valid practical reasons, confines itself to more limited intrinsic and/or extrinsic aspects of the text.

Although, for the purposes of the practicing Cervantes scholar, everything is grist for the mill—and the chapters on *Lazarillo de Tormes*, for example, are highly pertinent to the study of Cervantes’s fiction—the two chapters in which

Gómez-Moriana deals most directly with Cervantes merit comment. As the author states,

Rather than subscribe to its usual reading, which would have Cervantes's work reflect the struggle between (sound) realism (the presentation of things "as they are") and the excesses of idealism (the protagonist's antics as inspired by imaginative readings on chivalry), I propose instead that we study the text as an interdiscursive crossroads, that is, a *mise-en-scène* of an entire repertory of regulated and accepted modes of speaking, of discourses—some obsolete, others still in force—of the various social milieus represented in the work: the country and the court, peasantry and nobility, the inns and country roads (the latter already traveled more by merchants than by wandering knights). . . . Seen in this manner, *Don Quijote* becomes an experimental interdiscursive test tube, so to speak, in which the literary genres of Cervantes's time (the epic, popular epic, courtly novel, chivalric novel, eclogue and pastoral novel, Moorish novel, Byzantine novel, picaresque novel, comedy, and so on) are weighed and tested. (6)

Both chapters (5 and 6) are of interest, but chapter 5 is perhaps the best example of Gómez-Moriana's method in practical application. In this case, the particular area of discourse taken for consideration is the "extra-literary" phenomenon of Inquisitorial discursive norms. How this special language, quite "external" to what we might consider the realm of imaginative narrative fiction, informs (gives form to, becomes integral to) the Cervantine text is the core of this chapter. Gómez-Moriana first examines "the transition from the poetic discursive code to the veiled reminder of inquisitorial discourse in the narration of the scrutiny of Don Quijote's library" (67). While many readers might question the notion that the reminder of inquisitorial practice is terribly "veiled," the author's insistence on the breadth and depth of this particular incorporated discourse brings into sharper focus, for the twentieth-century reader, the power of this whole area of "evocation," one that is so inescapably present in *Don Quijote*.

Despite the book's numerous insights into the historical context and the interpenetration of "extra-literary" discourses and the literary text, it should be pointed out that, as a coherent book, *Discourse Analysis as Sociocriticism* has certain shortcomings. To my mind, the most notable weakness of this book is a certain redundancy and lack of chapter-to-chapter coherence, reflecting the fact that this is essentially a collection of previously published articles. For example, the three essays on *Lazarillo de Tormes*, while well differentiated in their respective main concerns, are at times redundant in ways that could theoretically have been remedied had there been a more thorough reworking and synthesizing of the central arguments. Likewise, in his discussion of Tirso and Cervantes (with a sidelong glance at Molière's ironic revision of the *Burlador* tale), Gómez-Moriana's remarks at the end of chapter 6 (97) are repeated in chapter 7 (see 104–05), with no sense that they have "already" been clearly presented. Thus, the opportunity for a further and more coherent development is lost. On the

other hand, this same element of non-connection means that one need not feel constrained to read the chapters in the printed order and can therefore go directly to the essay or essays of most immediate interest.

Gómez-Moriana's ultimate goal is ambitious. As he puts it in his epilogue, "By integrating the four elements [i.e., context, author, text, and reader] as inseparable dimensions of the same phenomenon, the literary fact, I intend not only to overcome each of the four fetishisms of literary criticism, but I try also to integrate literary fact into both discursive and cognitive histories. Consequently, when we contextualize the text in relation to its discursive surroundings, as well as to its production and its reception, and when we measure its intervention in language and in the collective imaginary, we discover in the interaction between author and reader a new dimension: the process of consciousness. It is in relation to this process that I define the sociocritical dimension of aesthetics" (149). Whether or not a given reader or scholar shares these goals or conceptions, much can be gained from following Gómez-Moriana's conceptually sophisticated and sensitively insightful readings of Golden Ages texts, especially his comments on Cervantes and the picaresque. *Discourse Analysis as Sociocriticism* is a challenging and valuable contribution to our readings of Cervantes and it gives intriguing suggestions for further research.

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