Cleveland State University
EngagedScholarship@CSU

Cultural Encounters, Conflicts, and Resolutions   World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Journal

12-2016

Language and the Promised Land: Passage and Migration to a Spanish-Language 'Third Place'

Kenya C. Dworkin y Mendez
Carnegie Mellon University, kenyacdworkin@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

Language and the Promised Land: Passage and Migration to a Spanish-Language 'Third Place'

Abstract

The Spanish-language anthology Caminos para la paz: Literatura israelí y árabe en castellano (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2007) [Paths towards/for Peace: Israeli and Arab literature in Castilian], compiled by Ignacio López-Calvo and Cristián Ricci, offers us a collection of over thirty reflections—some Jewish, others Muslim—about the millennial but also contemporary situation of two literally related and historic peoples in a language—Spanish—that seemingly allows them to inhabit the same, this time uncontested, space. Despite the potentially questionable title of the work, which couches the conflict as that of a nation-state versus a nation and/or two peoples contesting rights to one same land, the anthology makes a daring attempt to invite multi-positional authors to express themselves openly without fear about matters that, through a third language, appear to transcend their political and national boundaries. According to the compilers, the search for Muslim contributors to this collection was sometimes met with aggression and threats to capitulate. One coeditor explained that nearly midway through the project most of the non-North African, Muslim contributors backed out after being warned by naysayers of the negative consequences of their participation in this literary convivencia or coexistence. Those who eventually did contribute—some Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa (from Ceuta, Morocco or Tétouan), and a few more, Latin American Jewish immigrants to Israel (from Argentina, Chile, Mexico)—saw in this project "una oportunidad de regresar al hogar común del idioma [an opportunity to return to the common home of language]" (Ricci & López-Calvo, p. 12). Caminos para la paz represents a kind of 'tierra (com)prometida,' a socially and politically committed and promised land whose existence and survival goes beyond the disputed and bloodied land itself, one in which the writers (and readers) "could return to their common home of language" (p. 12).

Keywords

Spanish, Third Place, Israeli, Palestine, Jewish, Muslim, conflict, peace

Language and the Promised Land:
Passage and Migration to a Spanish-Language 'Third Place'

Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez
Carnegie Mellon University

Abstract:

The Spanish-language anthology *Caminos para la paz: Literatura israelí y árabe en castellano* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2007) [*Paths towards/for Peace: Israeli and Arab literature in Castilian*], compiled by Ignacio López-Calvo and Cristián Ricci, offers us a collection of over thirty reflections—some Jewish, others Muslim—about the millennial but also contemporary situation of two literally related and historic peoples in a language—Spanish—that seemingly allows them to inhabit the same, this time uncontested, space. Despite the potentially questionable title of the work, which couches the conflict as that of a nation-state versus a nation and/or two peoples contesting rights to one same land, the anthology makes a daring attempt to invite multi-positional authors to express themselves openly without fear about matters that, through a third language, appear to transcend their political and national boundaries. According to the compilers, the search for Muslim contributors to this collection was sometimes met with aggression and threats to capitulate. One coeditor explained that nearly midway through the project most of the non-North African, Muslim contributors backed out after being warned by naysayers of the negative consequences of their participation in this literary convivencia or coexistence. Those who eventually did contribute—some Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa (from Ceuta, Morocco or Tétouan), and a few more, Latin American Jewish immigrants to Israel (from Argentina, Chile, Mexico)— saw in this project "una oportunidad de regresar al hogar común del idioma [an opportunity to return to the common home of language]" (Ricci & López-Calvo, p. 12). *Caminos para la paz* represents a kind of 'tierra (com)prometida,' a socially and politically committed and promised land whose existence and survival goes beyond the disputed and bloodied land itself, one in which the writers (and readers) "could return to their common home of language" (p. 12).

