A COMPANION TO

Comparative Literature

EDITED BY
ALI BEHDAD AND **DOMINIC THOMAS**

WILEY-BLACKWELL

A Companion to Comparative Literature

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Introduction

Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas

In "The Crisis of Comparative Literature," the distinguished scholar of Comparative Literature René Wellek wrote "The most serious sign of the precarious state of our study is the fact that it has not been able to establish a distinct subject matter and a specific methodology" (Wellek, 1963: p. 282). That nearly over fifty years later, the same can be said of the state of a discipline that has grown to over fifty departments and programs worldwide (see http://www.swan.ac.uk/german/bcla/clusa.htm) under-scores not only the timeliness of this volume, but also the precarious and plural nature of the discipline itself, a discipline which defines itself as an *inter*-disciplinary, *cross*-cultural, and *trans*-national endeavor. Comparative Literature occupies a distinct and unique position in the humanities. Despite the small size of most departments and programs, the discipline typically plays a central role as a clearing-house of ideas not simply for other literary departments on university campuses but across the humani-ties and humanistic social sciences. Indeed, with student interest in the traditional national literatures rapidly declining as evidenced by a shrinking number of majors, the field of Comparative Literature is quickly emerging as the natural site around which to organize modern language and literary studies.

Perhaps more significantly, as Haun Saussy points out, "The premises and protocols characteristic of our discipline [i.e. Comparative Literature] are now the daily currency of coursework, publishing, hiring and coffee-shop discussion" (Saussy, 2006: p. 3). In recent years, not only has the idea of world literature gained a great deal of currency among national literature departments, but theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches to literature have taken institutional forms. Indeed, as Tobin Siebers had predicted almost two decades ago, "everyone is becoming a comparatist of a kind" (Siebers, 1995: p. 196), though contrary to his prediction, far from a dying discipline,

Comparative Literature is alive and well today. Consider the field of English literature, arguably one of the strongest and most traditional fields in the humanities. Almost ten years ago, Paul Jay, in an extremely insightful article titled "Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English," drew attention to the problematic tendency in English and other literature departments to organize their curricula around a "traditional division of discrete national literatures into ossified literary-historical periods," calling instead for the globalization of literary studies by which he meant an approach that gives "primary attention to the historical role literature has had in global systems of cultural exchange and recognize(s) that this exchange has always been multi-directional" (Jay, 2001: pp. 42–3). Today, comparative fields such as Transatlantic Studies and Global English are gaining tremendous critical momentum in many English departments. That even national literature departments are moving away from a nationalist paradigm towards a globalized model of literary studies suggest that comparative approaches to literature are no longer the exception but the norm in the academy. This has certainly been the case in many French departments that now include in their curriculum the study of the cultures and literatures of the Francophone world, and these transcolonial and transnational approaches have afforded us more accurate contextualizations of French history and the role of Europe in the larger postcolonial world.

In light of the recent interest in world literature among literary scholars, a brief discussion of the origin of Comparative Literature and its originary vision of a post-national approach to literature is in order. Many scholars of Comparative Literature locate the genesis of the discipline in Goethe's coining of the term *Weltliteratur*. Goethe wrote to Eckhermann in 1827 that "Nowadays, national literature doesn't mean much: the age of world literature is beginning, and everybody should contribute to hasten its advent" (cited in Moretti, 2000: p. 1). According to Goethe, the literary imagination transcends national and linguistic borders, even though he acknowledges that every work of literature is historically situated and aesthetically unique. As Edward Said argues, the early practitioners of Comparative Literature such as Ernest Robert Curtius and Erich Auerbach took their inspiration from intellectuals of pre-imperial Germany such as Goethe and Herder who considered nationalism to be transitory, while recognizing the global dimensions of modernity. For early comparatists, "the idea of comparative literature not only expressed universality and the kind of understanding gained by philologists about language families, but also symbolized the crisis-free serenity of an almost ideal realm" (Said, 1993: p. 45). Other critics, however, have pointed to the specific emergence of Comparative Literature as a product of the Cold War. As the Levin Report on Professional Standards of 1965 acknowledges, "The recent proliferation of Comparative Literature, in colleges and universities throughout the country, could hardly have materialized without the support of the National Defense Education Act," which was passed in 1958 in response to the Soviet Union's early success in the space race and the need for foreign language instruction to counter the threat of communism (The Levin Report; 1965, 1995: p. 21). Comparative Literature, according to these critics, belonged to a par-

ticular politico-cultural movement in the United States that called for the teaching of foreign languages and literature to help the younger generation of Americans understand and engage more effectively with the cultural and political challenges of the Cold War era.

Whether one may attribute the emergence of the discipline to "Goethe's grandly utopian vision" to use Edward Said's words (2004: p. 95), or to practical demands of the Cold War politics, all scholars of Comparative Literature concur with the idea that it is a dynamic and plural field of study perpetually transforming its theoretical assumptions, critical methodologies, and objects of study. Even a cursory glance at the reports on professional standards and the state of the discipline by Levin (1965), Greene (1975), Bernheimer (1993), and Saussy (2004), mandated by the bylaws of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), demonstrates the ability and the commitment of students and scholars of Comparative Literature to launch new scholarly projects by way of transforming the intellectual mission of the discipline. Thus, for example, while the Levin Report highlights the importance of a broad linguistic competency and a focus on literary problems that transcend national limits, the Greene Report emphasizes the value of crossing disciplinary boundaries and challenges the "elitism" of the earlier report. Similarly, wheras the Bernheimer Report recommends that Comparative Literature departments "actively recruit faculty from non-European literature departments and from allied disciplines" while "broadening the cultural scope of comparative literature offerings" (Bernheimer, 1995: p. 45) the Saussy Report offers a "multivocal report" that elaborates the values of "'world literature' and the politics of empire" (Saussy, 2006: p. viii).

As a way of highlighting the dynamic and innovative qualities of the field, this volume uses the metaphor of mobility to organize the selection of articles both by way of remaining faithful to the general project of comparative literature *and* in order to address the historically situated nature of the methodologies and theoretical assumptions. Thus, in order to circumscribe the project, categories that include "roadmaps," "directions," "intersections," "trajectories," "mobilities," and "connections" help us track historical antecedents while also pointing to new and exciting configurations (digital humanities, diasporic formations, transnational texts) of the comparative landscape. As global cultural, political, and social alignments continue to emerge and transform the parameters of comparative study, such contextualization becomes all the more important. The articles in this volume provide general theoretical models to use in studying literary texts and cultural products comparatively, as well as specific examples of comparative analyses, including the relationship between translation and transnationalism, literary theory and emerging media, the future of national literatures in an era of globalization, gender and cultural formation across time, East-West cultural encounters, postcolonial and diaspora studies, and other experimental approaches to literature and culture.

The first section, *Roadmaps*, consists of five articles and position papers by scholars who have been actively engaged in the process of defining the methodologies and theoretical assumptions of the field, and accordingly elaborating the different modes

of comparative work. Among the issues these introductory and general articles address are: the intellectual promise and critical values of Comparative Literature as a discipline; the function of literary criticism today; the ways in which historical conditions determine and effect what constitutes the notion of literariness; the relation between form and content, aesthetics and politics, theory and literature.

The articles in this section also underscore the fact that the project of defining the discipline of Comparative Literature remains highly important, albeit extremely contested. Thus, for example, while Rey Chow in her article defines Comparative Literature as a "Discipline of Tolerance," that is "a loose discourse network sprouting from an incessant proliferation, intermingling, and hybridization of subjects" (p. 24). David Ferris rejects "the logic of *indiscipline* to which Comparative Literature has recurrently turned whenever it evades the question of its own limit," calling instead for "the foregrounding of comparison in Comparative Literature" which remains the fundamental task in the humanities (p. 33). Like Ferris, David Palumbo-Liu addresses the fundamental question of comparative methodology, arguing that Raymond Williams' notion of "congruity" provides a more compelling methodology than the traditional notion of "commensurability." Put otherwise, instead of seeking a common denominator, comparatists, according to him, ought to look for "a structural similarity [understood in terms of the 'historical matrices'] informing literary cases emanating from different cultural spaces" (p. 57). In contrast, Haun Saussy engages not the question of methodology but rather the very distinct subject matter that has traditionally defined the field. Saussy rejects the very foundational equation of Comparative Literature with world literature, arguing that the latter should be treated as a "starting point" rather than a "goal" for the field in order to make "space for comparative projects that have as their objects things and relations that are not part of the world – yet" (p. 63).

At least since the rise of Structuralism in the 1970s, through the 1980s when Deconstruction, Feminism, Post-Structuralism, and Psychoanalysis became dominant theoretical paradigms in the study of literary texts, and in the 1990s when New Historicism and Post-Colonialism came into view as new theoretical interventions, the field of Comparative Literature has been highly influenced, indeed, defined by what has been generally viewed as "theory." As Kenneth Surin points out in the first section of this volume in his genealogy of the field, the emergence of critical and cultural theory inaugurated a fundamental shift in the discipline "from a traditional kind of 'comp lit' towards a more intellectually ramified 'comparitism' involving a diverse range of theoretical paradigms" (p. 70). In recent years, however, some scholars have called into question the centrality of critical theory to the field. The late Richard Rorty, for example, argued that "literary theory" is not a "dialectical necessity" for the field and that its dominance among comparative literature scholars was merely a "historical accident" which "has gradually become old hat" (Rorty, 2006: pp. 62, 63). However, what such wholesale rejections of theory overlook is the fact that the discipline's theoretical orientation has been extremely useful in that it has not only problematized nineteenth-century European historiographic methodology, but it has also

enabled literary scholars to critique logo- and phallocentric biases of humanism in the West. As Stathis Gourgouris points out in his article, "The turn to theory was a fecund period of experimental practices of radical interrogation, subversion of established methods of interpretation, daring cognitive ingenuity, irreverent performativity" (p. 76). Furthermore, such theoretical paradigms as deconstruction and poststructuralism have also played a pivotal role in the introduction of non-Western literary traditions in Comparative Literature departments, for as Rey Chow correctly observes, "one of the strongest justifications for studying the non-West has to do precisely with the fundamental questioning of the limits of Western discourse which is characteristic of deconstruction and poststructuralist theory" (Chow, 1995: p. 112).

In the second section of the volume, *Theoretical Directions*, the essays engage a variety of theoretical approaches, their uses and influence in the work of Comparative Literature scholars, and offer concrete examples of how these theoretical models can be deployed to study literary texts and other cultural products. Thus, for example, Eric Hayot reviews the history of East/West comparison in the field to advance a more self-reflexive theoretical model that is attentive to the fact that the very terms East and West "are themselves the historical functions of a series of comparisons" (p. 88). Similarly, Michael Lucey focuses on the works of two French canonical authors, Colette and Balzac, to argue for a mode of comparison founded on the idea of (historical) circulation, that is a way of "thinking about the production of meaning that happens not just 'in' texts, but in the ways texts circulate, the ways they are transmitted and reproduced" (p. 120). These kinds of innovative ways of approaching cultural mediation extend into other domains, and Efraín Kristal's article demonstrates how the "insistence on paying attention to a dynamic between the purposive activity of the artist and the artistic qualities that ensue is a rich way to think about art whether or not one is committed to psychological considerations" (p. 112). In fact, while Comparative Literature has fostered all kinds of productive encounters, these have not, by any means been exhaustive. This is particularly true when it comes to drama and theater, and Sharon Marcus' article explores "the scant attention paid to theater by comparative literature in general" (p. 136), the consequences for the field of adhering to an often "restricted definition of literature" (p. 136), and the resulting disconnect between cultural practice and its reception and analysis in the Academy. In the spirit of this volume, Marcus' article convincingly argues for more inclusive paradigms, because "To encompass more of the cultural field, to grasp it in ways that do not fix its *mobility*, in order to understand better what we study, is the most basic and most persuasive reason to bring together comparative literature and theater" (p. 151, emphasis added).

One of the crucial contributions of "high theory" to the field of Comparative Literature has been the introduction of other modes of discourse to literary scholarship. The group of scholars who worked on the Bernheimer Report in 1993 wrote: "Literary phenomena are no longer the exclusive focus of our discipline. Rather, literary texts are now being approached as one discursive practice among many others in a complex, shifting, and often contradictory field of cultural production" (The Bernheimer Report; 1995: p. 42). The authors go on to point out that students of

Comparative Literature tend to work between disciplines, but *also* often study litera-ture in relation to other modes of discourse. As Jonathan Culler remarks, Comparative Literature scholars recognize the fact that "their analytical skills can shed light on the structures and functioning of the wide range of discursive practices that form indi-viduals and cultures; and their contributions to the study of philosophical, psychoana-lytic, political, medical, and other discourses, not to mention conduct books, film, and popular culture, have been so valuable that no one could wish to restrict literature faculties to the study of literature alone" (Culler, 1995: p. 117).

The third section of the volume, *Disciplinary Intersections*, offers analyses of the cross- and inter-disciplinary nature of comparative analysis while providing concrete examples of how the study of literature can be enriched by the consideration of anthro-pological, historical, linguistic, new media, political, psychoanalytical, race, and socio-logical discourses. Thus, for example, Gisèle Sapiro explores the fecund relationship between Comparative Literature and historical sociology, considering "the conditions under which 'entangled history' can be transposed to the historical sociology of litera-ture" (p. 226), while Zöe Norridge examines the complexity of social suffering and human experience in thinking about the process of "comparing pain," arguing "that we should be comfortable in paying greater attention to the exceptional rather than always seeking to establish the exemplary, with its concomitant assumption that literature is to be used as evidence of social patterns within the world" (p. 223). In turn, Todd Presner offers a compelling discussion of the transformation of the very notion of literature that has emerged since the cyber revolution and the emergence of digital technologies by way of demonstrating how "electronic literature offers a sig-nificant and multivalent possibility for exploring the future of Comparative Literature (p. 195). Similarly, while Jorge Coronado focuses on three specific instances of lettered production in Latin America to elaborate the relationship between literature and visual arts, Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller address the complex ways in which Comparative Literature as a discipline is interpolated by the political economy by focusing on how literary texts materially come to existence.

The final three sections of the volume broaden the implications of Comparative Literature as a postnational discipline by broaching non-Western literary traditions. While Comparative Literature as a field of study serves as a beacon for interdisciplinary inquiry, this success has engendered new challenges. Comparative Literature histori-cally has been structured as a discipline around a tension between two forces that seem to work in opposite directions: on the one hand, a concern with overcoming the bar-riers of national culture and literature and reliance on the nineteenth-century notion of world literature as a concert of the world's literary traditions and, on the other, a concerted effort to consolidate the idea of Europe in literary and cultural terms, to be distinguished formally, and once and for all, from all other societies and their literary and cultural creativity. At the same time that the discipline has provided openings to a consideration of a multiplicity of literary cultures, it has also participated in the solidification of a world literary system in which the collective cultures of "the West" have functioned as the center, the interpreter, and the point of reference for all others.

As Edward Said cogently observed, "To speak of comparative literature therefore was to speak of the interaction of world literatures with one another, but the field was epistemologically organized as a sort of hierarchy, with Europe and its Latin Christian literatures as its center and top" (Said, 1993: p. 45).

