

ences of works cited in the text) illuminating the relationships of narrative theories to a literary pedagogy.

Mario J. Valdés, Daniel Javitch, and A. Owen Aldridge, eds.
Comparative Literary History as Discourse: In Honor of Anna Balakian
Bern: Peter Lang, 1992. Pp. 388. \$85.95
Reviewed by Allan Reid

This *estschrift* pays fitting homage to Anna Balakian (b. 1916), one of the preeminent comparativists of the twentieth century. Besides its honorific function, the volume also represents a substantial review of the state of comparative literary history as a discipline: its history, its nature, some of its key problems, and its place in the humanities and the broader scholarly arena. As such, it should be of interest not only to comparativists, but to all those engaged in the study of literature whether from a national, historical, generic, or text-centered orientation. Two of the articles are written in French, the remainder in English. Their quality is generally quite high, which is not surprising given the list of contributors. Although two or three are not as compelling or original as the majority, none of these articles could be considered negligible. They are well distributed among sections which are more coherent and intentional than is the case with many such compilations.

Besides the Introduction by Mario J. Valdés, there are six thematic sections consisting of from two to six articles. Part I, entitled "Historical Background of Comparative Literary History," examines "the internal history of the discipline," and certain controversial problems associated with it. Here we encounter such figures as Irving Babbitt and the Schlegel Brothers. Part II, "Toward a Theory of Comparative Literary History," is the most interesting from a general and theoretical perspective. The articles in this section discuss a wide range of questions including the problem of the centrality or primacy of comparative literary history, the need for a personally grounded approach to literature, the relationship between literature and *contemporaneity* in the context of social discourse, and a more traditional and deterministic presentation of literary history in terms of universals.

Part III "Historiographic Problems in the Reconstitution of Literary Periods," revisits a number of literary and cultural periods and movements and analyzes their identities and roles as the basis for the study of comparative literary history. These studies range from the broadly comparative (the European Baroque) to strictly differential (Belgian symbolism). While they offer some new insights into specific literary periods, there is no attempt to radically alter currently available notions of literary periodization as such. That, in itself, is not disappointing, insofar as there is evidence of creative application of existing methodologies and principles. On the other hand, some of these articles, such as Marc Angenot's do try to alter the way literature itself, comparative and otherwise, is viewed.

Part IV, "Questions of Genealogy and Textuality," contains articles which focus much more sharply on a single text or a smaller group of texts in the process of examining the matter of genealogy and questions of the literary character of specific texts. In part V, "Art History and Comparative Literary History," two articles examine first a broad problem associated with literature and other arts in the context of the Rococo, and then the question of Picasso as illustrator and reader of literary texts.

The final section, "Anna Balakian, Comparatist," contains a biographical sketch, a bibliography of her publications, and a short article by Professor Balakian herself, in which she offers what she considers a workable schema for the historical organization of literature. While her approach contains some interesting and subtle modifications to the standard approach to periodization, this reviewer does not feel it resolves all the outstanding questions. Still, her proposal does improve on many of the confused and frequently more taxonomic attempts to organize not only comparative, but all literary histories.

While there is no overriding theoretical rationale to this collection nor any unifying principle—nor need there be—still there seem to be two dominant motifs. The first is an emphasis on intertextuality, and the second is an appeal for a status of a sort of meta-discipline for comparative literary history. The arguments for both are fruitful, if not totally convincing, and support the contention that collections such as this should inform the investigations of all students of literature, not only those directly engaged in comparative studies.

Finally, given its outrageous price, purchasers should expect this book to be totally free of technical and typographical deficiencies, but there are still a considerable number of each. Its exorbitant price aside, the editors have put together a worthy tribute to Professor Balakian.

Salwa Bakr

The Wives of Men and Other Stories

Translated from the Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies

Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993. Pp. xxii + 178. \$9.00

Reviewed by Ramzi M. Salti

At first glance, Salwa Bakr may be considered as the latest newcomer in a series of Arab feminist writers who have burst onto the literary scene in recent years, following in the footsteps of such notable authors as Nawal al-Sa'dāwi and Alifa Rif'at—both of whom have received much attention in the Arab world and in the West for their feminist works of fiction. Many of the resulting similarities between Bakr, Rif'at, and al-Sa'dāwi are notable, even striking. Like al-Sa'dāwi, Bakr was imprisoned for a short time for her political views and consequently utilized her incarceration as a basis for much of her writing. Not unlike Rif'at, her short stories carry an uneasy air of serenity which, ironically, serves to heighten the anger and courage which often accompany an (Egyptian) woman's struggle for liberation. Yet despite these similarities, Bakr has managed to success-