

NECROLOGY. DONALD SHAW (1930-2017)

CHRISTINE BLACKSHAW NABERHAUS
Mount Saint Mary's University

On January 30, 2017, Donald Shaw, eminent scholar of Spanish and Latin American literature, passed away at his home in Bologna, Italy. In his lengthy and remarkably fruitful career, he authored eleven books and nearly two-hundred articles or book chapters. He was also a beloved professor and mentor to hundreds of scholars, many of whom have become prominent Hispanists at British and United States universities.

Donald Leslie Shaw was born on February 11, 1930, in Manchester, England, where he and his identical twin Ken studied at Stand Grammar School and the University of Manchester. After falling in love with Spain during a trip to Toledo with some friends (all of whom would go on to become prominent Hispanists) both brothers decided to continue their studies at the University of Manchester, earning master's degrees in Spanish literature in 1953. After serving as a flying officer for the British Royal Air Force, Donald went on to the University of Dublin (Trinity College), earning a doctorate in Spanish literature in 1961. He spent the first seven years of his career at the University of Glasgow. There, he continued to publish studies of Spanish literature, but he also began to teach and study Latin American literature. He also met his wife, Mariela, with whom he would go on to have two children, Andrew and Sylvia.

Shaw's growing expertise in Latin American literature led him to the University of Edinburgh (1964-1986) and the University of Virginia (1986-2012). At the latter, he was a Brown-Forman professor of Spanish until his retirement in 2012. Even as a distinguished scholar of Latin American literature, he resumed publishing articles and book chapters about Spanish literature, and Ariel and Cátedra continually published updated editions of his books about nineteenth-century Spanish literature and the Generation of 1898, respectively. One of his final publications was a contribution to *A History of the Spanish Novel*, published by Cambridge University Press, in which he discussed Pío Baroja's novels.

A prominent theme in Shaw's studies of nineteenth-century Spanish literature was the ideological and aesthetic transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism. It first emerged in his *A Literary History of Spain: The Nineteenth Century* (1972), a book whose translation into Spanish is currently in its fourteenth edition. His subsequent studies of Agustín Durán's *Discurso*, Rafael Húmara y Salamanca's *Ramiro, conde de Lucena*, and Duque de Rivas's *Ataúlfo*, *Aliatar*, *Duque de Aquitania*, *Malek-Adbel* and *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* reflect his ongoing concern with this often understudied phenomenon. In his three articles devoted to neoclassical theater—"Dramatic Technique and Tragic Effect in García de la Huerta's *Raquel*" (*Dieciocho* 1986), "Montiano's *Athaulfo*" (*Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*

1991), and “Quintana’s Pelayo Revisited” (*Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 2009)—Shaw exhibited an expertise in neoclassical theater and eighteenth-century discourse as he argued that these plays underscore the tension between Enlightenment optimism and the incipient Romantic aesthetic and worldview. Accordingly, while his official area of specialization was nineteenth-century Spain, he nonetheless deepened our understanding of eighteenth-century Spain by studying it through the lens of the movements it preceded.

Shaw often said that in his writing or teaching he endeavored to “reduce the distance between the reader and the text.” In addition to a writing and speaking style that scholars often praised for its lucidity and precision, he was highly skilled at analyzing a literary text for its form and structure while placing the text within the larger historical, political, and aesthetic context, all the while providing original, compelling insights. This was how he taught his students, and those who read his work, to approach literature. Although he often said his empirical, analytical style of criticism was “out of the loop” or old-fashioned, the longevity of his earliest writings, his ongoing publication record, and scholars’ continued reliance on his publications and evaluations of current criticism, belie his modest assessment.

Donald Shaw’s passing truly marks the end of an era for many of us in Hispanism. Yet he has left behind an intellectual legacy that will continue to inform how scholars read and understand Spanish and Latin American literature. Those of us who had the good fortune of being his student or colleague will remember an office door at the University of Virginia that was always open, ready to welcome a visitor who needed encouragement or feedback on a current research project. We will remember his honest, sometimes brutal, assessments of our writing, as well as the pride we felt the first time we received sincere, hard-earned praise from him. Most of all, we will marvel at how blessed we were to work with one the greatest minds in our field.



David T. Gies and Donald Shaw (1993)