Keywords*:* Spanish, Third Place, Israeli, Palestine, Jewish, Muslim, conflict, peace

It is not often that contemporary literature in languages other than English, Arabic, or French presents us an opportunity to take an up-close and personal look at a socio-historical and geo-political conflict such as the Israeli-Palestinian one, or at the role language can have in fueling or neutralizing it. Notwithstanding, the Spanish-language anthology *Caminos para la paz: Literatura israelí y árabe en castellano* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2007) [Paths towards/for Peace: Israeli and Arab literature in Castilian], compiled by Ignacio López-Calvo and Cristián Ricci, offers us just that, a collection of over thirty reflections—some Jewish, others Muslim—about the millennial but also contemporary situation of two literally related and historic peoples in a language—Spanish—that seemingly allows them to inhabit the same, this time

uncontested, space (They are related, as both peoples are biblically descended from Abraham). Despite the potentially questionable title of the work, which couches the conflict as that of a nation-state versus a nation and/or two peoples contesting rights to one same land, the anthology makes a daring attempt to invite multi-positional authors to express themselves openly and without fear about matters that through a third language appear to transcend their political and national boundaries.

According to the compilers, the search for Muslim contributors to this collection was sometimes met with aggression and threats to capitulate. One coeditor explained that nearly midway through the project most of the non-North African, Muslim contributors backed out after being warned by naysayers of the negative consequences of their participation in this literary *convivencia* or coexistence. The project almost fell through, but survived, and was published, despite this limitation. One can only imagine the extraordinary content it might have boasted had those other voices not been silenced. Those who eventually did contribute—some Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa (from Ceuta, Morocco or Tétouan), and a few more, Latin American Jewish immigrants to Israel (from Argentina, Chile, Mexico)—saw in this project "una oportunidad de regresar al hogar común del idioma [an opportunity to return to the common home of language] (Ricci & López-Calvo, p. 12)." *Caminos para la paz* represents a kind of '*tierra (com)prometida,'* a socially and politically committed and promised land whose existence and survival goes beyond the disputed and bloodied land itself, one in which the writers (and readers) "could return to their common home of language" (p. 12). With this book the co-compilers and editors wanted to "create a '*locus amoenus,'* an idealized place of safety or comfort, a third place, much in the vein of sociologist Ray Oldenburg's view (*The Great Good Place*),[1] where the cultural descendants of Jewish physician and humanist Maimonides, and Muslim philosopher, physician and mathematician Averroes could contribute to the mutual "*entendimiento de los dos pueblos*" [understanding between two peoples]" via Spanish (p. 10).[2]

In a not very concrete or precise way, the contributors reveal concerns that go beyond the geo-political or historical-religious limits of their daily reality. It is not an overtly political book, despite the fact that it delves into subjects as sensitive as the scrutiny of children by soldiers at the crossing zone between Israel and Palestine; the insufficiency of language for explaining wildly divergent but overlapping perspectives; the unthinkable and unpronounceable similarities between two peoples; and others. The writers do not waste time vacillating between both rejecting each other and building bridges to join themselves. On the contrary, they offer highly intimate, personal views of their unease and concerns that are in no way national-global or political-territorial (not

---

[1] In Oldenburg's book, *The Great, Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), the author analyzes and argues for the importance that physical, third places have played in human history (e.g., German beer gardens, English pubs, American taverns, coffeehouses), because they are places where people could hang out, feel safe, and converse about shared and differing views. I am extending the concept to include language as a third, not physical but mental, place in which to find safety and commonalities (and, by extension, the page on which it is printed, too).

[2] Both the Jew Maimonides and Muslim Averroes were Andalusians by birth and lived during a time in which the southern Peninsula's Islamic culture was in a "Golden Age" in which dialogue and collaboration amongst the three great religions flourished. In fact, Maimonides wrote most of his texts (with the exception of those that dealt with Judaism) in Arabic with Hebrew letters, an excellent example of the almost transnational hybridity there was in the culture of Al-Andalús.

that these don't exist, because they do). The approach in almost all of the anthology's texts offers an intrinsically intimate, human perspective, e.g., that of a young girl's terror upon being watched by what seem like rifle eyes; an equitably critical and quasi-Borgesian elegy to the peace process; or the discernment of a truly corroborated difference between peoples due only to a lack of communication.