Among the challenges the field has been facing in the past two decades is how to overcome the Eurocentrism that has traditionally defined the field of Comparative Literature. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out; the fact that "Comparative Literature was founded on inter-European hospitality" has prevented it from engaging "the languages of the Southern Hemisphere as active cultural media" (Spivak, 2003: pp. 8, 9). Given recent shifts in the focus of literary and cultural studies away from an exclusive concentration on European literatures, as well as the fact that many students (both graduate and undergraduate) now commonly engage in comparative studies that cross chronological, cultural, disciplinary, linguistic, and national boundaries, it is intellectually necessary to consider new directions in studying comparative studies. The articles in the final three sections of this volume explore the various ways in which comparative approaches have been forced to broaden the context under investigation in order to account for factors at play beyond a traditional framework in which *two forces* were juxtaposed: How, for example, do we engage in a comparative analysis of works produced at/in global diasporic sites (writings in/by Vietnamese authors in Vietnam, France, the United States) and by transnational authors who circulate between different locations (residency in Africa, Europe, and a *third space*) anchoring narratives in multiple topographic sites? And finally, how might the complex history of decolonization and population displacement/movement have inaugurated spaces that cannot be fixed, immigrant narratives that operate in a constitutive context in which *both* centers and peripheries are reconfigured? These final sections of the volume therefore consist of articles that address some of the possibilities of intellectual inquiry for current and future students of Comparative Literature.

In the fourth section, *Linguistic Trajectories*, the contributors address in particular the transformations that have marked Comparative Literature's relation with the question of language and linguistic competency which is deemed essential to any comparative project. Among the most significant issues in the context of language has been the field's traditional focus on European languages and literatures. As early as the Green Report of 1975, scholars of Comparative Literature have been cognizant of the fact that the field has not traditionally engaged non-European languages. In recent years, however, a new vision of Comparative Literature as a planetary project has emerged, a vision that calls into question the centrality of European languages and literary traditions in the field. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, has admonished students of Comparative Literature to "take the languages of the Southern Hemisphere as active cultural media rather than as objects of cultural study by the sanctioned ignorance of the metropolitan migrant" (Spivak, 2003: p. 9). As the Greene Report had predicted, this new vision of Comparative Literature has made "our comfortable European perspectives parochial" (The Greene Report; 1975: p. 30). New generations of comparatists have begun not only to study literatures of

non-European traditions in the original, but they have also engaged the very hybrid nature of linguistic traditions itself. Naturally, as the articles reveal, the process of categorizing various *centers* and *peripheries* proves to be a complex endeavor.

Cathy Caruth persuasively elaborates the challenges and implications that arise when one brings into dialogue such apparently distinct authors as Dickens and Rushdie, illuminating the very paradoxical ways in which language itself "may survive precisely because it is inherently parted from itself, and because it carries within it the historical marks of an impossible history that is also the history of its own rootless past and future" (p. 251). However, as Simon Gikandi argues, "so long as European literatures and languages remain at the center of the project of comparison, gestures of expansion, those that seek to embrace other cultures and national languages, will always remain feeble" (p. 259). "[T]he task of comparison," Gikandi further suggests, "must start by exploring how the reigning ideologies of translation are, or can be, dislodged, questioned or revised when scholars seriously engage with the historicity of texts produced in the non-European languages" (p. 259). Thus, while Gikandi critiques Comparative Literature's privileging of European philology, Mary Louise Pratt draws attention to comparatists' overlooking of the multiple ways in which linguistic circulations have been enabled by migration, and therefore asks "What are the linguistic dimensions of this set of planetary realignments people call globalization?" (p. 274). On the one hand, Pratt elaborates the ways in which migrants redistribute linguistic competences; on the other, she discusses "the widening use of translation and lingua francas in the creation of world scenarios" as well as the "heterolingual expressive practices, which … are made possible by the extroverted potential of language" (p. 286). Ultimately the section entitled *Linguistic Trajectories* reveals how, as Mireille Rosello has shown, "Emphasizing relationality is a way of remembering that comparing involves a theory of the self and of the other, and a theory of the comparable […] in other words, relationality does not so much mean that we will be crossing borders between area studies but that the borders in question will now be rethought as our assumptions are about more or less naturalized canons and territories" (p. 313).

Such questions prove to be all the more pertinent to the strikingly original angle adopted by Nasrin Rahimieh in her exploration of the manner in which "A reconceptualization of Persian literary history from the vantage point of Comparative Literature can offer a different history of the apparent political, religious, and cultural impasse defining contemporary Iran's relations to other nations" (p. 296). For if the articles in the fourth section trace the linguistic trajectories that have complicated the task of comparison today, those in the fifth section, *Postcolonial Mobilities*, address the implications of postcolonial interventions for Comparative Literature. Since the publication of Edward Said's seminal book, *Orientalism* (1978), the field of Comparative Literature has been marked by a shift in the interest of its practitioners from textuality to historicity, from the aesthetic to the political, and from individual receptions to collective responses to literary texts. That Said himself was first and foremost a comparatist speaks to the affinity between the fields of Comparative Literature and postcolonialism. For, as David Murphy remarks in his article, postcolonialism can be

viewed as inherently a comparative project in that it constitutes "the sort of transnational literary sphere that has long been central to dominant conceptions of comparative literature" (p. 408). And yet, postcolonialism has been crucial to Comparative Literature as a field for several reasons. For not only postcolonial theory brought the issue of colonialism to the forefront of literary studies in the West by critically displaying the ideological underpinnings of scientific and aesthetic representations of "otherness" in European thought throughout modern history, but it also enabled a mode of critical inquiry that is attentive to the complex ways in which knowledge, and more specifically, nineteenth century European literature was implicated in relations of power. As well, the field of postcolonialism reconfigured the literary canon by focusing on the works of many Anglophone and Francophone authors, among others. Today, the works of postcolonial authors such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Aimé Césaire, Assia Djebar, Ngùgì wa Thiong'o, Jamaica Kincaid, Caryl Phillips, Sembène Ousmane, and Salman Rushdie have not only enlarged the literary canon but also helped transform the very notion of literature itself.

The articles in the *Postcolonial Mobilities* section approach a wide range of topics in the field of postcolonialism in a comparative framework. David Theo Goldberg, for example, focuses on critical analyses of race and racism, arguing that though it is "undeniable that racial configuration and arrangement may speak thickly to local conditions and reference points, it is nevertheless the case that racial conditions pretty much anywhere are shored up and sustained by […] racial articulations elsewhere" (p. 359). Goldberg posits a "relational" model to account for "how state formations or histories, logics of oppression and exploitations are linked, whether causally or symbolically, ideationally or semantically" (p. 361). Like Goldberg, Françoise Lionnet offers a relational model of comparison, and the focus is provided by the works of Edward Said and Abdelkebir Khatibi. Her analysis provides a transcolonial model of comparison that "takes as its point of departure the commitment they both share to a relational, polyphonic, and contrapuntal – rather than merely binary and oppositional – understanding of identity, culture, and literature" (p. 388). Whereas most postcolonial critics have tended to study the relationship between the center and the periphery, she suggests that a "transcolonial critique of power" must pay equal attention to "the relationships among different margins" by examining the "transversal and rhizomatic networks of minority subjects and intellectual agents together" (p. 393). These contributions draw attention to the vibrancy of postcolonial studies. Deborah Jenson makes the case for the importance of Haiti, and how "This diasporan literature by those whose common descent involves kidnapping, gives us a new point of entry to exploration of the nation, not just as an imagined community beyond face-to-face interaction, but as an imagined community with unimagined participants, who were subject to the lawless silencing of their voices and public existence, but who nevertheless persevered in self-representation" (p. 384); Allison Crumly Deventer and Dominic Thomas discuss the potentialities of a new field of comparative inquiry (Afro-European Studies) that could assist us in accounting for the complicated historical relationship between colonialism, African and European nation-building, immigration history, and diasporic community formation; and Sangeeta Ray outlines the important links

with ecocriticism and environmental studies, suggesting new frameworks ("eco-graphies") that can assist us in unpacking contemporary cultural, political, and social phenomena.

The final section of the volume, *Global Connections*, addresses the idea of World Literature, the multiple refractions that such an idea entails, and its relation to the field of Comparative Literature. If anything, this concluding section confirms the vitality of Comparative Literature, pointing to the *mobility* of concepts and terms and to the historical journey that has taken us from *Weltliteratur* to *World Literature*. As David Damrosch remarked; "No shift in modern comparative study has been greater than the accelerating attention to literatures beyond masterworks by the great men of the European great powers" (Damrosch, 2006: p. 43). In the past two decades, students of Comparative Literature have had to reckon not only with the proliferation of literary works by exile, diaspora, and immigrant writers in Western metropolitan centers, but also with non-Western literary traditions, all of which have problema-tized, if not fully displaced, traditional European literary canons. Scholars of Comparative Literature have also turned their attention to world literature as a frame-work with which to explore new modes of literary circulation, production, reception, and interpretation. One of the most crucial features of world literature, Damrosch argues, originates in the complex ways in which "works of world literature take on a new life as they move into the world at large, and to understand this new life we need to look closely at the ways the work becomes reframed in its translations and in its new cultural contexts" (Damrosch, 2003: p. 24). Put otherwise, to the extent to which various works of literature become world literature through their receptions in foreign cultures, the processes of circulation and reception become as crucial to understanding literary texts as their actual contents. In this way, "World literature is thus always as much about the host culture's values and needs as it is about a work's source culture," as Damrosch argues (Damrosch, 2003: p. 283).

While critical of the universality of the idea of world literature, Charles Forsdick "explores the relationship of world literature and world languages, reflecting in par-ticular on whether an adherence to monolingualism is an appropriate characteristic of such a purportedly global literary phenomenon" (p. 477). Forsdick is attentive to the diversity of cultural and political contexts in which notions of world literature have been deployed (among the most recent incarnations has been the francocentric concept of a "world literature in French"), and certainly not entirely dismissive of the theoretical implications. Graham Huggan, however, takes a critical stance against world literature, observing that "debates around *World* literature are often simultane-ously debates around the future of *Comparative* literature," and making a contentious argument that "World Literature institutionally supports what it claims ideologically to oppose" in that "it represents the cultural *realpolitik* of globalization masquerading as either a 'worldly' cosmopolitanism of reading (Damrosch) or a transnational study of form (Moretti)" (p. 491). In contrast to these assessments of world literature, Brian Edwards adopts a more favorable view by stressing the literary and cultural advantages of circulation, and asking "What happens when texts move into new contexts, taken

up by audiences beyond the imagination of their producers, emerging from radically different social and discursive spaces?" (p. 454). Focusing on a range of Moroccan texts, he demonstrates how the notion of circulation not only allows us to grasp the contingent and unstable nature of their meanings but also to understand the logic of their receptions in different social and discursive contexts, while simultaneously urging students and scholars to reflect additionally on the usages that are made of our critical tools: "If what we mean by 'globalization' implicates an impossibly broad fabric, it is necessary for scholars and students of literature to localize our attentions on particular texts and contexts in order to understand how such a changed or changing episteme works on the imaginary" (p. 463–464).

Either explicitly or implicitly, all contributors to the volume invariably find themselves contending with larger questions that have to do with curricular focus and orientation, in other words with the ethical, political, and social implications and consequences of the various proposed approaches to scholarly and pedagogic activity and the resulting learning outcomes. As Emily Apter maintains in her article, "In addition to foregrounding the political stakes that accompany the classification of peoples within heritage traditions (a major concern in *Orientalism*), Said places the study of legal statutes governing citizenship and land entitlement within humanism's purview. Equally important, he urges the critic to remake humanism in the guise of ethical militance; thereby, disrobing the congeniality of a liberal tradition that loves the world but ignores the earthly violence of distributive injustice" (p. 450). In coming to grips with these important issues, humanistic inquiry remains all the more crucial to the process of addressing relationality, of accounting for the new ways in which knowledge production occurs, information is accessed, disseminated, analyzed, and processed. Indeed, colleges and universities have made adaptability, circulation, diversity, internationalization, and *mobility* in terms of demographics, curriculum, and study abroad opportunities integral to their mission. Thus, in the end, readers will hopefully find themselves confronted with a range of stimulating insights to the manifold techniques, systems, and models that emphasize the potentiality of comparative study to evolve and suggest ways in which Comparative Literature's tentacular reach can stand to impact twenty-first century disciplinary configurations, while also insisting on the importance of training students so that they can think globally as effective, informed, and responsible citizens.

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Part I
Roadmaps

1

A Discipline of Tolerance

Rey Chow

A call for papers for a conference on comparative literature in 2009 names the following as possible topics: comparative literary history; literature and the languages; world literature, translation, and globalization; colonial and post-colonial literatures; deconstruction and its legacies; hermeneutics; gender, sexuality, and eroticism; drama, theater, and performance; the history of the discipline; philosophy and religion; psychoanalysis, trauma, and testimony; visual arts and architecture; technology, media, audio-visual culture; sociology, anthropology, and political economy; history and historiography; geography, geology, and ecology (Figure 1.1). Although seldom discussed by way of Louis Althusser's well-known essay on ideology, a call for papers is, it seems fair to say, a mode of interpellation. What kind of subjection is in play? Since the occasion is a matter of academic practice, the notion of the subject at stake is, arguably, double: it is both a respondent to the call who consents to participation as a comparativist, and the matter at hand, namely, what comparative literature is/does.

The open-ended nature of the list brings to mind another famous moment: Michel Foucault's invocation, at the beginning of *The Order of Things*, of Jorge Luis Borges' Chinese encyclopedia, that fantastic agglomerate of incommensurate things. Foucault's point, we recall, is precisely that the agglomerate defies all probable logic of similarity and comparability in Western thought. For him, Borges' invention functions not only as a representation of an exotic order of things but also as a means to make visible the West's conventional way of organizing knowledge, itself an artificial grid of intelligibility that, because it is taken for granted, tends to remain invisible. With good humor, Foucault finds in the Chinese encyclopedia the intimation of an impending epistemic abyss, in the light of which the hitherto assumed certitude of Western reason crumbles. From this glimpse of the void, Foucault goes on to give an account

Constellations:
Of Comparative Literature and the New Humanities

October 16-18, 2009
Hosted By:
The Department of Comparative Literature
Emory University, Atlanta GA

With a Two Day Roundtable Featuring:
Geoffrey Bennington, Eduardo Cadava, Cathy Caruth, Peggy Kamuf, Thomas Keenan,
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

What does it mean to practice comparative literature? When we speak of a discipline that is intrinsically interdisciplinary, how do we understand its limits, articulate its purpose, and constitute its objects? These very questions apply to the humanities in general—itself a heterogeneous constellation of disciplines, each representing not only its own knowledge but its own way of asking questions. From what position can this multiplicity of knowledges comprising the humanities ask the increasingly urgent question of its self-definition?

"Constellations" aims to negotiate this critical task of self-definition by bringing the questions of comparative literature and the humanities together. We hope to produce well-informed perspectives on comparative literature within the broader context of the humanities. But we also hope to ask the question of the humanities from *within* the fold of comparative literature itself—not only because it is one of several loci in the humanities where interdisciplinary work is done, but because its emphasis on language has produced strategies for negotiating between opposed, even irreducible forms of thought and knowledge.

