

sionistas sobre la historia de la ciencia que ofrece, como uno de sus mejores exponentes, la obra de Steven Shapin *La revolución científica. Una interpretación alternativa*. Tiene la virtud de mostrarnos que la ciencia y la historia no constituyen disciplinas tan lejanas, porque, a la postre, ambas reflexionan acerca de lo que nos rodea, en el presente, y en el pasado, y somos los seres humanos los que hemos clasificado, desmenuzado y etiquetado los saberes, lo que no pasa al fin y al cabo, de ser una construcción cultural, siendo herederos en este sentido, de una tradición decimonónica que consagró la división entre ciencias y letras, olvidando que el mundo que nos rodea (o, por decirlo más exactamente, lo que percibimos del mismo) es único, y somos nosotros los que lo parcelamos. Lo que no era así en el siglo XVIII, señalando al respecto la publicación periódica *Variedades de ciencias, literatura y artes* (tomo III, 1803, p. 6) como «se sabe generalmente que todos los conocimientos humanos son ramas de un mismo árbol, nacidas de un mismo origen, y unidas entre sí por un tronco común, que se fortifican y enriquecen los unos con los otros, y que si las ciencias dan gravedad y solidez a las letras y a las artes, las letras a su vez amenizan la austeridad de las ciencias, y las hacen mas comunicables». Cualquier lector, especialista o curioso, que se enfrente a este libro, acabará su lectura con más preguntas que respuestas, lo cual, al fin y al cabo, es lo mejor que le puede pasar a un libro de historia. ■

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**Guillemette Bolens. *Le style des gestes. Corporéité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire***. Lausanne: Éditions BHMS (Bibliothèque d'histoire des la médecine et de la santé); 2008, 156 p. ISBN: 978-2-9700536-7-5, € 24.20.

In her book *Le style des gestes. Corporéité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire*, Guillemette Bolens gives an account of how literary narratives can provide models of a corporeality that is not self contained. Bolens teaches Medieval Literature at the University of Geneva and her research interests include the history of the body and corporeal logics in classical and medieval as well as in contemporary literature. In this most recent book, she comes up with a comparative approach that comprises a vast variety of sources from disparate historical periods and different media, in order to develop the outline of a specific type of knowledge that is situated in the corporeal.

Bolens begins her endeavour with the analysis of a painting by Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin depicting a child (one Auguste Gabriel Godefroy) standing at a table, immediately after having thrown a top. The top is now spinning while the child observes it. In this painting, Bolens points out a series of details, the most significant of which is the child's right hand that now rests on the table area, thumb and index finger still touching, upholding, as it were, the tension required to throw a top, and ready to repeat the same movement. The question she raises is concerned with what it is that qualifies this painting as the depiction of a trajectory, namely of a *gesture* in the emphatic sense of the word. How come that, as a spectator, one intuitively knows what is going on in this picture, even though it is, by its nature, static? What kind of knowledge does the intelligibility of gestures as such presuppose?

This problem, which seems to be the starting point of Bolens' undertaking, calls for a notion of *kinetic intelligence*: «Sans l'intelligence kinésique de celui qui regarde, la toupie ne tourne pas et l'image reste lettre morte» (p. 4) – It is this notion of *kinetic style* («style kinésique»), which, in Bolens' account, Chardin's painting stands for paradigmatically. Bolens differentiates between *kinesthetics*, meaning the proprioceptive sensation of one's own movements, and *kinetics*, which denotes the perception of movements *from without*. Referring to ongoing research in neurosciences and cognitive sciences, she also introduces the concept of *simulation*, which functions as an intermediate process, namely as evocation of kinesthetic responses in the absence of an actual stimulus. Bolens' intention is to establish this concept of *kinetic style* as a tool for the analysis of narrative texts or, more precisely, of narrated gestures in literary texts. *Simulation* then becomes a key-concept insofar as it stands for a mode of semantisation that proceeds by recognition —of, for example, a description of features or bodies in a given situation— and anticipation of how these features or bodies tend to develop, based on the readers' sensorimotoric memory. As an example Bolens quotes a phrase of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*: «À peine arrivions-nous dans l'obscur antichambre de ma tante que nous apercevions dans l'ombre, sous les tuyaux d'un bonnet éblouissant, raide et fragile comme s'il avait été de sucre filé, les remous concentriques d'un sourire de reconnaissance anticipé. C'était Françoise (...)» The narrator, as Bolens puts it in narratological terms, here addresses an instance she calls the «narratee» (le narrataire). The narratee can be seen as a role implied by the narration charged with the task of the said semantisation, a role the reader can either assume or fail to do so, the latter being tantamount to not grasping the narrated gesture as such.