More revealing yet is the fact that the Jewish or Muslim 'origin' of the contributors, or hints about to which of the two groups of writers they belong, is not always clear. In fact, it is not really relevant, because what they say or describe somehow defies boundaries—the project's original purpose. One must quite often consult the headers, and even the authors' contact information is offered in the headers, as if it were an invitation for readers to also enter and engage in this third space. It would seem that the compilers' intention—purposeful or not—was to present or promote a unifying vision through Spanish, a language as much a historical mantle of identity for Spain's expelled Jews as a bearer of the unequivocal stamp of Arabic influence, with twenty-percent of its words originating with the peninsula's Muslim conquerors. In other words, historically, Spanish somehow served as a 'mother' tongue for both peoples and can today express sentiments unfettered by national, political, or linguistic boundaries. Physicist-philosopher of the mind David Bohm (1917-1992) believed that if we accepted that the totality of life was comprised of a coherent, harmonious, and holistic unity, one free of divisions or boundaries, our way of thinking would also work the same way. In contrast, if we conceive the totality of it as a sum of independent fragments, then our reasoning process will also be fragmented (Bohm, p. 172). It would seem, then, that the compilers-editors, in their creation of the literary, third place, and utilization of Spanish as a tool for boundary-less expression, facilitated the contributors' ability to manifest some semblance of that "coherent, harmonious, and holistic unity" of which Bohm wrote.

The original title of the anthology was to be "Unidos por un idioma" [United by one language]. The implicit irony I see in the original Spanish of this subsection's tone—*unidos por un idioma* [united though one language]*, is nothing more than a playful double entendre that suggests the adjective "united" [*unidos*], could also be seen as a subliminal use of the formal imperative "unite" [*unid os*], as if the authors, themselves, could see their situation as such: first by seeing themselves as united or following a moral-ethical command to come together. The time that transpires between when our eyes encounter these words on the page, and our reading of them, determines the momentary timeframe in which a spontaneous reflection or dialogue might take shape for us, as political scientist Susan Allen suggests in her article "Defining Nonviolence as a Language and Strategy." Given the fact that communication nowadays is so immediate, due to rapid technology, that same extemporaneity could also provoke equally unconstrained or spur-of-the-moment reactions, not always producing the best results. Allen proposes that activists should take this important interval into account before responding to certain situations. For her, knee-jerk responses sometimes obstruct the possibility of dialogue, and she believes that political and social activists should be aware of this (Allen, 2008, p. 93-94).

Similarly, linguist-anthropologists Anita Taylor and M. J. Hardman, in their study of the construction of non-violent metaphors, caution us about the presence of negative or violent metaphors that are part of our everyday speech. For example, "*struggle* against something" instead of "*work* on behalf of something," or "*fight* for

peace" instead of "*cultivate* peace"—they suggest that an alternative linguistic strategy could turn these often mindlessly articulated tools reflective of contrariness into words for peace.[3] Thus, writing and reading texts that are not violently nuanced, both activities that require time and consideration, could lead to a different way of shaping dialogue between two parties, even if both of them convinced of their legitimate position as primary interlocutor—for different yet sometimes identical reasons, as we shall see further on in our discussion of Putnam's original "mental" exercise.

In "Salmos trozados en salmuera (sintagma hierosolimitano)" [Sliced and Brined Psalms (a Jerusalem phrase)], author Daniel Blaustein combines aspects of speculative fiction, epistemological dualism, and social and epistemological constructivism, bringing together a myriad of Jewish and Muslim, sacred and profane elements, as well as real and fictional people and events, all in a "fractured" language that in reality ends up being two languages, quite reminiscent of Borges's "Tlön, Uqbar and Orbis Tertius," that story's language lacking verbs and/or being only adjectival. This is quite in keeping with "adverbial theory" and its view of the phenomenal nature of experience in and of itself. The speculative nature of Blaustein's text can be found in its juxtaposition of hypothetical, fantastic, matter-of-fact other worldliness, alternative historicity and reality, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic overtones, and dystopian visions. Because the Jerusalem we experience in this text is indirectly real, it is an object of perception and serves as an intermediary between the city and us. The text's rootedness in social and epistemological constructivism resides in the fact that the author has created a text in which the knowledge he is sharing is socially situated and constructed through our interaction with the 'reality' it presents.