This call for papers invites all who have a stake in these questions to report on their projects and participate in the on-going conversation about what comparative literature and the humanities are or should be. Of course, we also welcome the arrival of unexpected guests.

Abstract submissions may pertain to the following:
- Comparative Literary History
- Literature and the Languages
- World Literature, Translation, and Globalization
- Colonial and Post-colonial Literatures
- Deconstruction and its Legacies
- Hermeneutics
- Gender, Sexuality, and Eroticism
- Drama, Theater, and Performance
- The History of the Discipline
- Philosophy and Religion
- Psychoanalysis, Trauma and Testimony
- Visual Arts and Architecture
- Technology, Media, Audio-Visual Culture
- Sociology, Anthropology, and Political Economy
- History and Historiography
- Geography, Geology, and Ecology

Abstract Submission Deadline:
May 15, 2009; 300-500 words

Email submissions to Armando Mastrogiovanni, ammastr@emory.edu

Figure 1.1 Comparative literature conference call for papers. (Reproduced with permission from the graduate students in the Department of Comparative Literature, Emory University)

of the history of modern Western knowledge practices, a history replete with the limits that accompany the appearance of that historical figure, "Man." Is our present moment, characterized as it is by a hyper-fluidity and interchangeability of information (as is evidenced in this well-intentioned call for papers), a replay of the moment of Foucault's encounter with Borges' imaginary artifact?

The two moments bear a resemblance, of course, simply because of the infinite multipliability of data suggested by the list. Although many of the topics named by the conference organizers are familiar to comparative literature practitioners, the act of piling and bulleting indicates that many more items can be added and that this is a potentially endless and fenceless field, for which no attempt at self-delineation and self-limitation will suffice. To this extent, comparative literature may be said to be undergoing a process of subject de-formation, a process that has been copiously debated, for instance, in the series of discussions accompanying the reports issued by the American Comparative Literature Association in response to multiculturalism and globalization (Bernheimer, 1995; Saussy, 2006). But while Foucault's reflections historicize the emergence of Man, a figure who, as he predicts at the end of his book, is about to fade like a face drawn in sand by the edge of the sea, many current discussions of comparative literature seem to head in a quite different direction. As the subject (matter) of comparative literature undergoes de-formation, a new type of subject formation seems simultaneously to be taking place, alongside a new type of agenda.

To probe these linked events of subject de-formation and subject re-formation, it will be instructive to return briefly to Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, which for many of us remains an authoritative founding text in our post-Second World War (and largely North American) academic discipline.[1] Whether or not we agree with Auerbach's analyses, his book stands unparalleled in its range of erudition, attention to minutiae, and generosity of spirit. I have elsewhere approached this work in terms of the problematic of forgiveness and mercy, a problematic that is silently but evocatively inscribed in Auerbach's detailed discussion of the Biblical narrative of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac in the Book of Genesis Chapter 22 (Chow, 2009).[2] By placing his reading of that episode at the beginning of *Mimesis*, I propose, Auerbach is making the crucial gesture of arguing a fundamental shift in the conceptualization of the human in the Western literary canon.[3] Since *Mimesis* and *The Order of Things* were published within two decades of each other (1946 and 1966, respectively), and since both may be described as postwar reconfigurations of the status of Western knowledge, their disparate conclusions about the human are worth a closer examination.

Being a philologist by training, Auerbach focused primarily on style, even though style, much like categories to which the contemporary critical reader is more accustomed, such as race, class, and gender, is first and foremost about the hierarchical arrangement (that is, the politics) of social differentiation. The focus on style allows Auerbach to establish significant differences between the Hellenic and Hebraic ways of writing – specifically, the contrasts between Homer's elaborate narration of Odysseus'

homecoming in *The Odyssey* and the Bible's reticent account of the near-slaughter of Isaac (in Chapter one). As may be surmised in the remarks Auerbach made in response to the early critics of *Mimesis* who complained that he had been unfair in his treatment of the Greeks, there is a strong sense of ethical purpose on his part. "I considered for a moment letting the Homer chapter fall entirely by the wayside," he wrote. "For my purposes it would have sufficed to begin with the time around the birth of Christ" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 560).

> It is quite clear to me with what great justification, for example, early Christianity can be regarded as the product of late antiquity […] But the task that my theme imposed on me was a different one: I had to show not the transition but rather the complete change. (Auerbach, 2003: p. 562)

What kind of complete change? This is an important question in and of itself, but to raise it in the context of comparative literature is to ask how such a question is instrumental in shaping the orientation of the discipline as a whole – how, in other words, it functions as a type of call.

With the emphasis on the Judeo-Christian narrative tradition, Auerbach is not simply demonstrating a cultural difference but also negotiating an alternative inception of the Western canon.[4] As I have argued, the choice of a scene about divine mercy is critical here. As Auerbach shows by following the elliptical and withheld style of the Biblical story, the nature of divine mercy remains entirely mysterious to the human characters involved and, by implication, to the reader. For him, therefore, the Hebraic narrative style lays claim to a powerful kind of truth – the sacred – that cannot be conflated with historical realism. The ineffability of this claim to truth is what distinguishes the Judeo-Christian manner of storytelling from that of the pagans. If a Greek author such as Homer tends to digress into picturesque details, the Biblical narrative leaves much to the reader's speculation and interpretation. (Abraham may hear God's voice and respond by gesturing upward toward God, but we are not told exactly where that voice is coming from.) Above all, Auerbach describes this claim to truth in absolute terms, as:

> tyrannical – it excludes all other claims […] All other scenes, issues, and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it, and it is promised that all of them, the history of all mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, will be subordinated to it. (Auerbach, 2003: pp. 14–15)

The logic of a certain spiritual progression may thus be inferred from Auerbach's book. It goes something like this: the Judeo-Christian style, with its hallmark emphases on humble, earthly, and mundane contents, and its liberal mixing of genres and idioms, embodies a distinctive paradigm of what it means to experience alterity. That alterity is originally named God. As we follow Auerbach's chapters through the centuries, however, God has been representationally displaced onto the plurality of the human world. By the time we reach Virginia Woolf, the notion of God has become

so thoroughly dethroned from the place "up there" that even the authority of a novelist or her narrator (who used to be a stand-in for the divine maker) must be understood to have made way for a linguistic/stylistic multiplicity, comprised not only of different human characters' exchanges but also of a Babel of articulate and inarticulate voices, marked by techniques such as the stream of consciousness, free indirect speech, interior monologue, and so forth as well as by direct speech and dialogue. In a novel such as Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, "The writer as narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of the dramatis personae" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 534). Although Auerbach is ostensibly concerned with style, style in his reading is nothing less than a historical symptom of the remake of God's (mysterious) voice in human language. This remake means that the inscription of alterity, originally understood in terms of a tyrannical and ineffable divinity, has been brought up to date. Alterity is now experienced non-transcendentally, as human polyphonicity.[5]

If my reading of Auerbach's interpretative trajectory of de-sacralizing and (re) humanizing alterity is at all acceptable, his radical gesture of using a Biblical story about mercy to inaugurate this interpretative trajectory would seem poignantly motivated. In the story Auerbach tells, it is the Judeo-Christian tradition that is credited, in a state of exceptionalism, with the agency of laying the foundation for modern Western – and by implication, global – democratic thinking. (Again, instead of our contemporary identity-politics terms such as race, class, gender, agency is defined in terms of writing.) Central to this democratic thinking is a benevolent gaze, one that includes everybody, especially the lower classes and common folk whose varied and impure languages/voices, as Auerbach's various chapters demonstrate, have helped (authors) transform the stylistic genealogy of the Western canon. By referring to what he is doing as a "complete change," Auerbach intends nothing less than a reconceptualization of literature on the basis of *a common humanity.* As he writes, what he wishes to foreground is:

> a world which on the one hand is entirely real, average, identifiable as to place, time, and circumstances, but which on the other hand is *shaken in its very foundations*, is transforming and renewing itself before our eyes. (Auerbach, 2003: p. 43; my emphasis)

Hence his startling observations toward the end of the book:

> The more numerous, varied, and simple the people are who appear as subjects of such random moments {as depicted by modern writers like Woolf], the more effectively must what they have in common shine forth. In this unprejudiced and exploratory type of representation we cannot but see to what an extent – below the surface conflicts – the differences between men's ways of life and forms of thought have already lessened. The strata of societies and their different ways of life have become inextricably mingled. *There are no longer even exotic peoples. A century ago (in Mérimée for example), Corsicans or Spaniards were still exotic; today the term would be quite unsuitable for Pearl Buck's Chinese peasants.* Beneath the conflicts, and also through them, an economic and cultural leveling

process is taking place. It is still a long way to a common life of mankind on earth, but the goal begins to be visible. (Auerbach, 2003: p. 552; my emphasis)

In such a foundational change in thinking about humanity, Judeo-Christianity, notwithstanding its status as religion, is reborn as the origination site of secularism, understood as an enlightened overcoming of the boundaries imposed by religion, culture, and language – in sum, of ethnocentrism. Indeed, in ways that resonate with the long-established scholarly interest in the legacy of the Apostle Paul, who founded the Christian Church, Auerbach associates the missionary spreading of Christianity with a gradual detachment from the specificities of the Jewish tradition and steady adaptation to the preoccupations of a wider, global audience, whose conversion to the faith is made possible by the introduction of a new covenant (or contract) lifting the prohibitive constraints as stipulated by the Old Testament.[6] The more recent collective turn among contemporary critical theorists such as Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek to the figure of Paul can perhaps be explained in part by way of this investment in the Janus-faced resilience of Christianity as both a religious and a secular enterprise – one that alternately signifies divine grace, ontological infinity, sacrifice and love, revolution, and institution building – despite such thinkers' ostensible avant-garde philosophical and/or Marxist-Leninist sympathies, and remoteness from Auerbach's type of philological orientation. That said, it is Auerbach's reading, with its meticulous attentiveness to writing style, that offers a most remarkable clue to the paradoxical nature of this investment.

What bears repeating is Auerbach's observation that the sacred's claim to truth is tyrannical. Such a claim, he emphasizes, "excludes all other claims" in such a way as to subordinate to itself the history of all mankind (Auerbach, 2003: pp. 14–15). The sacred claim to an ineffable truth, in other words, is absolute because it is grounded in an originary act of exclusion. What this implies is that when the embrace of/with alterity devolves – from the realm of the sacred into the realm of the secular, as it were – the exclusionism that is constitutive of that claim, that is structural to its enunciation, is also being transmitted in the same process, becoming part and parcel of a new experience of alterity based in the human world. Instead of being forsaken, this exclusionism is henceforth (re)coded as the polyphonicity of a common humanity. Paradoxical though it may sound, then, the form assumed by exclusionism is now none other than an all inclusionary, universalist humanism, a new *uni-form* that supposedly has the power to let us start afresh, imagine and instigate a new kind of collective life, emancipated from past (ethnic and linguistic) boundaries and conflicts.

Understood in these terms, the secularizing of Christianity would be less a matter of doing away with God *per se* than with a demand for an egalitarian, cosmopolitan approach to human languages and cultures. This demand, which may be viewed retrospectively as the ambitious ethical proposition of Auerbach's book, was in turn consolidated as the premise of comparative literature. The discipline's efforts at self-reform, in recent years, from its previous Europe-dominant foci to "world," "global," or "planetary" literatures, with compellingly argued emphases on distant reading,

circulation, translation, postcoloniality, subalternity, and world republicanism (see Moretti, 2000; Damrosch, 2003; Apter, 2006; Melas, 2007; Spivak, 2003; Casanova, 2004), are, in this respect, the latest corroborations of this spiritual lineage. In comparative literature's increasingly democratized setting, a setting aptly dramatized by the list of possible conference paper topics to which I alluded, what kind of subject is being summoned into being? – a subject whose humanity is reconstituted by civility, the ability to coexist peacefully with others across classes, cultures, and languages; in sum, a tolerant subject.

The place occupied by Auerbach around 2011, the time of the present chapter, is thus quite thought-provoking. When poststructuralism emerged on the scene during the 1960s to the 1980s, the universalist humanism espoused by Auerbach's literary vision seemed to have gone out of fashion. Foucault's attempt to historicize Man, for instance, was simply one instance of an entire intellectual movement, shared by thinkers such as Derrida, Barthes, Lacan, Deleuze, Irigaray, Cixous, and their contemporaries, that sought to radicalize Western thought by overturning the centrality and continuum of an entrenched anthropocentrism. During this period and well into the 1990s, in North American universities at least, comparative literature departments became the home of "theory," and comparative literature practitioners adopted a broad and flexible, because cross-national, notion of literary production and reception as opposed to the more restrictive, nationalistic way of studying literature. But the enthusiastic pursuit of theory, which to more old-fashioned literary scholars is more akin to philosophy than to literature, also marked the beginning of the end of comparative literature. Theory led to the relativization of the literary as such, with the status of literature being gradually analogized (some would say "demoted" or "reduced") to one type of discourse among many. This is followed, in tandem with Western consciousness-raising as spurred by US civil rights movements and other historical events of decolonization, by the relativization of subjects, identities, nations, cultures, and lifestyles. Ironically, this momentum of relativization also – inevitably perhaps – prompted the interrogation of the Eurocentrism of poststructuralist theory itself and its anti-humanistic modes of critique, together with an increasingly liberalized approach to academic study, in particular in the humanities. If a secular, universalist humanism had lost favor among comparativists in the heyday of high theory, the signs today are that this kind of humanism is back in full swing, with a self-conscious and tyrannical mission of tolerance.

What happens when a categorical (or hypothetical) imperative such as tolerance is placed on an academic discipline? This question can obviously not be answered within the space of this chapter, though some difficulties are readily apparent in the context of comparative literature. Let me raise them briefly:

Timelines

Whose and which chronologies should define and delineate the temporal layout of the field of knowledge? The familiar grid of periodization, more or less following the

signposts of antiquity, medieval, Renaissance/early modern, the Enlightenment/the long eighteenth century, Victorian/Realism/nineteenth century, modern, and contemporary is increasingly unsatisfactory because it is provincial. The challenge posed by tolerance is obvious here: how can a discipline attempt to be inclusionary when a specific national or regional timeline of literature continues to dominate? If, as Auerbach claims in the mid 1940s, even Pearl Buck's Chinese peasants have lost their exoticness, can other timelines be included in comparative literature without being simply peripheralized or subsumed under the more conventional signposts? For instance, as we become engaged with the currently trendy notion of world literature in Euro-America, part of this engagement should involve not simply adding non-Western samples to the familiar Euro-American timeline for variety but also finding out what world literature means or has already meant in other world situations, other literary and cultural timelines.

Questions regarding linguistic multiplicity

Whose relation to languages (native and foreign) should determine how linguistic multiplicity is defined? As the knowledge of different languages is so obviously valuable, it is easy to forget that language is not necessarily a countable unit and that plurality resides within single languages as well as among different, enumerable national languages. For comparativists, the question posed by tolerance is perhaps not so much the additional languages that should be learned (since that is a disciplinary given) as it is the condition of monolingualism: how are we to include, rather than exclude, monolingualism within the comparative study of literature? And, in a discipline that is explicitly committed to translingualism and translation, how could the principle of tolerance help us rethink the tendency to fetishize and privilege linguistic nativism, wherein native speakers' linguistic abilities and skills tend to be presumed to be naturally superior to those of non-native speakers?