Bolens develops her conception of kinetic intelligence and its role for the narrative genesis of meaning by presenting a series of readings of canonical narrative texts from different historical periods. Besides the above-mentioned Proust, one chapter is dedicated to representations of the body, more precisely of hand and mouth (metonymies, as it were, of speech and gesture) in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1. Le corps en littérature), a second one to the 13th century work *La Queste del Saint Graal* as well as other realisations of the grail legend (2. Tropes kinésiques et verbes d'action). In this chapter, Bolens develops a theory of metaphor that, in succession to approaches by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, conceives sense as always already ahead of itself and, as it were, rather vectorial than self contained, thus undoing the distinction between literal and *transferred*, figurative meaning as well as between the corporeal and the mental (see p. 50). The third chapter treats the different versions of the *Legend of Lucrece* from the Antiquity to the Renaissance, focusing on the transformations of the structure of the emotional category designated by the term «vergogne», an emotion thought to render possible social relationships through the internalised inhibition of impulses (3. Vergogne et blessure sociale dans la légende de Lucrèce). Following Emmanuel Lévinas by developing the concept of *face*, as the epitome of the subject's susceptibility to (social, i. e. verbal) injury, Bolens leads over to an analysis of the late 14th century text *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In this fourth chapter (4. La face et les ambiguïtés de l'exploit: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight), Bolens presents a reading of the Middle English text that highlights the intimate connection of language and gesture in the activity of fabrication: «Le langage ne s'explique pas comme un système de symboles abstraits qui suivrait des règles autonomes vis-à-vis de l'action pratique. Au contraire, le langage fait partie de ce, système d'action' (...) par lequel l'environnement est "manipulé, modifié, organisé et créé"» (p. 127). With Merleau-Ponty, Bolens holds that «[o]n ne peut dire de la parole ni qu'elle est une "opération de l'intelligence" ni qu'elle est un "phénomène moteur": elle est tout entière motricité et tout entière intelligence.» (Merleau-Ponty, see Bolens p. 128).

Here, Bolens reformulates what seems to be her main concern, namely a notion of corporeality which is not self contained, but rather by its nature exposed to contingencies of all sorts. The corporeality at stake is not so much supposed to be represented in the analysed texts as it is implied by them in the way they address the reader. The narratological difference between *showing* and *telling* as two distinguishable dimensions of narrative texts opens a space in which, ultimately, alterity can be thought. Bolens indicates the ethical or political implications hereof —though they remain somewhat underexposed—

by quoting Giorgio Agamben's almost existentialist plea of the human as not an essence and not an actual «thing in the proper sense of the word», but rather «the simple fact of the own existence as possibility or potentiality» (p. 130). Alongside with Agamben, she also refers to Judith Butler's description of a *conditio sine qua non* of psychoanalytic transference, being «[t]he fact that [in speaking, Y. A.] we always show something more or different than what we mean, and that we hand this unknowing part of ourselves to another to return to us in ways that we cannot anticipate in advance.» (p. 128; see also Judith Butler. *Undoing Gender*. New York/London: Routledge; 2004, p. 173).

In a concluding chapter, these are the leitmotifs in Bolens' analysis of the cinematic works of Jacques Tati, and it is especially this last chapter that renders obvious the problems that afflict Bolens' approach. Bolens seems to assume that narrations always already evoke images in their readers and that this sort of response — which she, as mentioned, describes as *simulation* — can be viewed as a transhistorical factor. But in doing so, she fails to address the problem that reading as well as writing, as cultural activities, might in a crucial way be influenced and transformed by historically locatable media technologies, and that abilities such as proprioceptive sensibility as well as the experience of time, as elements of those activities, have a history of their own. *Movement*, one could therefore presume, changes its character and becomes epistemologically accessible in the first place as an effect of the emergence of cinematography, which on its part can be seen as having its origin in the human sciences of the late 19th century. (For extensive research on this topic see: Stefan Rieger. *Kybernetische Anthropologie. Eine Geschichte der Virtualität*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag; 2003). Cinema, as Walter Benjamin already pointed out in his essay on *The Artwork*, introduces new ways not only of writing, but also of perceiving. Bolens' argumentation, though she declaredly intends to consider «les paramètres historiques et anthropologiques des gestes d'un récit» (p. 9), seems to fall short of considering the historicity of the human perception apparatus as well as literary writing practices when she hypostatizes a *natural* response to narrative texts. Also, the specific difference between media — a difference Bolens does not completely ignore (see p. 138) — and the interferences between them, in fact the transfer from image to text and from imagination to words and vice versa, can be shown to be subject of specific discourses since the late 19th century (in which at least Proust and Joyce partake), involving brainphysiologists, physicists and psychologists (see Peter-André Alt. *Kafka und der Film - Über kinematographisches Erzählen*. München: C. H. Beck; 2009). Forgetting the historicity of findings that ultimately originate in these discourses

and applying them as analytical instruments, would constitute precisely the kind of essentialism —in Agamben's words: the regarding of the human as a *thing*—that Bolens' book apparently intends to counteract. ■

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**Adriana Álvarez. Entre muerte y mosquitos. El regreso de las plagas en la Argentina (siglos XIX y XX).** Buenos Aires: Ed. Biblos [Colección Investigaciones y ensayos]; 2010, 219 p. ISBN 978950-786-786-6, US\$ 10,44.

La fecundidad de los estudios de historia en la Salud Pública, en terminología de Alfons Labisch, se pone, una vez más, de relieve en la monografía que reseñamos y así lo hace explícito, en la contraportada del libro, el experto en medicina social y director de la Maestría en Salud Pública de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, Mario Rovere. Tomando como punto de partida el problema actual del dengue en varias provincias argentinas, y el hilo conductor que plantean los estudios sobre enfermedades emergentes y reemergentes, entre ellas el paludismo, la perspectiva histórica se transforma en una herramienta privilegiada para entender y abordar con éxito problemas de salud actuales, tal y como, de forma muy lúcida, se ha expuesto varias veces y parece ser una de las señas de identidad de los mejores historiadores que trabajan en el campo de la salud pública (Perdiguero, Enrique; Bernabeu, Josep; Huertas, Rafael; Rodríguez-Ocaña, Esteban. *History of Health. A valuable tool in Public Health.* JECH. 2001; 55: 667-673).

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