The intention of this anti-narrative seems to be to insert the reader into a mental experiment. He or she must examine the assumed 'naturalness' of the way things are and whether their meaning is always the same for everyone. The narrator situates his story at the corner of Batzalel and Ussishkin streets, respectively a Jerusalem intersection named in honor of the Tabernacle's primary builder, and a precursor of Zionism and settlement programs in Palestinian lands biblically identified and justified as situated in the "Promised Land." Even the etymological roots of the city's name are a glaring example of the indivisible nature. 'Jerusalem' in Hebrew means Home or Place of Peace. In Arabic, "Jireh" (from the Arabic "God will see") means Sacred Sanctuary. The S-L-M of either *shalom* or *salaam* (diacritical signs and not vowels are written in either language) both spell out a word for peace, which justifies the bicultural, bi-historical, and bilingual attribution the author made when he chose which intersection for his readers to focus on. Upon beginning to 'pronounce' this "sliced Psalm," he

---

3 See Anita Taylor and M.J. Hardman (2004). War, Language and Gender, What New Can Be Said: Framing the Issues (3-9*). Women & Language 27*:2, for a discussion of how directly tied are actual thoughts and subsequent actions to language choices (e.g., violent metaphors). They discuss an excellent example of the power of words and their definitions using the word "terrorism." The Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language defines "terrorism" as an action verb meaning: "(1) domination by terror" and (2) "a succession of acts of violence executed for the purpose of inspiring terror." For its part, electronic dictionary *Word Reference* <www.wordreference.com> defines it with a long list of nouns whose connotation is negative: "Violence, extortion, intimidation, threat, reprisal, terror." Neither of the two sources identifies or associates the negativity of these verbs or nouns with a specific agent, leaving open to whom one can attribute said actions or negative results (e.g., the State, itself, or some extra-governmental or national element). Yet, most of the dominant press's and media's use of the term "terrorism" reflects a definition whose semantic value is overtly pro-State and against non-affiliated groups.

invokes a litany of referents regarding two peoples who problematically 'compart'—
(divide but share; in Spanish, *compartir*)—one space:

> [the] city of grafts, of insults, of ingesting the Kippur (atonement), the orb of
> UmKultim,[4] (a famous Arabic vocalist), the orbs of the incestuous calf (some
> researchers believe it was a cow, symbolic of the Egyptian deity Isis (or instead, a
> symbolic representation of the Phoenician god Baal),[5] the Mufti's invading
> gesture, a reference, perhaps, to the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Husseini,
> who declared a Holy War due to partition in 1948)[6] or to the Palestinian
> Authority's *mufti*, who in 1967 stated that Jews had no historical claim to the
> Wailing Wall,[7] the Capital of the false Prophet, the Test Tube Messiah, gross
> income, the sacred bleeding one, Asia's graced one, Asad's defatted one (a
> reference to the fatted calf Moses had prepared for his three celestial visitors, in
> Genesis 18:7), the one removed from the route map, the one the Pope walked on,
> the traced, emphasized, consumed, stone-filled one...amen. (*Caminos,* pp 51-52)

A simple 'translation,' or better yet, 'interpretation' of this psalm's first seven
lines (it is over two pages long) reveals that beyond Blaustein's ludic, almost excessively
verbose wordplay—his allusions to intruding Jews, State efficiency and subordination,
the "Mother of Arab songs," the Biblical calf, corrupt actions, divine wisdom used for
evil ends, economic interests, fate, provoked nuclear annihilation, the Pope, the city's
excessively emphasized, undermined, and stony character—totally blur any clear,
concrete and established notion of this city, its history and inheritors, or any real
experience of it. This also truly causes us to question whether or not just one people
alone can justify its claim to her. Blaustein's 'speculative' text is like an exercise in
semantic externalism. Its Borgesian language disputes and problematizes meanings that
we assume to originate solely in the mind. It makes one see what can happen if we
modify Putnam's original "mental exercise," and instead of we speaking of "H20" and
"XYZ" (a substance that is in fact water by another, equivalent, chemical name) we
speak of "disputed territories" and "!@#$%^&" (the second space unpronounceable,
and meaning 'occupied territories, as in the Palestinians' conception).[8] It is one and the