Discourse networks

How to continue studying literature when it has become entirely possible, and for some logical, to view literature as one type of discourse in a generative network of discourses? Can literature still be defined and defended in terms of what is specifically or authentically literary, or should it be regarded simply as writing, text, technology, medium, with a kind of specificity that is always constituted in relation to, relative to …? As Bruno Latour (1993) writes in *We Have Never Been Modern* (in a manner that once again evokes Foucault's reflections on the fantastic Chinese encyclopedia), although certain discourses make perfect sense when understood separately, their being brought into proximity with one another can render them unintelligible or nonsensical. To push Latour's logic to its extreme, might it not be precisely the unintelligibility or nonsense that results from such proximity – itself an increasingly inescapable condition in the age of digitization – that could help reinvigorate the

debate of the literary? Conversely, as the literary is by turns studied alongside science, ethnography, visual culture, religion, and other kinds of discourses, is tolerance, finally, simply a matter of (ap)proximate, neighborly discourse networks? And, in what amounts to the same question: by saying "yes" to everything, is tolerance simply another name for Foucault's notion of (bio)power?

Well before the more recent disciplinary self-reform in comparative literature, a secularized notion of representation, understood, in accordance to Auerbach's vision, as the representation of a polyphonic universal humanity, already informed a work such as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, first published in 1978. Although Said was consistently critical of Western literary and cultural representation for being complicit with the military and political agendas of Western imperialism, once we reclassify the objectionable features of Orientalism, as Said analyzes them, as examples of cultural bigotry and ethnocentric bias, Said's critique must be recognized as an eminently logical sequel to Auerbach's work. Not surprisingly, *Mimesis* was acknowledged by Said as a book that had profoundly influenced his thinking (see Said, 2003: pp. xx–xxii; 1997: pp. 68–69, 72–73; 2006: pp. 5–9; 1994: pp. 43–61).

In the introduction he provided for the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Auerbach's book, Said calls it "the finest description we have of the millennial effects of Christianity on literary representation" (Said "Introduction": pp. xxii). In his magisterial appraisal of Auerbach's landmark study, Said empathizes with Auerbach's historical situation as a Prussian-Jewish intellectual forced into exile by mid-twentieth century German National Socialism. Rather than subjecting Auerbach's claims about literature to any harsh criticism, Said chose to interpret them imaginatively – indeed, literarily – as the flaws of a tragic hero:

> the triumph of *Mimesis*, as well as its inevitable tragic flaw, is that the human mind studying literary representations of the historical world can only do so as all authors do – from the limited perspective of their own time and their own work. (Said, 2003: pp. xxxii)

Its generosity notwithstanding, Said's reading has the effect of subjectivizing Auerbach's work, leaving open the question of the historicality of Auerbach's comparative undertaking.

As Auerbach tells us in the Epilogue, the composition of *Mimesis* took place in the city of Istanbul. Said's incisive comments on this locale of Auerbach's exile are worth citing at length:

> To any European trained principally, as Auerbach was, in medieval and renaissance Roman literatures, Istanbul does not simply connote a place outside Europe. Istanbul represents the terrible Turk, as well as Islam, the scourge of Christendom, the great Oriental apostasy incarnate. Throughout the classical period of European culture Turkey was the Orient, Islam its most redoubtable and aggressive representative [...] The Orient and Islam also stood for the ultimate *alienation* from and opposition to Europe, the European tradition of Christian Latinity, as well as to the putative authority of

ecclesia, humanistic learning, and cultural community. For centuries Turkey and Islam hung over Europe like a gigantic composite monster, seeming to threaten Europe with destruction. To have been an exile in Istanbul at that time of fascism in Europe was a deeply resonating and intense form of exile from Europe. (Said, 2006: p. 6; my emphasis)

In so far as the spotlight remains on Auerbach himself as the tragic hero, Said is quite right to conclude that *Mimesis* is not only "a massive reaffirmation of the Western cultural tradition," as it has often been assumed to be, but also:

a work built upon a critically important *alienation* from it, a work whose conditions and circumstances of existence are not immediately derived from the culture it describes with such extraordinary insight and brilliance but built rather on an agonizing distance from it. (Said, *The World*: p. 8; my emphasis)

Even so, Said's repeated use of the word "alienation" alerts us to considerations that go beyond Auerbach's personal circumstances. Said's interventions on behalf of the non-Western world, in particular, make it difficult to overlook another important aspect of alienation: for a (re)construction of the European literary canon of its scope and scale, *Mimesis*, despite being written in Istanbul, bears little trace of the legacies left by the Arabs, the Turks, and Islam *in Europe*. Should this omission be explained strictly in terms of professional competence (i.e. that Auerbach was a specialist of romance literatures and thus could not have been held responsible for not addressing Islamic literatures and cultures)?[7] Or should it be understood as the limit to the secularist, modern Western ethics of tolerance, an ethics that aspires toward redeeming all of humanity and that nonetheless, *perhaps because of the acquiescence to exclusionism that constitutes its fundamental approach to alterity*, must in the end ban/bar some from entry?

This "tragically flawed" alienation – in the literal sense of rendering alien – of some peoples and cultures from Auerbach's monumental literary history resonates a bit too well with the anguish Auerbach expresses in the 1952 essay "Philology and *Weltliteratur*" at the superabundance of non-European literatures and languages emerging on the modern historical stage. "There is no more talk now […] of a spiritual exchange between peoples, of the refinement of customs and of a reconciliation of races," Auerbach writes sadly of the postwar era; advocating the Goethean ideal of *Weltliteratur* as "a conception of the diverse background of a common fate," he holds onto the hope of a positive effect (cohesion, mutual understanding, common purpose) resulting from this conception, adding that such an effect "might […] help to make us accept our fate with more equanimity *so that we will not hate whoever opposes us* – even when we are forced into a posture of antagonism" (Auerbach, "Philology and *Weltliteratur*": pp. 6–7; my emphasis).[8] For him as a philologist steeped in the European romance tradition, the masses of the non-European world clearly presented, at the dawn of the cold war, a threat rather than a source of comfort.

If Auerbach's story of literature can be understood as the forerunner of the situation in which comparative literature finds itself today – a loose discourse network sprouting from an incessant proliferation, intermingling, and hybridization of subjects – his

remarks just cited above also bring home the kinship between the democratizing impulse and an older human condition, hatred. That kinship would be a good way of explaining why literature, understood in the broad modern sense of fictional composition, continues to be relevant in one significant sense. As tolerance becomes the global mediation currency for human transactions, with an ever renewable start-up point or zero balance known as a common humanity, it is the human subjects who are unable to participate in tolerance – whose accounts are messy and insolvent, as it were – who pose the greatest fascination. Cast in the Auerbachian terms of linguistic style, these would be subjects who refuse to speak or are incapable of speaking other than in their own idioms, whose styles remain elusively antagonistic, idiotic, monolingual, or untranslatable. As we read fiction circulating around the globe, such mutant relations to the ethics of tolerance may take on the import of a kind of alterity, one that remains outside the religious, philosophical, literary, and cultural-political trajectories charted by Christian benevolence and its secularist avatars. Between the joyously nihilistic destabilization of the human as such and the humanism of the Auerbachian literary paradigm, a rupture persists, prompting a line of flight. Even if minor, this line of flight will likely remain a vital force in comparative literature's continual self-invention.

NOTES

1 Hereafter references to Auerbach's book will be taken from the 2003 edition.
2 Passages of this essay that pertain to Auerbach have been adapted for the present one.
3 For a well-known discussion of Abraham's story in terms of a distinction between ethics and faith, see Kierkegaard.
4 It should be noted that Auerbach consistently contrasted the Christian origins of Western literature with the Hellenic, and that, for this reason perhaps, he did not highlight the differences between Judaism and Christianity. In the parameters he set up, "Judeo-Christian" and "Christian" seem interchangeable.
5 For this point, see especially Chapters eight and eleven of *Mimesis*, on Dante and Rabelais respectively.

6 Using as his example the depiction (in the Gospel according to Saint Mark) of Peter's denial of Jesus, Auerbach describes how Christianity spread by gradually detaching itself from more ethnically specific (Judaic) elements. "To be sure, for a time its effectiveness was hampered by practical obstacles. For a time the language as well as the religious and social premises of the message restricted it to Jewish circles. Yet the negative reaction which it aroused in Jerusalem, both among the Jewish leaders and among the majority of the people, forced the movement to embark upon the tremendous venture of missionary work among the Gentiles, which was characteristically begun by a member of the Jewish diaspora, the Apostle Paul. With that, an adaptation of the message

to the preconceptions of a far wider audience, its detachment from the special preconceptions of the Jewish world, became a necessity and was effected by a method rooted in Jewish tradition but now applied with incomparably greater boldness, the method of revisional interpretation. *The Old Testament was played down as popular history and as the code of the Jewish people and assumed the appearance of a series of 'figures,' that is of prophetic announcements and anticipations of the coming of Jesus and the concomitant events*" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 48, my emphasis). An English version of Auerbach's famous essay "Figura" can be found in Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (see Said, "Introduction": pp. xx–xxii).

7   Auerbach was candid about his choices of texts: "the great majority of the texts were chosen at random, on the basis of accidental acquaintance and personal preference rather than in view of a definite purpose. Studies of this kind do not deal with laws but with trends and tendencies, which cross and complement one another in the most varied ways" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 556). In response to the question about his book's relation to German literature, he wrote: "The preponderance of Romance material in *Mimesis* is to be explained not only because of the fact that I am a Romanist, but rather above all because in most periods the Romance literatures are more representative of Europe than are, for example, the German" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 570).

8   As a philologist, Auerbach was preoccupied in this essay with the methodological problem of synthesis, but the overtones of alarm and pessimism at a changing world are clear (see Said, *Beginnings, pp.* 68–69; *Culture, p.* 45; *Mimesis*, p. xvi). See also Mufti, who argues that Said's secular criticism should be understood as being rooted in a minority-exilic conception of culture – that is, that it is aimed not so much at religion *per se* as at forms of majoritarian thinking such as nationalism.

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2
Why Compare?

David Ferris

Indiscipline, je pense à vous

In an essay written for the most recent of the American Comparative Literature Association's (A.C.L.A.) ten year reports on the discipline, I addressed the nature of this Association's recurring series of reports as embodying a logic of *indiscipline* that afflicts not only this field of study but also, more generally, the humanities (Ferris). I fully intended not to return to the subject since it seemed to me then that this logic had become so entrenched that Comparative Literature was no longer capable of discerning the questions posed by its critical practice. As a result, I predicted then, and still hold to this prediction, that the A.C.L.A.'s habit of examining the state of "discipline" could only repeat the same result like a most forlorn Odysseus destined to embark every ten years or so on a new adventure to burn some other Troy into the past one more time. The heroic achievements of these reports have now left in their wake Greece, Europe, multiculturalism, and soon the world and its globe, and all in the interest of connecting Comparative Literature to the prevailing object of contemporary critical emphasis.[1] That Comparative Literature has lacked the discipline to avoid repeating itself in this recurrent exercise is an effect of what I referred to as its *indiscipline*. While this word could be taken up as embodying what many see as a positive attribute of the field – its lack of definition – it was used to indicate quite the opposite: a lack of definition is actually a limitation not an unbounded horizon. This is nowhere more present than in Comparative Literature's pursuit of the world as a place of boundless promise when in fact that pursuit is only a more extensive expression of an imprecise methodological task, namely, comparison, that is present across the humanities at large but whose effects are concentrated to an extraordinary degree within Comparative Literature. Having said this, it should also be pointed out

that it is Comparative Literature's gift to be able to recognize this limit even if it should repeatedly succumb to it. This double aspect and its relation to the current situation of the humanities, their sense of crisis and loss of value, is what underpins this return to the question of Comparative Literature's *indiscipline*. The relation between this indiscipline and the current sense of crisis in the humanities is the subject of this chapter. This crisis will be examined as the effect of the comparative project so singularly embodied by Comparative Literature, a project that simultaneously demands and denies that the humanities have, either collectively or alone, their own proper object of study. It is such a sense of crisis that now raises fundamental questions about the task of comparison within the humanities, in particular, the extent to which this task has contributed to the ineffectiveness experienced by the humanities when called upon to justify their existence. For this reason alone, it is now imperative to ask: why compare?

The contemporary situation of the humanities now resembles more and more the history that Comparative Literature has always known. The sense of crisis that René Wellek inserted into the history of Comparative Literature has now migrated across the humanities as the latter is increasingly faced with the question well known to this field: what is its object of study, that is, what guides the contemporary significance of the humanities when the past can no longer assure such significance? The question is even more pressing at a moment when a pervasive sense of the decline of the humanities only seems capable of cultivating a mood of crisis and anxiety-laden self-reflection. The need to respond to this question hangs over conferences such as the one organized by the Cambridge University's Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities in July 2009, as well as events such as a recent lecture, entitled "What about the Humanities?," at Cornell's Society for the Humanities by Don Randel, president of the Mellon Foundation (Randel, 2010). The growing presence of these events is the sign of an anxiety that has spread beyond Comparative Literature despite the latter's success at containing such anxiety by constitutionally internalizing it in the form of a report on what Comparative Literature now is or what it wants to be (until the arrival of the next report).[2] Unfortunately, now, neither Comparative Literature nor the humanities have the luxury to debate their own self-definition. Now, that definition is being made on their behalf as evidenced by the closing or downgrading of Comparative Literature and humanities departments and programs and the dissolution of existing humanities departments into marriages of fiscal convenience – an unthinkable option at the time of Comparative Literature's expansion in the 1970s. But, it is not just the cultural side of the humanities that is being affected: the philosophy department at Middlesex University, despite its high ranking, was deemed unsustainable and the decision was made in 2010 to "phase out" the program (Driscoll, 2010; Morgan, 2010). While it is easy to lament a managerial or corporate ethos as the cause of these decisions, this simply displaces the problem away from the humanities themselves while attempting to rally round some core value that is the opposite of all managerial practices. Identifying such a core was the subject of Randel's lecture. Significantly, in order to do so, Randel suggested that:

> … we declare a moratorium on the use of the phrase "the crisis in the humanities."
> There are too many other real crises to go around. Take for example the nation's political
> life […] This raises more questions on the criteria to determine the value of the humani-
> ties. […] The current economic stress simply brings to the fore even more forcefully
> the wish to justify everything in instrumental terms.

Randel's sense that the rhetoric of crisis is at best a diversionary practice in the humanities recalls Paul de Man's contention that this rhetoric of crisis is the symptom of a deeper rooted question (Paul de Man, 1983: pp. 3–19).

Recent reflections on the humanities have affirmed that they, like Comparative Literature are faced with a problem, but they have not posed the question whether these self-reflexive examinations are themselves part of the crisis they proclaim to the extent that they sustain the humanities at the limit of their significance (and precisely in order to sustain this limit so that such reflections remain repeatable). Nor have they critically explored the link between an economic and an intellectual crisis. Has the current economic crisis become confused with what was already a problem for the humanities, namely, the question of their significance, the question of what they can be compared to? Do the economic terms of the current crisis obscure the extent to which the humanities have sustained themselves? Here the humanities has taken its lead from Comparative Literature by making uncertainty about how to define their significance become the subject of a limitless reflection, in effect, transforming Cartesian self doubt into a cultural project but forgetting, as Kierkegaard pointed out, to question the instrumental purpose of that doubt, namely, to develop the "content of a concept" where no content was evident or could be positively agreed upon. But, is this questioning even possible now for the humanities? And, if not, what happens to Comparative Literature which has long thrived on this project that links theoretical doubt to cultural and critical significance? In this current climate, has the "crisis" of Comparative Literature now been revealed as only useful within this field? When generalized to the humanities, does this sense of recurrent crisis as the ground of self-definition expose the weakness that now makes Comparative Literature (as well as the humanities) become the opportunistic target of crises not of its own making?

