This journal is devoted to connections between Northern and Southern Europe, historical, contemporary and future. One of the strongest contemporary connections is that of trade; and trade in the Western world depends on contracts. Today, contract law remains fragmented in Europe, not least as a result of the conservatism of most law schools. As Graziano points out: "In Europe, when one proposes to teach from a European perspective which no longer focuses on the solutions of a single country, one becomes the target of a tide of criticism: curricula of law schools are already crammed; hardly any time would be left to devote attention to foreign or European trends" (23). Yet notwithstanding this resistance, commonalities in European contract law are emerging; pragmatism triumphs over convention.

Cases, Materials and Text on Contract Law, (Beale, Fauvarque-Cosson, Rugers, Tallon and Vogenauer) is a new edition of a 2002 treatise, part of the Ius Commune Casebooks for the Common Law of Europe series produced by the Leuven Centre for a Common Law of Europe.[1] This second edition has not come too soon, given the advances made within the European Union towards harmonizing contract law within the area. This is not part of some devious European agenda towards a "federal Europe" (whatever that means) but a practical approach to easing the trade barriers that continue to exist when citizens of one state are not only used to one particular set of rules that differs from those of their trading partners, but lack the training to even understand those foreign rules. The authors' aims are explicitly to rectify this situation; to ease the challenges facing law students who will be facing ever more internationalized careers. This, for countries as small as Iceland, cannot be overstated.[2] Mention must also be made of the affordable price of what is a huge piece of work.

Cases, Materials and Text takes a rules-based approach to comparative law; looking at defined rules of law and results of cases to illustrate points of law. The authors acknowledge that they do not take a deeper psychological approach, for example, investigation of the so-called *mentalités* of legal practitioners in different systems, but make the reasonable justification that such an analysis, whilst interesting intellectually and necessary to the

comparative careerists, is not going to give the ordinary scholar the skills she needs to operate practically with foreign law (vii). The text is supplemented with a web-site (currently still under construction) that will include links to the full text of the original materials.[3]

The text's greatest strength is also its significant weakness as an undergraduate textbook. At over 1300 pages, including extracts from civil codes, legislation, judgments and commentary (albeit the latter being clearly explained and to the point), it is too much to be handled as a regular classroom text in the standard 6 or 8 ECTS course. Thus, an instructor must decide whether to opt for deep consideration of a few select subjects and chapters (admittedly, made easy given the logical ordering of the book) or a superficial review of the broader field. Thus we are again reminded that most law schools are unwilling to devote more than a few credits of a 5 year legal education to foreign and comparative studies, notwithstanding the international environment in which their graduates must work.

Graziano's *Comparative Contract Law,* also at a student-accessible price, is less daunting to the usual undergraduate student. Its contents are much slimmer than its competitor: fewer subject areas and much less depth. However, Graziano has also stepped away from the somewhat discredited "legal families" approach (13), taking materials not only from what are considered the 3 parent systems that form the bulk of *Cases, Materials and Text,*[4] but also Greece, Italy, Serbia, Spain and Switzerland, alongside China and the United States of America. *Nordicum-Mediterranean,* which forgoes the usual focus on central Europe to concentrate on more neglected Northern and Southern Europe, must welcome this.

While Beale and his colleagues take for granted the interest of their readers, Graziano sells his project, devoting chapter two to an explanation of why comparative law is needed now in the face of hostility in law schools and quite possibly amongst the students that he expects will be obliged to study the book's contents. Thus before being thrust into the nitty gritty, Graziano attempts to convince the student that *non scholæ, sed vitæ discimus.* Whereas *Cases, Materials and Text* relies on the companion website to provide the original language of the selected excerpts, these are included in *Comparative Contract Law.* This is helpful for

multilingual teachers and students, especially those whose first language is not English and who may find it easier to read the original texts in German, Greek or even Chinese.

Graziano also includes questions at the start of each section. These are similar to the kind of questions one might find in any reader on domestic contract law. They also make for fine tutorial problems: problems for the students to ponder and come prepared to discuss in class with the instructor. While any teacher of contract law (comparative or otherwise) should be able to come up with similar questions, by including them in the book, *before* the substantive discussion, the inexpert reader's attention is drawn as she reads on to consider what aspects of the cases are most important and to find her own answers: not wait passively to be "told" by the book.

Where Graziano disappoints is in the oft-neglected reference sections. This text needs a much better index (it is only one page and a half, compared to the 31 page index of *Cases, Materials and Text*) as well as comprehensive tables of cases (there is none at all in Graziano).

As a textbook, *Cases, Materials and Text on Contract Law* is too demanding; as a research tool for anyone working in contract law, it is indispensable and should be held by every current or aspiring professor of contract law as well as every law library in Europe. Graziano's text is more suitable to the classroom and it can only be hoped that law schools will look forwards instead of backwards and recognize as Graziano does that: "this body of literature [in comparative law] will be consulted only by lawyers who have been introduced to an international comparative approach during their education. Only those who have become accustomed to working with foreign legal orders during their education will be ready and will show a sufficient degree of openness to have recourse to these resources in their daily work, and to take into account the solutions and tendencies revealed in the area of European private law" (22).

You wait eight years for a good book on comparative contract law and two come along at

once.

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[1] See, http://www.law.kuleuven.be/ccle/

[2] See, Rachael Lorna Johnstone, "Iceland's Renaissance: Time for Comparative Law" 5 *Lögfræðingur* [2011] forthcoming.

[3] Companion site: http://www.casebooks.eu/contractLaw/about/

[4] As well as English, French and German law, *Cases, Materials and Text on Contract Law* deals extensively with Dutch law.