---

[4] No doubt a reference to Um Kulthum, a female, Arab nationalist singer born in Egypt who visited Jerusalem after the British Partition, and supported Palestinian and Arab causes. She was respected and beloved by the Palestinian *and* Israeli public and even broadcasted for over 50 years on the radio program *Voice of Israel*, though this was not without criticism due to the fact that the Israeli radio did not acquire rights to the music, and many Israeli performers have covered her songs in an attempt to attract Arab listeners.

[5] See Jean-Joseph Goux's (2010) "Freuding Unconscious and Secularization of Judaism," in *Disciplining Freud on Religion: Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences*. G. Kaplan and W. Parsons, (Eds). (p. 22) Lantham, MD :Lexington Books for a discussion of this Phoenician tradition in which the bull Baal mates with his own sister.

[6] See "The Muslim Claim to Jerusalem," by Daniel Pipes, (2001), *Middle East Quarterly 8*(4), p. 60-63.

[7] See *Myths and Facts 1982; a Concise Record of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* by Leonard J. Davis and M. Decter (Eds.). Washington DC: Near East report, 1982, p.199, for a discussion of historic, Arab claims to Jerusalem the predate Jewish claims.

[8] I have totally invented these symbols to represent the same, but on the Twin Earth.

same space seen from two different worlds, as in Putnam's Original World and Twin World.[9]

In considering Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia, in which the importance of context determines a text's or word's meaning, the above apposition allows us to see how the residents of Israel and Palestine can imagine different meanings and realities for the very same place, each group according to its sociolinguistic, political, subjective, etc., orientation. This is the only way we can understand how a space like Jerusalem or Palestine (Israel) can be seen simultaneously as the exclusive property of two rival peoples. For the Jews, the Biblical notion of Zion is now a State: "Israel," and "occupied territories" are "disputed spaces." For the Palestinians, who have inherited a tradition that has held that very same land, and even the name "Israel" as equivalent to Canaan, Gaza, Palestine, Syria Palestine, Trans-Jordan, Holy Land, and others (it is even mentioned in the sacred Koran seven times), it is Palestine. In other words, for the Palestinians, Israel is Palestine, that is, Israel=Palestine (as it was prior to 1948). In considering Blaustein's colophon—"Amen," the text's title and ending suggest not only that prayers can slip away or dissipate as tears, but that both the entire content of this short prayer and the wording itself belong to all natural residents of this millenary land.

For philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), our responsibility for the 'Other' does not stem from our own subjectivity, but rather from the implacable experience of meeting the Other, face to face. It is from this act that our subjectivity and responsibility derive. Yet, this does not mean that there is equality between the "Self" and the Other, nor does it render it impossible for heteronymous conditions to exist between them (when words look the same but have different meanings) (*Otherwise than Being*, p.109). Just as Levinas's view maintains that our own subjectivity comes from being exposed or subject to the subjectivity of the Other, he also affirms that ethical and not theoretical subjectivity is what give us direction and purpose in life (*Totality and Infinity*, p. 150). This notion is complex but does offer a much less binary view than that proposed by many post-colonial and other studies.