Like the humanities, Comparative Literature is now positioned at a point where institutional economics, value, and limit coincide. With the convergence of these three forces, it is no longer simply a matter of discerning how the logic of *indiscipline* affects this field of study since what has been claimed as a strength from within Comparative Literature threatens to become a liability in the broader context of the humanities. However, despite the migration of its practices and interests across other fields of study, there is an important difference to note between Comparative Literature and the humanities. More than many fields in the humanities, Comparative Literature is poised between a debate over what it should examine (Europe, multiculturalism, world literature, for example) and its engagement with the methodological basis of humanistic study, an engagement experienced through the limit that this methodol-

ogy and its *indiscipline* imposes upon various fields of study in the humanities. Only by grasping this capacity, can Comparative Literature avoid having to justify, one more time, its significance by displacing its methodological awareness into this or that body of literature or cultural production no matter what that body is defined as being. Resisting the desire to reenact this displacement allows Comparative Literature to pose the question of the limit within which reflection on the value of the humanities has been confined. Taking up this question is crucial at a moment when the humanities are being transformed into economic instruments – precisely the moment when the right to be educated has become the selling of that right.

Crisis

The limit that induces hyper-reflection as well as a sense of crisis in the humanities is one that Comparative Literature has recognized as fundamental to what it does even when it has tried to displace this recognition. René Wellek already put his finger on this fundamental problem in 1963 when he wrote that Comparative Literature "has not been able to establish a distinct subject matter and a specific methodology." Wellek goes on to observe that Comparative Literature "has been saddled with an obsolete methodology." The obsolete methodology he refers to is at best a naïve kind of comparison ("myths and legends," "ideas which nations have of each other," and approaches that Wellek brands as "positivistic factualism") that does not inquire seriously into the nature of the object it studies (Wellek, 1963: pp. 284–285). For Wellek, the path out of this obsolete practice of comparison lies in abandoning "the artificial distinction between 'comparative' and 'general' literature." The consequence of this position, Wellek continues, is that:

> there are no proprietary rights and no recognized "vested interests" in literary scholarship. Everybody has the right to study any question even if it is confined to a single work in a single language and everybody has the right to study even history or philosophy or any other topic. (Wellek, 1963: pp. 290–291)

With this remark Wellek opens literary study, and also the humanities, to the kind of critical and cultural relativism he was later to deplore in the form of literary and critical theory (Wellek, 1983: 1–8). For Wellek, crisis is seemingly dissolved in a definitional openness about Comparative Literature but this openness is what came back to haunt both Comparative Literature and the humanities as a limit. This is not the kind of limit commonly associated with the material emphasized by this or that field of study (such as literature for literary study, and so on). It is a limit produced by a lack of definition about what constitutes and drives Comparative Literature as a field of critical inquiry. As such, it is paradoxical. Yet, this has not stopped the reiteration of this lack of definition, after Wellek, as possessing the positive value of a limitlessness in which the significance and the strength of the field is enshrined. These

assertions have their counterpart within the humanities when they are framed as a quintessential aspect of what it is to be human (as limitless possibility becomes the idea under which the value of the being human is asserted). Despite their ideological character, such claims have now become ineffective when made in the current context defined as it is by crises that are separately intellectual and economic. The appeal to the value of the human has become so obviously transparent that the humanities as an organizing term may be nothing more than the historical remainder of another time and era or, at worst, a catch-all term for everything in the university that does not privilege the illusion of quantifiable examination or a mathematical model of symbolic purity. Eschewing such options, the humanities are left to make evaluative claims about their own significance, claims that frequently take the form of asserting the value of the humanities by proclaiming the value invested in the materials they examine (literature, art, history, thought). As Randel bluntly stated, "humanists have long believed that the study of the humanities essentially required no justification. The importance of the humanities was self evident." Self-evidence is no longer evidence since the terrain on which significance is now played out requires not only economic metaphors but also criteria that are brutally economic (Weber, 2010).[3] In the face of this historical transformation (a history that moves from humanism, to politics, to economics as the key source of its significance), the humanities, like Comparative Literature, is left with what Walter Benjamin would have seen as an appeal to an auratic redeemer: a concept of the humanities in which literature, art, etc., look back at us with their, or rather, our value in a personification that is at the heart of auratic reception: "Experience of the aura thus arises from the fact that a response characteristic of human relationships is transposed to the relationship between humans and inanimate or natural objects" (Benjamin, 2006: 4.338). For Comparative Literature, did Europe, multiculturalism, the globe provide no more than images for the auratic self-reception of this field? Why, within this field, has the politics of this *mode* of reception never been raised but always displaced by reference to the identities involved?

   The displacement of value into the object examined is more easily sustained in the case of those fields of study whose title actually names an object to which a classified body of material responds, such as English Literature, History, and so on. Since, in distinction to these fields, Comparative Literature foregrounds itself as a method, a more problematic issue comes to the fore: while mimicking the naming of an object, the title of Comparative Literature actually indicates a claim to method. As Natalie Melas has recalled for us, Lane Cooper pointed out this confusion between method and object in the 1920s and suggested resolving this question by adopting the name Comparative Study of Literature (Melas, 2007: p. 1; Cooper, 1942: p. 75).[4] What Cooper's desire for clarity in the name of this field points to is not so much that Comparative Literature is misnamed (we can all agree that there is no such thing as a literature that is *comparative* rather than Russian, Chinese, etc.) but rather, his remarks locate a methodological basis for this field in the task of comparing. It is this task that Comparative Literature can offer for reflection in a moment that invites the

question, "why compare?" A question whose answer is not an invitation to endless analogy nor is it the occasion for the bemused answer that comparatists don't really compare anymore (to be bemused here is to confuse specific acts of comparison belonging to a particular time in the history of Comparative Literature with a task whose significance is more general than this field). So, why compare?

The importance of this question is that it names a task that informs the humanities as a whole. In this respect, Comparative Literature poses the question of the significance of the humanities in general. This is because methods define a discipline while objects studied merely define a field of study. Here, the foregrounding of comparison in Comparative Literature highlights the methodological basis of the fields that comprise the humanities and, in so doing, implicates those fields within the logic of *indiscipline* to which Comparative Literature has recurrently turned whenever it evades the question of its own limit. The humanities are a comparative endeavor since their fundamental stake is that whatever is produced in the name of art, culture, literature, history, or thought has been historically grounded in an answer to the question of what it is like to be human, a question that immediately sets up a conflict about the right of this or that claim to such a title. In short, this is a conflict about the right to define the human subject according to a particular image. And, even if works of art refuse this claim – as is the case with automatic writing or art based solely on the dictates of chance or mechanical production – it has been the task of their political, social, and academic interpretation to re-institute that claim, namely, the significance of the humanities resides in the reflection of the human subject. And, the method for sustaining that reflection has not ceased to be comparative.

The fact that Comparative Literature names such a method as the attribute defining its field of study indicates the extent to which it is faced with the choice of either reflecting upon or embodying this fundamental task within the humanities. It is thus a matter of utmost concern to the future of the humanities whether or not the history of Comparative Literature's own response to the fact that it is grounded in a method rather than this or that subject can be avoided. The choice facing the future of Comparative Literature is then whether it can bring focus to the methodological basis of humanistic study or whether it will displace this opportunity, once again, by identifying yet another body of material in which to relocate its comparative practices: Europe, multiculturalism, globalization, economics … as reflection becomes simply another mirror in which to see itself. If it does the former, then the crisis of definition into which it periodically places itself can be seen as a structure of its history, as a means by which it registers a fundamental issue at the center of its practice. By doing so, it raises the possibility of articulating its significance, not by opposing what it has been, but exposing the institutional ideology that defines value through the production of crisis. If it does the latter, then it remains an *indiscipline* willfully entrapped within the repetition of a practice whose history is driven by strategies of self-evasion.

It is true that Comparative Literature is not the only field of study within the humanities that now engages in a reflection on it is own significance. As Haun Saussy

has argued the triumph of Comparative Literature has been its replication within many of the fields of study that make up the humanities (see Saussy, 2006: pp. 3–5). While Saussy is referring to the presence across many fields in the humanities of two emphases that have defined Comparative Literature, theory and transnationalism, another symptomatic aspect of Comparative Literature has accompanied this proliferation: a questioning of what constitutes a field of study within the humanities when there no longer appears to be a limit to what can migrate from one field to another. The comparative drive helped Comparative Literature become the preeminent field for theory and transnational inquiry, a drive that placed Comparative Literature in the position of reflecting on what it means to study literature in distinction to a practice that preferred to limit a literature to its historical and national geography. Yet, within this comparative drive, as Saussy recognizes, there remains a weakness: a loss of identity and specificity which occurs when the generality of comparison turns on the boundaries that have protected the fields of the humanities from themselves since the division of the modern university into departmental categories – a decision that ensured administrative effectiveness in the guise of intellectual discipline. Comparative Literature's option in this situation is either to succumb or to recognize that to compare also means to ask what literature is in terms of our critical relation to it rather than ask what it represents (which means what it is comparable to).

The question of what comparison *should* be is legible across the self-reflexive exercise begun by the A.C.L.A. in 1965 when the first of its reports on the discipline was completed.[5] After the 1975 Greene report, this exercise has taken the form of a collection of essays in response to the lead essay. In the case of both these two later reports, the hesitancy of "an" in the title should not be overlooked – as if uncertainty about the context provided by a given age were already present not to mention a lack of confidence about evoking this or that age as an adequate response to questions about, as the A.C.L.A. puts it, the "state of discipline." Already in their titles, these reports broadcast their contingency as well as the dependence of Comparative Literature on its contemporary critical context. The gap in reports between 1975 and 1993 is significant in this respect since this period marks the time in which Comparative Literature had an enormous influence on defining an age of literary study rather than the other way around. It would have been ludicrous to have written a report under the title "Comparative Literature in an Age of Theory" since the two were largely synonymous for a time. To an increasing degree these reports reflect anxiety about what Comparative Literature is and the significance that can be attached to whatever the field was, is, or should be. From this anxiety, the rhetoric of crisis springs as a means of displacing precisely what this anxiety is responding to: namely, comparison's inability to account theoretically for its own practice except by the extension of that practice.

As stated above, these moments of self-reflection are no longer restricted to Comparative Literature but have become increasingly common for other fields, especially English, as well as for the humanities in general. This sense of a crisis within the humanities and uncertainty about how to address a future while preserving the

past (itself a recipe for perpetuating crisis) has prompted the pursuit of new areas of study whose contemporary presence seems to guarantee a future for the humanities. Foremost among these is the as yet poorly defined field of digital humanities – a field whose difference from past analogic practices would seem to ring the end of the comparative era in the humanities. Unfortunately, the consequences of conceiving the humanities in digital terms remain largely unexamined despite the pursuit of their promise within many universities as a panacea of sorts for the current situation of the humanities. The question that remains pending here is whether the change from analogue to digital media is accompanied by a change in how the humanities perceives its significance or whether the humanities as a discipline has stuck to the longstanding sense of its own significance and simply extended its horizon to other forms while remaining unchanged by those forms.[6] What this question embodies is a reservation about the role of confusing technological newness with a change of perception and whether this confusion is the only means available to salvage the humanities from themselves or whether the persistence of analogical, comparative means of analysis is unavoidable and is simply imported into digital material. If the latter is true, then the central question to be addressed concerns why the comparative method has successively invited these crisis-like moments of self-reflection as a means of articulating the significance of not just the field of Comparative Literature but also, now, the humanities at large. This is the question already posed by the history of Comparative Literature's displacement into a series of contexts as it is swallowed up by a desire to transcend its peculiar relation to discipline and field, a relation that has now passed institutionally to the rise of interdisciplinary centers. If these centers are to avoid the rehearsal of crisis as a means of sustaining their futures, then they must also avoid becoming sites for the endless rearrangement or reflection of perceived and imagined contexts. This is particularly true in the case of the humanities where interdisciplinary work now runs the risk of looking like rearranging different colored deck chairs on the Titanic rather than any radical departure from what has always been done across and between this or that field of the humanities.[7]

Compare

Given this sense of crisis in the humanities, what is the role of a Comparative Literature when its guiding task no longer appears to be sustainable? Or to put this question more bluntly, *why compare*? To recognize what remains at stake in this question, an understanding of the function of the task of comparison and what it addresses is first necessary.

The task of comparison is a task that originates in relation to a world. It is not a task that belongs to the world despite the current tendency to see the comparative part of Comparative Literature as if the words "world" and "comparative" were so interchangeable that no real difference can be discerned as one is translated *as* the other because one is so comparable to the other. This translation drives the imperative

that Comparative Literature should now become "World Literature" as it extends what it can compare but does not change the comparative practice by which it has always operated. It also remains a challenge to distinguish sociological and practical forces from this development since this turn to the world has as much to do with an attempt to address the precarious position of literary study as well as the precarious future of Comparative Literature within the contemporary university. But, whatever motivates this drive, the fact remains that embedded within this drive there resides the claim of a methodology with a limitless extension of subject matter across space (see Weber, 2010: p.1). The terms of this confusion are complex since both the method as well as this extension draw upon the world for their significance. Accordingly, it needs to be clarified how comparison arises in a relation to the world that is different from its conceptualization as the world – precisely now that Comparative Literature and other fields are claiming global practices.