The story "Imán in the Closed Room" [Imán en el cuarto cerrado], by Jewish author Abi Ben Schlomo, is about a girl who lives near the Gaza Strip, who at the tender age of thirteen has already concluded that death is about to assault her. She also imagines that life after death is like being inside a stifling closed space. The story is narrated primarily in first person: the reader accompanies her on her daily, fearful trek to school, hearing her monotonous yet moving plea:

> Why do *they watch me, God!!?* Oy oy oy, I took the wrong path....I know *they are watching me through their rifle's eyes*....I am a poor girl who has done nothing wrong....I'm going to school....Mama, please, *they are watching me through their rifle's eyes* I am trembling and if I turn around they will shoot me in the back and

---

[9] Philosopher Hilary Putnam's original formulation was based on imagining a planet that was the complete twin of Earth's, and later considering whether the residents of that Twin Earth would see things existing and named on the Original Earth as identical, even if they did not exist or were not called the same on the Twin Earth. It is an exercise in semantic externalism that Putnam uses to understand if the "meanings" of things don't always stem from the mind. He uses the example of water (H2O) on the Original Earth, and XYZ on the Twin Earth. For more information on "semantic externalism" and the "assumed" truth of "subjective experiences," see "Brains in a vat," by H. Putnam, (1975) in *Reason, Truth, and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

I didn't do anything....The discharge violates the Strip's muted silence....The soldiers have beat the enemy. (*Caminos*, p. 17-19, my emphasis)

She is not only tormented by the idea of the title's "enclosed room," which is how she imagines death—a lightless, soundless, airless place—or that she is too young and innocent to die, but also senses that she is being anonymously watched. Here, the rifles' eyes function like a Panopticon—they see everything. They efficiently watch the girl while she only sees shapes in the distance that take aim at her. All she knows is that the rifles' eyes, with their nearly invisible omniscience, see her, and possibly have their sights on her. Just as is the case with prisoners in Bentham's prison design or Foucault's panopticism, the presence of imminent punishment (death) is almost imperceptible.[10] The kind of discipline that is being applied here is in keeping with Foucault's notion of "reviewing," "inspecting," or "taking inventory," an ostentatious sort of examination in which subjects are presented as objects to an observer who is "revealed only through his or her gaze" (Foucault, p. 187-188). After the rifle shot, Levine's face-to-face encounter has become impossible, and the subjectivity of the soldier-assassin who killed her remains in the realm of the theoretical, purposeless, or lack of ethical direction. The Gaza Strip, and everything it symbolizes, makes dialogue impossible.

In the story "Verging on the Ending," by Moroccan writer Ahmed Mohamed Ngara, a first-person narrator informs the reader that for some unexplained reason he must visit different areas in North Africa from which dinghies with hopeful but paperless immigrants depart for Spain. He also lets us know, although not entirely intentionally, that he is white and speaks perfect Castilian (and perhaps English, too), thus establishing himself as the Self apropos the emigrating Others, an irreconcilable binary. Yet, with the Lacanian notion regarding the gaze's effect, when an autonomous subject realizes he or she is "being observed" and projects his or her identity, or attributes his or her imperfections to said object, the assumption is that the subject's assumed autonomy should be questioned.

While at one of these debarkation points, the narrator observes the desperation of "hundreds of black Africans" who have walked thousands of kilometers through the desert, with little money or food, to later see their "dreams" frustrated by a few miles of salt water, their eyes...focused on the land that filled the horizon on the other side of the Strait" (*Caminos* 266). Yet, the Strait is not exactly an inviolable barrier; it is not water alone that separates them from the "promised land:" Spain and Europe. Moreover, he tells us that the water is "magical" and "angelic," and that Africans can "bless" their bodies "in the same waters that bathe Tarifa and Getares, Alcegiras and another other point at which they could disembark" (p. 266).

He tries to communicate with some of the "transmigrants" but fails, because between them there is no dialogue possible, or, as he, himself, declares, because "no one trusts anyone. They are fearful of *foreign beings*. For them, we are all responsible for them not being able to make it to the peninsula...we whites are racist and informers," revealing that he can indeed blame the Others for the uncomfortable lack of communication, and that he, himself, can be seen as a "foreigner," "responsible," "white,' and "racist," although he cannot assume himself to be the intruder he is (p. 267,

---

[10] Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) was an English jurist and philosopher who invented, among other things, the concept of the Panopticon.

my emphasis). Another example of the narrator's constant (re)positioning is the way he describes the linguistic ability of his potential interlocutors: "Some answered me in very difficult English" (267) and "very difficult Spanish" (267). These statements are evidence of his assumed superiority.