The point at which this worldly task and the act of cultural interpretation first emerge in an unambiguously positive way can be discerned in a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* – the founding text of western poetics in the sense that it is the first text in this tradition that argues for the significance of the poetic in a world that exists or can exist. In this passage, Aristotle claims a comparative relation between the image and what exists in the world in order to establish the ubiquity of the mimetic intention he wishes to proclaim on behalf of literature: "The reason why we enjoy seeing likenesses [*eikonas*] is that, as we look, we learn and infer what each is, for instance, this because of that [*hóti hoûtos hekeînos*]" (Aristotle, 1927: 48b, ll. 15–18). Comparison is here a form of knowledge that is rooted in likenesses, in the fact that there is or could be someone or something to which the image of a person or thing refers. Significance is then invested in what exists in the world. Aristotle, however, also extends this significance to what is comparable to what exists in the world. With this step Aristotle breaks with the Platonic understanding of comparison rooted in what is truly real, namely, the ideal. To do so, Aristotle introduces two levels of comparison: one that is closed and one that is open. The first, the historical one, is closed because it is limited to what already exists. The second remains open since it is defined in terms of possibility: it is what could have already existed. However, the possibility of this second comparison is always rooted in the indisputable factual truth of the first. This means that what Aristotle describes as possibility here is open to the extent that it adheres to the facticity of the first. It is therefore an openness within limit. Here, the sense of limit referred to at the beginning of this chapter returns: that a lack of definition is actually a limit not an unbounded horizon. How the second level of comparison becomes meaningful is described by Aristotle when he distinguishes literature from history writing:

> The writings of Herodotus could be put into verse and yet would still be a kind of history, whether written in metre or not. The real difference is this: that one tells what happened (*genomena*) and the other what might happen (*genoito*). For this reason poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give

general truths while history gives particular facts. By a "general truth" I mean the sort of thing that a certain type of man will do or say either probably or necessarily (*kata to eikos he to anankaion*). (Aristotle, 1927: 51b, ll. 1–7)

With this general truth, Aristotle gives comparison a significance that appears to be unbounded; however, it is only meaningful as long as it adheres to the example of the first historical comparison. Here, the meaning of a general truth lies in its comparison to the knowledge of particular facts since it is only in this comparison that general truth can claim to be more than mere fiction. For example, a general truth is something that could have happened, it thus relies upon a double status: it is what didn't happen but it is something that does not contradict what happens or happened since it relies on being like these for its meaning. Aristotle makes this absolutely clear when he refers to the use of real names in tragedy as opposed to the use of names that define types in comedy:

> In tragedy, on the other hand, they keep to real names. The reason is that the possible is persuasive (*tithanon esti to dunaton*). If a thing has not happened, we do not yet believe in its possibility, but what has happened is obviously possible. Had it been impossible, it would not have happened. (Aristotle, 1927: 51b, ll. 15–20)

In tragedy, a real name, that is, the name of someone who existed, lends factual possibility to the person portrayed. Here, the relation of what is real (the name of someone who exists or existed) to what is not real (the fictional character existing only in a literary form) is based on a comparison between what exists and what is like that existence. Aristotle's extension of comparison sets up the possibilities of histories that are not, in the strict sense, historical, yet they remain within the bounds of historical understanding. This point is crucial. It places a non-existing event or person within a fundamentally historical frame. Comparison in this respect is not an innocently aesthetic exercise (we *like* likenesses). It is codified in a fundamentally historical account of meaning as the justification of its existence. This then means that, for Aristotle, comparison is driven by an essentially historical purpose even when it deals with non-historical material such as poetic or cultural productions. Comparison is the mode in which our critical discourse occurs as our reliance on the phenomenological language of analogy, metaphor, in short, of saying what literature is like or not like, confirms.

Controlling a potentially wayward fictionality by bringing it under the umbrella of a general truth comparable to historical fact indicates the extent to which Aristotle's account of comparison is itself circumscribed by Plato's rejection of the artistic mimesis practiced by poets and dramatists, a mimesis that is, in effect, a simulacrum of comparison. We tend to read this relation backwards, as if Aristotle's interpretation of fiction as historical possibility laid to rest the challenge to comparison Plato perceived within artistic imitation. But, even within this history it is crucial to recognize that Aristotle changes the terms in which fiction is understood by comparing art to

history but he does not question the analogy between history and literature through which this takes place. Such an analogy is simply traced back to a universal, natural tendency to compare as the basis of the act of imitation. To reveal what this refusal to question is confronting, it is necessary to return to Plato but not to the infamous passage in which the poets and dramatists are expelled. That passage is a distraction. Rather, Plato's the allegory of the cave is the decisive passage for this question since what is at stake in this allegory is the existence of comparison as a learned rather than natural activity.

Despite no reference to this passage as an allegory by Plato, the tradition has rightly identified Plato's account of comparison as necessitating the serial character of allegorical presentation, that is, a presentation that enacts a movement in time in order to recuperate time within a defined space – whether Plato's cave, Europe, world, etc. This is precisely the step Aristotle evades by his appeal to the naturalness of the comparative task because it is innate to humans. In distinction, Plato's allegory recognizes the necessity of leading its victims to the world in order to enact comparison as a mode of knowledge. Unlike Aristotle, Plato recognizes a temporal element in the establishment of comparison as a mode of knowledge. This temporality is given in the form of a narrative in which Plato first describes how those who have been chained in the cave are set free in order to see the source of the images projected on the wall. This provides the occasion for an initial comparison: no longer viewing shadows, the freed prisoner of the cave now views images that are "more true" [*alethestera*]. Yet, his understanding of these images, and thus of comparison, is thwarted by the effect of the fire that prevents him from seeing how its light causes the images to be projected as shadows. As a result, the freed prisoner concludes that the shadows, which were all he could see previously, are in fact more true than the images, their source, that have been revealed to him. This rejection of how the cave functions allows a second comparison to arise when what is normative (prior knowledge, the world as it was known) is judged to be better. Before, the world of the prisoners was all that was known – now that world is known comparatively as a better world. This marks the first step in Plato's allegory; it establishes a comparison in which what is known as the world is privileged over a recognition of the conditions of knowing that world (precisely the issue that has afflicted Comparative Literature as a field – the confusion of method with object of study). The knowledge this prisoner refused now has to be appropriated in another way. This sets up the second attempt at comparison when the prisoner is dragged out of the cave and into the world of daylight.

This second step aims to reinstate what Plato's text had first presented as "more true" – that the images are truer than the shadows on the wall. This part of the allegory is well known; it recounts how the eyes of the prisoner are at first incapable of seeing anything but by degrees they are able to discern the world in a movement that progresses from viewing shadows to viewing the sun itself:

> And at first he would most easily discern the shadows and, after that, the likenesses or reflections in water of men and other things, and later, the things themselves, and from

these he would go on to contemplate the appearances in the heavens and heaven itself, more easily by night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than by day the sun and the sun's light […] And so, finally, I suppose, he would be able to look upon the sun itself and see its true nature, not by reflections in water or phantasms of it in an alien setting, but in and by itself in its own place. (Plato, 1969: 516a–b)

Getting to the point that will establish comparison as knowledge takes time; it takes what Plato calls "habituation [*sunetheia*]" (Plato, 1969: 516a) – precisely what did not occur in the cave. If habituation had been permitted in the cave then the prisoner's passage to an outside world would not be required but then, as Plato's own interpretation of this allegory insists, a false knowledge would have been created. This is why the prisoner must learn what the world is in comparison to his own past. From this learning, comparison emerges as something other than the retreat to the normative, the facticity with which the prisoners view the shadows. The world in this case is not a fact, it is not a self-evident content whose mere existence, however multiple, constitutes its meaningfulness. If it were this content, there would be no need for Plato to imagine the return of this prisoner to the cave; the comparison would already be in force. This return establishes the world as existing in relation to the cave and, in so doing, it indicates how comparison is the method through which a world is affirmed. As Plato makes clear in the following question, the world is not in itself a reservoir of comparison; it takes the negative force of ridicule as well as a rejection of the time in which habituation occurs:

> And before his eyes had recovered – and the adjustment would not be quick – while his vision was still dim, if he had to compete again with the perpetual prisoners in recognizing the shadows, wouldn't he invite ridicule? (Plato, 1969: 516e–517b)

Only by maintaining the blindness of the returning prisoner can the comparison invested in the world be different from what was already described as "more true." The ridicule directed at the returning prisoner by those still imprisoned in the cave is instrumental is producing this comparison but, as the question in which this ridicule is referred to makes plain, this ridicule rests on the possibility that his inability to see what is normative for those prisoners is what invites ridicule. This last step is crucial. The prisoners' ridicule of the returning prisoner is used to make them appear ridiculous. But, what is easily overlooked here is that this ridicule is not directed at what the returning prisoner knows but simply to the blindness that arises from movement between places: cave and world. Isn't this also a repetition of the blindness that made the freed prisoner first prefer the shadows over the images because the brightness of the fire would cause pain to his eyes? Here, in this first failed attempt comparison leads to the reassertion of the normative as comparatively better yet the cause of this comparatively better knowledge has nothing to do with the value or content of that knowledge. The same is true for the second moment when the ridicule of the others is used to affirm what he has learned outside the cave. What then is really at stake in this allegory which twice enacts comparison by curtailing its temporality into

what Plato calls habituation? And, why is it that the world, in Aristotle as well, is consistently called upon to embody a comparison that the world is powerless to affirm?

Why?

With these questions in mind, we can now return to the sense of crisis Comparative Literature adopted before its management of crisis became generalized as a defining trope of the humanities. In effect, what we are witnessing here is the end of an era when this task reigned unseen and unquestioned as the source of significance for the humanities. What sustained this task and what was repeated across its history is what was recognized already in Plato's and Aristotle's account of comparison: the necessity of its embodiment in a world. While Aristotle pursues the task of comparison by insisting that the comparative value of what is without a world is in fact the world, Plato underscores the extent to which this world (and therefore comparison) requires the necessity of effectively negating the experience of temporality if the comparative task is to be established. The purpose of the narrative in the allegory of the cave is to overcome the necessity of accounting for comparison in the form of a narrative. This negation of the temporal and the spatial valuation of the world demanded by this negation is what defines comparison as an essentially localized task. How this occurs in Plato is as follows: temporal adjustment is cut short as the cave becomes the place that asserts the sovereignty of place over time as the decisive element in constituting comparison. Is this why it is only "natural" that Comparative Literature and the humanities should have pursued globalization with such zeal?

The pursuit of world literature and the global is not simply a pursuit of a trope that has migrated throughout the contemporary university. Rather, this pursuit has been the task of comparison from its very beginning. This is why, for Comparative Literature, the significance of world literature is not that there are more literatures, cultures beyond a European canon; its significance is that it fulfils the inmost tendency of the methodological practice that has justified not only the significance of literary study but also the humanities. Armed with a task that derives meaningfulness from its relation to the world, it is not surprising that Comparative Literature and the humanities have sought out an object that promises unbounded comparison. But what remains unrecognized here is that the comparative task that drives this pursuit is what is in crisis as Comparative Literature and the humanities are forced to confront the boundary of their significance. The index to this boundary is already present in the founding move of comparison as Plato enacts it: the prisoner who is freed can only be led to comparison by force both within the cave and when he is led outside the cave. The significant role played by force in this allegory of comparison cannot be overlooked – it occurs four times, preceding each of the scenes in which a prisoner is located in a defined space or a different part of the same space.[8] Each time this forcing occurs, it sets up a scene for comparison. First, the scene in which all the prisoners are described in their chains which establishes one side of the comparison in the third

scene; second, when one prisoner is forced out of his chained position; third, the scene in front of the fire which leads to the comparison of shadow over image when the prisoner who is freed is forced to look at the fire; and fourth, when the same prisoner is dragged to the scene in which the world of daylight will be experienced. Why is comparison preceded by an act of forcing? And, what relation does this have to why we compare?

The presence of forcing is the sign of a difficulty that arises because what is to be compared knows nothing of the task to which it will be submitted. The form in which this has arisen within Comparative Literature has been the turn to an intensive account of a world that it cannot comprehend in its extensiveness. Faced with a multiplicity it cannot master (and when has it ever mastered a more limited multiplicity), Comparative Literature submits the world to the practice of its disavowed European model: two to three national literatures, etc, as if this had ever been a comprehensive engagement with Europe. Here, the extensive drive of the comparative task pulls back while trying to preserve that drive in the face of a challenge of its own making. This intensive turn is also already present in Plato's allegory in the necessity that the freed prisoner returns to the cave in order to enact the comparison that makes the world of daylight fully meaningful. The necessity of this turning back lies in the fact that the world cannot by itself embody comparison either intensively or extensively. This is why the return or turning back is so necessary; the field of comparison is always a circumscribed field of limited historical duration – this is what the A.C.L.A. recognizes in its constitution when it demands a state of the discipline report at an interval equivalent to the historical duration of an Homeric epic. To act in accordance to this constraint is now, clearly, to force another comparison to take place within a circumscribed context – *Comparative Literature in an age of …* The means by which this forcing takes place is not quite as sharp as it is when the freed prisoner returns to the cave and is ridiculed but something like ridicule could easily assert itself if the first A.C.L.A. report is compared to its later examples – especially when the word Eurocentric is so easily available to justify this backward look at a "world" fatally confined to its ideology. Despite the intellectual impasse it re-enacts, there is something this backward look can teach us about why we compare.

To re-enact the restriction that enables comparison is to preserve the field in which comparison is possible. To hold to that field as the embodiment of the comparative task is to risk sustaining the ideological interests that thrive within that field. This is precisely what happens when the limit within which Europe became an object for Comparative Literature is extended to other domains before finally incorporating the largest domain of all, the world. Such is the historical development of Comparative Literature. But, to articulate Europe as limit is to recognize how comparison has moved its field of inquiry in order to avoid facing the conditions of the task it pursues. It has done so in order to deflect attention away from its semblance of method (this semblance is what is articulated by Aristotle's grounding of comparison in a possible history). This deflection also makes a virtue of such semblance as Comparative Literature displays its *indiscipline*. To remain blind to the function of this deflection

it to ignore the limit within which comparison operates – and which forces comparison to be identified with what it compares. This blindness allows ideology to make a claim to history as it pursues another as yet unbounded and apparently uncircumscribed field. Recognition of this limit is what occurs when we proclaim a crisis albeit a crisis whose purpose has been to reset the conditions necessary for its return once the previous dissolution of crisis has run its course. That the humanities are now faced with a crisis of a different order, a crisis that threatens their history (and above all, their ability to persist in a mode of crisis), indicates the extent to which the quasi-method under which they and Comparative Literature have operated can no longer, in a quintessentially Aristotelian move, displace itself into another possible role that is just like the "different but always the same" role it has adopted in the past.

It is here, at this point in the history of the humanities, that another question begins to emerge. It is a question that Comparative Literature has bequeathed to the humanities, the question of whether the force with which the humanities has precipitated its crises remains operational or is simply irrelevant because the terms of what a crisis is no longer belongs to those who are in crisis. Evidence clearly shows that the humanities lack the force to confront a sense of crisis that is not of its own making. The ineffectiveness of its own figurative self-reflection confirms that the humanities no longer have the ideological force to define themselves. Its crises are now at the end of their history and that is not the history that Aristotle calls a general truth: that is, yet another possible arrangement of the past. This impasse, in and of itself is already a step forward since it offers the knowledge that what has been played out in the humanities and Comparative Literature may be no more than a rationality forced to recognize the historical limit to which it owes its existence and to which it always turns. The value of this turn no longer holds as the secular claim of literature to the presumption of a universal value borders on self-ridicule. What then is the fate of the task that sustained this value and its history? Here it is a question of a comparison that concealed its own forceful engagement with the past in order to turn its eyes to a future that saw no impossibility, that could never imagine there would never be another Troy to burn so that it could repeat its tale and live to compare another day. To begin to understand this other question is to begin to understand why we compared.

That there is another question to ask and that it can be articulated in the context of Comparative Literature (rather than displacing Comparative Literature into yet another context, yet another future that repeats its past) is the index of a possibility that has not been chosen. The reasons for this are both institutional and political (here the drive against an undeveloped theoretical moment has played a significant role). These reasons are institutional to the extent that Comparative Literature has sought a status comparable to other long established or more easily established fields in the humanities. This has foreclosed its creation of a context in which the humanities can engage with and be challenged by fields not yet neutralized by the ease with which the modern university channels any source of challenge into the discourse of a name,

into a subject of desire. These reasons are political to the extent that the political offered self-evident truths whose aims could not be challenged. But in an age when politics no longer automatically sets the agenda for what issues or contexts should be addressed, and in an age in which the institution is molded by the advance of global economics as the decisive model (and nowhere is this felt more than in the pursuit of Globalization), Comparative Literature and the humanities run the risk of making the mistake of simply changing politics for economics lest the next boat to the future should leave without them. Instead, should we not ask what crisis has now put economics into the position of the boundless denominator of intellectual work? Is this not a lesson we should have learned from a history that turned to politics when the aesthetic was no longer enough? To compare these moments in our history is to see how the logic of comparison betrays the intellectual project it appears to sustain. If such a project is to survive, the last thing it needs to do is to submit to the ideologies of its contemporary contexts. Rather, it needs to examine its relation to those contexts so that the past does not become, again and again, its betrayal. A reflection on comparison that is capable of interrupting its own unfolding in a mode other than the coercion of crisis would be a start so that our present can make a claim on *why* and avoid the endless repetitions of *what* and *how*. The natural sciences may ask about *what* is in our world, the social sciences may measure *how* we are in that world, we, at least, can ask *why* – and that is why we compare.

NOTES

1   The titles of the two most recent reports have also set the template for their own repetition, "Comparative literature in an Age of X." As economics has now taken on the role that politics has long enjoyed as the significant denominator or our modernity *Comparative literature in an Age of Economics* is entirely possible as the title of the next A.C.L.A. report.

2   Article VI of the A.C.L.A.'s constitution states that "A Report on the State of the Discipline must be issued at least every ten years."

3   Here, as Samuel Weber cogently points out, the espousal of globalization by cultural and literary study does not come without the terms on which globalization operates, and those terms are economic.

4   Wellek comments on this proposal as follows: "There is little use in deploring the grammar of the term and to insist that it should be called 'the comparative study of literature,' since everybody understands the elliptic usage" (1963: p. 290).

5   The Levin Report (1965) is followed by the Greene report (1975), then by the Bernheimer Report (1993) and the Saussy Report (2004). The following statement provides an apt summary of what these reports have become: "reflect the vibrant, often contested, diversity

of comparative literature while chronicling the past decade's scholarship and prompting thought about future directions" (Katznelson and Milner, 2002). However, to return this statement to its proper context, Comparative Literature must be replaced by Political Science. The point here is that these reports belong to an age in which the university and its fields of study have turned inward in order to articulate their value and significance. The occurrence of this exercise beyond the humanities, indicates the residual presence in those disciplines of issues and questions that betray their non-quantitative origins within the university curriculum while also suggesting the extent to which the development of the university and its curriculum takes place within a history that is, in effect, in reaction against the humanities.

6 Institutionally, what appears to have happened is a refutation of what Benjamin thought would be an effect of new technical forms, namely a change in perception. In a recent volume, Timothy Murray, reflects the hesitations that accompany the advent of the digital when he considers the conjunction of the digital and the baroque: "Perhaps they thus stand figurally as if enfolded into one another, thereby signifying the paradox and enigma of analogy itself. Might not we understand analogy as something not simply transcended by digitality but as something deeply cryptic and disturbingly disjunctive that is deeply crucial to digitality's structure and representations?" (Preface: *Digital Baroque* ix).

7 W.J.T. Mitchell (1996: p. 323), also adopts the deck chair figure but limits it to an interdisciplinarity that "systematizes the similarities and differences between artistic media and semiotic codes."

8 "They've been there since childhood, forced (*enankasmenoi*) into the same place" (Plato, 1969: 514a); "When one of them was freed and suddenly compelled/forced (*anankazoito*) to stand up, turn his head" (Plato, 1969: 515c); "And if someone compelled/forced (*anankazoi*) him to look at the light itself" (Plato, 1969: 515d); "And if someone by force dragged (*helkoi*) him away from there, up the rough, steep path" (Plato, 1969: 515e).

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Method and Congruity: The Odious Business of Comparative Literature

David Palumbo-Liu

The analysis of history is not a subject separate from history, but the representations are part of the history, contribute to the history, are active elements in the way that history continues; in the way forces are distributed; in the way people perceive situations, both from inside their own pressing realities and from outside them; if we are saying this is a real method, then the empirical test it's being put to here is that comparable methods of analysis are being applied to situations which are very far apart in space, have many differences of texture, and have very different consequences in the contemporary world. There is an obvious distance from what is happening in the English countryside, or in the English inner cities, to the chaos in Lebanon. Yet nevertheless I think it is true that the method, the underlying method, found a congruity. (Williams, 1989: p. 179)

After he writes this, he mentions the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies. But he is careful not to draw parallels. (Adichie, 2006: p. 104)

Comparisons are odorous. (Shakespeare, 1600: *Much Ado About Nothing* III.v.1)

One of the most important texts of modern comparative literary studies is René Etiemble's *Comparaison n'est pas raison: La crise de la littérature comparée*. Curiously, its English translation, *The Crisis in Comparative Literature*, by Georges Joyaux and Herbert Weisinger, omits the main title. Perhaps it was too objectionable, odd, insufficiently descriptive, not as catchily "timely" as a "crisis." The deleted title is the French translation of the old proverb, "comparisons are odious."[1] Regarding the quotation from *Much Ado About Nothing*, scholars have either taken Shakespeare to be engaging in some sort of wordplay, or they have argued that "odorous" was synonymous with "odious" at that time.[2] However you cut it, the proverb does not comment favorably on our "profession."

The notion that the field was in a state of crisis seemed widespread then, and people's sense of what constituted that "crisis" revolved around similar issues. At the 1958 Comparative Literature Congress in Chapel Hill, René Wellek gave a talk entitled "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" in which he stated that comparative literature as a discipline had "not been able to establish a distinct subject matter and a specific methodology" (see Clements, 1967: p. 284). Precisely the same sentiment is found in Etiemble's short essay, "Littérature comparée ou Comparaison n'est pas raison," which preceded the publication of his book:

> Open an issue of *Comparative Literature*, and *La Revue de la littérature comparée*, the *Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, and the little book that M.-F. Guyard has just published in the series *Que sais-je? – La littérature comparée*, and you will soon see that comparatists don't agree either on an object or a method for their "science." (Etiemble, 1958: p. 155)

Herein lies the main problem I want to address in this chapter. Are comparisons of a comparative literature kind "odious" exactly because they are too unsecured, *undisciplined* by method? The question I want to ask is then, why do it? I will risk a comparison – between Etiemble's essential response to this "crisis" and what ours might be.

Despite its title, the proverb "comparisons are odious" actually is elaborated nowhere in Etiemble's book itself, but rather in the 1958 essay just mentioned. In it he dramatizes a moment at the turn of the century in Paris:

> "Comparisons are odious," they said to Brunetière, when in 1890 he inaugurated lectures in comparative literature {at the Ecole Normale Supérieure} on the rue Ulm. "Fine," retorted Brunetière, "but as long as one is obliged to compare two objects in order to discover which is larger and which is smaller, comparison will remain the most reliable means of arriving at comparative understanding; and comparative understanding will always serve as the basis of complete knowledge." (Etiemble, 1958: p. 166)

Hardly a convincing argument, Brunetière's response is based solely on a kind of logical inevitability and certainly gives no hint at a methodology. We can't help but think comparatively when dealing with two objects, Brunetière and Etiemble both seem to say, but we have no agreed-upon method behind this. What Etiemble gives us instead are goals from which we might extrapolate a method. Here I mention two especially important ones.

First of all, one distinctive part of Etiemble's proposals for comparative literary "reform" found throughout his writings is an anti-chauvinistic program. Responding to the charge leveled against French comparatists that they are too centered on not only French, but specifically eighteenth century French values, tastes, and texts, Etiemble agrees with this charge but then throws it back upon those who make it – he claims that *everyone* seems to be rooted in their own national cultures and languages, and he implies that the lack of consensus around a method might well derive from that fact. He mentions, numerously, the "need to purify oneself of all chauvinistic

pride" (Etiemble, 1958: p. 157). It is only by extricating oneself from one's "pride" and consequent prejudices that one might see the bigger, more capacious picture and, it seems, discern an "object" sufficient to the project of comparative literature. In the section on "method" found in *Comparaison n'est pas raison*, we find mostly prescriptions to eradicate chauvinism – learn more "distant" languages, achieve a broader historical field, etc. – rather than a definition of "method." In sum, given comparative literature's lack of an object and a method, Etiemble approaches the first element of the "crisis" – what our *object* is to be – and then, I argue, infers a method. This is the second element from Etiemble I wish to discuss. The object to be sought is what he calls "*invariants*:"

> Comparative literature seems rich to the degree that it at least allows the discovery of what I will call literary invariants, without which in all ages, everywhere, there would not be a form of beauty. (Etiemble, 1958: p. 166)

The discovery of such "invariants" would do more than give us a literary object for comparative literature, it would defuse and disable the chauvinistic logic that keeps not only comparatists, but all chauvinists, without a common field, and, Etiemble says, bereft of a truly cosmopolitan vision of humanity:

> [The study of invariants] will show […] that the postulates of all racisms are not only criminal, but also inept; and that, despite differences due to history, the structure of languages, and religious dogmas, reliable constants exist by which Man exists, yes, *Man*, beneath the sometimes stupefying diversity of "men." That the same image of the moon presents itself to the French, to the Arabs […] (the list is not exhaustive): the "sickle of gold in a field of stars;" another [example], that of a furrow compared to lines of writing, which I found in Catalan poetry (the works of Joseph Carner), but equally in African verse, which brings me precisely to a mode of writing called *boustrophédon* which Pausanias also knew (he designed a system employed in certain ancient Greek inscriptions), is this not another index, another proof that something in Man functions beyond time and space that helps to define him? (Etiemble, 1988: p. 182–183)

Given this, comparative literature would devise a method to derive from these invariant modes of figuring the world a set of indexes to common humanity. Not a small task in the post-war era of decolonization, dramatically increased migrancy, the redrawing of national borders and the modern invention of nations themselves, and the creation of spheres of influence and new global arrangements of power, all of which seem to militate against a "big picture" not secured by a particular epicenter.

Etiemble gives one other, quite telling example of an "invariant" that gives us another way of imagining what his "method" might look like and the spirit that informs its core. He isolates three projects of nominalism – in ancient Greece, China, and in contemporary France. He considers the case of "*tcheng ming*" (*zhengming*, "the rectification of names") as found in the essay of the same title by Xunzi (ca. 312–230 BC); the late fifth century BC Socratic notion of the "correctness of names" as found

in the *Cratylus*; and finally in the works of his contemporary Francis Ponge (1899–1988). The first thing he does is to get away from the obligations of "influence studies," which he generally found unimportant, at least to the degree that they were practiced in comparative studies:

> Under the pretext that one could prove that Ponge was not aware of Hsun-tzu [Xunzi] and that one could not prove that he had applied the *Cratylus* to his theory, would we be prevented from comparing the Chinese "rectification of names" to the Greek "correctness of names," to that which Ponge at his turn called the "rectification of language?"

Etiemble argues instead for a kind of comparative literature adequate to the task of reaching across time and space, and even the strictures of translation, to get at something deeper:

> Literary comparison allowed me to better grasp at once the nature of the literary aesthetic and the social function of literature: comparative or not, literature is possible only because the "rectification of names" and the "correctness of names" and the "rectification of language" are all impossible. The only language in which "the correctness of names" is realized is precisely the only one which is translatable, the only one, consequently, having no proper literary value: the language of mathematics.[3] (Etiemble, 1958: pp. 164–166)

His choice of examples is thus ironic – we can and should imagine that these three projects were aimed at the same "invariant," yet we cannot translate them into one another, there is no exact method by which we can line them all up, "correctly," to "rectify" any imprecision, or, failing that, abandon the comparative project altogether. Rather, comparative literary method would see beyond those ambitions for exactitude to get at something not necessarily any less precise or worthy. Like the various ways of poetically capturing an image of the moon, or of describing the image of a line of writing, our eyes are directed not to the surface variants, *nor* to some hidden, shared, real object of representation, but to the invariable aspiration to name something that is the same in all cultures (How to describe the moon? What does the script of writing look like?), yet arrived at differently. We can take this as allegorical of the practice of comparative literature then – we are interested not in correcting the relation of names to things, or one literary phenomenon to another, but in comparing our different attempts to work around similar aesthetic and representational problems.

I would like to read Etiemble's project both in terms of its address to aesthetics and disciplinary practice, and its connection to social and cultural history. The two seem inextricable (see Etiemble, 1986). In the remainder of this chapter I turn from Etiemble to first frame the discussion of comparative literary studies and methodology within a discussion of modernity and migrancy. I then examine an essay by the anthropologist Margaret Mead in which she also treats the topic of migration and modernity, and arrives at a provocative set of recommendations with which to achieve a "shared

culture." These recommendations sound an awful lot like a program for a new comparative literature as well, with some features shared with Etiemble.

Having thus set up the historical relation between the field of comparative literary studies and more particularly its "crisis" over method, and the new demands for a method to accommodate the flux of modernity and the new pressures put upon such a project by real global crises (Etiemble's book was, after all, published just before Mai '68; Mead explicitly wrote her 1965 essay in hopes of defusing the possibility of nuclear war), I turn to the context of "multiculturalism" in international relations of the same period. My argument at the end of this will be that these various crises have taken on a new urgency in our age, and this calls for a rethinking of the premises of comparative "method," and that this rethinking benefits from Etiemble's basic position regarding *not* the object of study (the "invariant") as much as a stance toward method. I will argue that his way of comparing invariants moves us away from a notion of *commensurability* and closer to what I will call, adapting Williams, *congruity*. This, as with Williams, has political and ethical importance. We find that the "odiousness" of comparisons might be due now to a political and ethical problematic that is perhaps not new, but more palpable and urgent than ever before – the lack of "method" continues to haunt us, but for different reasons.

One of the very earliest texts on comparative literature in United States, Hutcheson McCauley Posnett's *Comparative Literature* (1886), was published as part of the International Scientific Series, sandwiched between *Mammalia and their relation to primeval times* and *Anthropoid Apes*. This passage from *Boston Journal*'s review (quoted on the inner cover of Posnett's volume) is telling in two ways:

> Scarcely a volume in this series appeals to a wider constituency than this, for it should interest men of science by its attempt to apply the scientific method to the study of comparative literature. The author's theory is that the key to the study of comparative literature is the gradual expansion of social life from clan to city, from city to nation, and from both of these to cosmopolitan humanity.

First, obviously, it lauds Posnett's volume for following "scientific method." Just as we can turn sideways and take stock of the state of human beings *vis-à-vis* our mammalian family members down through time, *and* our kin in the ape world, we can objectively ascertain what, exactly, comparative literature is. But to what purpose? Why and how would this yield anything nearly as exciting and revelatory as our place in the world of animals, in time and species? What the study of comparative literature offers, it seems, is a trustworthy view of the development of humankind in modernity. In human geographic terms, the study of comparative literature measures the relative spread of modernity across the variegated landscapes of the modern world. In this sense, the "method" of comparative literature is deeply historical and ambitiously broad – it is to not only discover the roots of comparative literature, but see in its enactment an attempt to make sense of more and different people, living now in different situations than before. We find then the co-presence of history, sociology, and

literature in this version of comparative literature. This backdrop continues to haunt comparative literary studies well into Etiemble's era.