Upon being invited by a man to enter a hut, to speak with him and five others, the narrator hesitates, but eventually goes in, despite his fear. He says: "I decided to go in and changed my life's direction" (267). That is, when he decided to eliminate the separation between him and the Others and joined the group despite not knowing if he spoke their language, it literally becomes possible for him to change his life, especially when his interlocutor asks him "*in perfect Spanish*" something that suddenly allows him to solve the enigma that separates them: "Hey, can you tell me which of the two shores is cursed, this one, where we are, or that one, where we haven't yet arrived?" (p. 267, my emphasis). Upon responding that "[each] shore has its own curse, but the hope you all have will be victorious over the two evils" (p. 267), the narrator, who before was proud and is now humble, has undone the Borromean knot of the real (the humanity of others), the imaginary (the narrator's assumed superiority over the Others), and the symbolic (the power of communication and hope). It seems that his interlocutor's "perfect Spanish" was what finally allowed him to overcome the racial, social, and economic barriers that separated him from the others, to see the coherent unity of which Bohm speaks. More than any other factor, the ambiguity or uncertainty of human destiny without a shared vision, and the lack of a common language with which to build it, can impede understanding and respect among peoples, and the ability to share lands and destinies.

In the humbly utopian space of this book, Cristián Ricci and Ignacio López-Calvo have attempted to create a space in which Jews and Arabs can directly or indirectly dialogue "by means of literature and creativity" (*Caminos para la paz*, p. 16). Language—its possible clarification, multiple uses, and meanings—seems key in this process of redemption. In just these few examples, we see how easy it would have been for the contributors to this volume to fill their pages with subjects not conducive to comprehension and mutual understanding. Yet, the recurring themes in their stories were the obscenity of violence and annihilation, imposed and self-imposed displacement, and incoherence, without making accusations or despair. All the authors leave semi-open the possibility of a way out, a purposeful awareness, a new way seeing and perceiving, a new language. If only death and destruction bring about a limit to the linguistic resources we can deploy in our ability to imagine or act, then, similarly, all that is left to us is to seek another language in which to imagine that holistic existence of which Bohm wrote. To achieve this, we would have to rethink words, break them, or simply re-inscribe them with other meanings, so they could serve as instruments for peace.

References

Allen, S. L. (2008). Defining nonviolence as a language and strategy. In T. D. Dickenson *et al.* (Eds), *Democracy works. Joining theory and action to foster global change* (pp. 93-103). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Bohm, D. (1980). *Wholeness and the implicate order*. London: Routledge.

Davis, L. J., & Decter, M. (Eds.) (1982). *Myths and facts 1982; A concise record of the Arab-Israeli conflict* .Washington, D.C: Near East Report.

Foucault, M.. (1995). *Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison.* N.Y.: Vintage.

Goux, J.-J. (2010). Freuding unconscious and secularization of Judaism. In G. Kaplan & W. Parsons (Eds.). *Disciplining Freud on religion: Perspectives from the humanities and social sciences* (pp. 217-224). Lantham, MD: Lexington Books.

Levinas, E. (1979). *Totality and infinity. An essay on exteriority*. N.Y.: Springer.

——— . (1998). *Otherwise than being*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Pipes, D. (2001). The Muslim claim to Jerusalem. *Middle East Quarterly,* 49-66.

Putnam, H. (1981). *Reason, truth, and history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— . (1975). *Mind, language and reality. Philosophical papers* 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ricci, C., & López-Calvo, I. (2007). (Eds.). *Caminos para la paz. Literatura israelí y árabe en castellano.* Buenos Aires: Corregidor.

Kenya C. Dworkin (Ph. D, Hispanic Literatures & Languages, UC Berkeley, 1994) is professor of Hispanic Studies, with appointments in English, History, Global Studies, International Relations and Politics, and Philosophy, at Carnegie Mellon University. Her research interests include Cuban, U.S. Latino, Latin American Jewish and U.S. Sephardic literary, linguistic and cultural studies.