In a remarkable essay on "The Future as the Basis for Establishing a Shared Culture" (1965), the anthropologist Margaret Mead also turns to this idea of migrancy as being that which defines the new modern, hopefully cosmopolitan world, but with different motivations and via a different use of "science." Here, the motivation is the avoidance of nuclear annihilation. To save humankind, she indicates, we must conceive of a shared culture. Similar to Etiemble, this would require giving up on our chauvinistic pride, through both gentle and not so gentle means:

> How are we to meet the problem of shared contribution? How are we to ensure that this corpus is not in the end a simplified version of modern western – essentially Euro-American – scientific and philosophic thought and of art forms and processes, however widely selected, interpreted within the western tradition? Is there any endeavor which can draw on the capacities not only of those who are specially trained but also those with untapped resources – the uneducated in Euro-American countries and the adult and wise in old, exotic cultures and newly emerging ones? (Mead, 1965: p. 174)

Mead argues that:

> …no single geographic location, no traditional view of the universe, no special set of figures of speech, by which one tradition but not another has been informed, can provide an adequate base. (Mead, 1965: p. 169)

In a negative way then, Mead basically evokes Etiemble's "invariants," in that these indexes to humankind are not the exclusive cultural property of any single nation.

So what *would* be the basis for this new shared culture? Ingeniously, it is the planet itself: "What we would build on, then, would be the known attributes of the universe, our solar system, and the place of our earth within this system" (Mead, 1965: p. 171). With this, quite literally, common ground, we can then move on to the question of how we will speak to each other, globally: every one would learn the same, secondary language "a natural language, chosen from among living languages, but not from among those which are politically controversial" (Mead, 1965: p. 176).

But even more radical, as both a model and an actuality, in *almost* a Leibnizian way, Mead puts forward a new written language that would have "world-wide intelligibility:"

> What is needed, internationally, is a set of glyphs which does not refer to any single phonological system or to any specific cultural system of images but will, instead, be a system of visual signs with universally recognized referents […] A project for the exploration of glyph forms and for experimentation with the adequacy of different forms has been authorized by the United Nations Committee for International Cooperation Year (1965 – the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations). This is designed as an activity in which adults and children, artists and engineers, logicians and

semanticists, linguists and historians – all those, in fact, who have an interest in doing so – can take part. For the wider the range of persons and the larger the number of cultures included in this exploration, the richer and the more fully representative will be the harvest from which a selection of glyphs can be made for international use. Work on glyphs can lead to work on other forms of international communication. (Mead, 1965: pp. 174–75)

Crucially, along with this radically democratic endowing of the power to make a globally-shared language, this glyph system would have *no syntax*, it would not have deep time or any other kind of time, in short, it would be ahistorical – all humankind would be synchronized at this new zero hour. Instead, Mead aligns humankind in a different temporality, linked to a different occupation of space. As a complement to this system of glyphs and the acquisition of a second language universally meant to disabuse us of national histories, traditions and predispositions, Mead insists that people be taught about movement, over and against the planetary environment, and in this again she attaches her model to the planet. In a passage worth quoting at length, Mead writes:

> One of the most intractable elements in our present isolating cultures is the interlocking of a landscape – a landscape with mountains or a desert, jungle or tundra, rushing cataracts or slow flowing rivers, arched over by a sky in which the Dipper or the Southern Cross dominates – and a view, of man. The beauty of face and movement of those who have never left their mountains or their island is partly the imprint on the human form of a complex relationship to the scale and the proportions, the seasonal rhythms and the natural style of one special part of the world. The experiences of those who have been bred to physical environments cannot be patched together like the pieces of a patchwork quilt.
>
> But we can build on the acute and vivid experiences of those who, reared in a culture which has deeply incorporated its environment, respond intensely to some newly discovered environment – the response of the countryman to the city, the response of the city dweller to open country, the response of the immigrant to the sweep of an untouched landscape and of the traveler to a sudden vista into the past of a whole people.
>
> We can give children a sense of movement, actually experienced or experienced only in some leap of the imagination. In the next twenty-five years we shall certainly not explore deep space, *but the experience of movement* can link a generation in a common sense of anticipation. As a beginning, we can give children a sense of different actual relationships to the physical environments of the whole earth, made articulate through the recorded responses of those who have moved from one environment to another. (Mead, 1965: pp. 177–78, my emphasis)

Here is a fascinating version of "world culture" anchored, as it is in the coordination of all of humankind (ideally) in relation to the physical world, not in stasis, but in motion. And this shared experience of motion (importantly, either actual or via representation) can not only sync us up in present time, but draw us into a parallel imagining of future movement. Again, this evokes something akin to Etiemble's

"invariants." It is a common registering and working out of a problem or issue, but in Mead, one that is deeply historical, even as it gestures both beneath and beyond history.

But I want to draw out attention now to one shared feature in both Etiemble's comparative literature and Mead's "shared culture." They are both rather fuzzy at a certain point. Etiemble more or less declares this in his rejection of "exact" comparisons – as long as we are dealing in languages other than mathematical ones, we are condemned to, or free to enjoy, a rather looser sense of equivalence between signs. And, despite her championing of glyphs to substitute for culture- and history-laden languages, and further diluting the force of "native language" by the requirement that we all learn the same second language, there is in Mead's prescription that the one thing that is shared or should be shared amongst all human beings is the sense of movement, of dis-placement, a vast fuzziness. To see why Mead's thoughtful program sadly could never work, we can turn to the field of international relations that informed Mead's time.

At this point it is important to remind ourselves of the backdrop of multiculturalism in international relations. In his invaluable study on what he calls "cultural internationalism," Akira Iriye (2000) explains the various ways that cultural diplomacy has been practiced, especially after the Second World War. The idea of culture was appealed to as a particularly palpable, lived component of social and national identity. It also presented a sphere wherein national boundaries, and even spheres of influence, were not hermetically sealed. The value of some "international," or "cosmopolitan" cultural sphere was undeniably attractive. However, just what it should contain was open to debate, as was how it would be operationalized in real world hard-knuckles diplomacy.

Iriye has documented the persistent tension between international cosmopolitical aspirations and the realities of racial and other difference. After the Bandung conference (1955), as the "three worlds" came into existence, what Iriye calls "Third World multiculturalism" came to threaten, or at least call into question, the capaciousness of Euroamerican cultural internationalism. This occurs exactly during a period that saw the increased importance of culture as a mediator of difference. As Iriye notes;

> What was […] significant [in the 1970s] was the emergence of cultural themes as important keys to international affairs. It was as if the waning of the Cold War and the crisis of the world economy were calling forth cultural agendas with greater vigor than ever before, the more so because these agendas now included what came to be known as multicultural perspectives. (Iriye, 2000: p. 165)

This point of tension between cultural internationalism and "Third World multiculturalism" is found in the Hazen Foundation's 1972 report, *Reconstituting the human community*, which notes a "clear historical trend away from unilateral cultural relations, or the dissemination and imposition of a unified value system with implied universal and absolute validity, toward reciprocal cultural relations" (Hazen, 1972:

p. 170). That is, we see the emergence of a set of multilateral negotiations around the idea of world culture, and a lessening of cultural hegemony. But how would this actually work? How could we talk to each other from separate cultural spheres? Bringing this back to academic disciplines which attempt some sort of knowledge-production – by what methods can we not only "know" others, given this now expanded set of interpretations of events and values, but also compare others to each other, or to ourselves? Again, what are the invariants to which all refer (or is there even such a thing)? Given this new landscape, unanchorable in the ways Mead hopes precisely because simple "movement" can no longer gloss over the precise and persistent differences that remain between actors, modes and motives for movement, and terrains so transected, differences that are articulated forcefully by emergent groups that now have to be listened to.

In an interview conducted with Edward Said, Raymond Williams raises the problem of comparative method, but more precisely, the problem of method*s* deriving from different geopolitical spaces. I want to isolate three key points in Williams' quote included in my first epigraph. First, he notes that people perceive situations both from within and without "their own pressing realities." Second, this double-focus can then employ, nonetheless, "comparable methods of analysis," that is to say, the way we and others compare "our" respective situations can draw on methods that, while perhaps not identical, are themselves "comparable." Third, that despite these non-identical situations and methods, there can be a "deep," that is "underlying" methodology that allows us to see, across the chasm of difference, some grounds for "congruity."

What does he mean by this? Well, it could be a number of things. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists, among definitions of the word, "An instance or point of agreement, correspondence," and, even more acutely, "Coincidence; exact agreement in superposition; capability of being exactly superposed." However, I would like to suggest that Williams also had in mind this definition – "Of physical substances: correspondence of structure or molecular constitution." Thus, between what was happening in the English cities, or rural areas, and what was happening in Lebanon, there were certain *structural* congruities. Transposed to comparative literature then, we might examine the ways that texts that seem to involve quite different plots, times, motifs, partake of a congruence that abides at a deeper level. Like Williams, I would be interested to see this emphatically in historical and structural terms, but also in the ways literature embodies the effects of historical structures. But seeing is not the same as articulating, and this is where we might find ourselves faced once again with the notion that comparisons, even if not necessarily odious, risk being so. This is the fear, or modesty, that informs the character whose inner thoughts are reflected in Adichie's text.

It is this discretion that Adichie, in her magisterial narrative of the Biafran war, appends to her character's "care" not to "draw parallels." This quick citation from Adichie does not do justice to the problematic she outlines in the course of some five hundred and forty-one pages. For this is not a matter of the failure of method, it is a matter of ethics, positionality, and historical responsibility. For the character in ques-

tion, an Igbo-speaking white male "journalist," is in an untenable speaking position. His discretion is as much a product of his inexact knowledge of Hamburg and Rwanda as it is his very real sympathy for and quite immediate knowledge of the cases of genocide and grief that he sees in Nigeria right before his eyes – Adichie makes this clear as she graphically describes Richard feeling the blood of victims of the genocide splatter against his clothes and dampen his white skin. Richard's "care" not to draw parallels, to make anything more than the slightest hints of comparison, in fact in the narrative logic of the novel prompt us to precisely seek out and test those parallels. Equally important however, it also draws our focus back upon not only the character, but the novelist who writes the description of his thoughts, and his non-action. Thus, in this slight passage from this huge novel, we find encapsulated the problem of comparative literature and any discussion of method. Our field commits us to embrace the "world" via a faith that some underlying, latent method will come about to yield "congruity." But it is a hard thing indeed to conceive of a method that respects the specificity of the object of study (by not familiarizing it too radically), that recognizes it via our imperfect imaginations, and at the same time compels us out of too tight a sense of discretion.

In this regard, we might need to think of a different kind of translation work, one that tries not to "convert" data from one space to another as much as recognize the problematic of a shared referent and to recognize as well the "methods" that produce, in Williams' words, both incongruity and congruity. This is not an empty, abstract, "theoretical" question, this is a real life and death question for a writer like Gabríel García Márquez and his challenge to us to think in the scales and dimensions of another country, another people, another hemisphere. He puts it bluntly and compellingly in his 1982 Nobel acceptance speech when he describes the carnage in Latin America, and suggests we adopt a new kind of statistical understanding, a new intercultural mathematics:

> Because they tried to change this state of things, nearly two hundred thousand men and women have died throughout the continent, and over one hundred thousand have lost their lives in three small and ill-fated countries of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. If this had happened in the United States, the corresponding figure would be that of one million six hundred thousand violent deaths in four years. (Márquez, 1982)

Again,

> Since 1979, the civil war in El Salvador has produced almost one refugee every twenty minutes. The country that could be formed of all the exiles and forced emigrants of Latin America would have a population larger than that of Norway. (Márquez, 1982)

Here we find the interplay, and tension, between those elements of "comparison" found in Etiemble's text, when he speaks of translatability. Perhaps even mathematical data cannot be translated, once embedded in real history. That is to say, even the hardest

data cannot mean the same, if dislodged from a point of view that aspires to objective detachment, but is actually rooted in time and space. For even García Márquez's attempts in these brief examples cannot convert the data from Latin America to the First World – this statistical adjustment cannot fully deliver the actual impact of such events. This incommensurateness calls for coupling the act of creative writing with the act of thinking historically at *all* levels of existence, hemispheric, regional, national, familial, individual. It will take literature to do that, to flesh out the disparities that produce very different senses of the same number. However, and critically, it will be a literature that is coupled to a recognition of disproportional history:

> I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression, that has deserved the attention of the Swedish Academy of Letters. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. (Márquez, 1982).

Conclusion

In an important and useful essay, Natalie Melas brings up the notion of incommensurability with regard to comparative literary study. She writes;

> Incommensurability [...] meaning "lack of a common measure," and rendered in dictionary definitions as "that which cannot be measured by comparison," foreground the act of measurement and this measurement's dependence on a common denominator. (Melas, 1995: p. 276)

She goes on to explain how the classical rhetorical distinction between *comparatio* and *similtudo* might give us a more nuanced way to reapproach the seemingly absolute demand for a common denominator conceived of in a particularly strict manner. *Comparatio*, according to Melas,

> can only occur in isotopic context, determining value according to rigidly defined realms; it enforces the comparison of apples with apples and oranges with oranges. *Similtudo*, on the contrary, depends on metaphor's transgression of isotopic contexts and encourages the comparison of apples with objects much further afield than oranges. *Comparatio* enforces preexisting similarities, whereas *similtudo* posits new resemblances, stretching the limits of a code. (Melas, 1995: pp. 276–7)

She uses this distinction to help explain Fanon's description of how comparison functions in the Antillean context, and in this respect we come once again to the notion of congruity, which I now want to posit as distinct from commensurateness. As noted above, congruity describes the overlaying of one object or phenomenon upon another,

seeing an "exact" match, or one common structure. I would suggest then that we examine the manners in which comparative literary studies are involved in both, with different points of emphasis. Commensurability seeks a common denominator, and the lack of one would seem to frustrate any comparative project – there would simply be no common ground. Etiemble pointed the way for an "inexact" practice, and this is again most pointedly evident in his discussion of nominalism and its others. However, we should remember that he wishes to move past the diverse surfaces that present themselves to discover precisely invariant *structures* of meaning. I want to take that opening and venture a move to the present-day that looks at how structures of meaning are attached to historical, material structures.

My adaptation of *congruity* would, as Williams suggests and as evident in its definition, emphasize the structural and historical aspects of congruity. Comparative "method" would thus seek to discover, or to hypothesize at least, a structural similarity informing literary cases emanating from different cultural spaces. "Structural" not in terms of their formal properties, but rather in terms of the historical matrices that shape the thematics and problematics of the text (which in turn may very well yield material for formal comparison). But, and critically, we would also be attentive to *incongruities*, precisely what García Márquez addresses. What kinds of dissonance persist beneath the "ciphers" of mathematics when it comes to naming the number of dead in one historical event from another place in the world? What structural differences produce our inability to sense that disparity? It is here that we can begin to see the kinds of imaginative and persuasive work demanded by literary and other art. This proposal to think of congruity and incongruity does not obviate the possibility of "odious" comparisons or the anxiety one might find regarding "drawing parallels," but it may well serve as a way to conceive a "method" for doing comparative literary studies that is attuned to our contemporary world.

In ending, I want to go back to this idea of "incommensurateness," not for itself, but for the way another discipline has grappled with it. Philosopher of science Ian Hacking describes the impasse incommensurateness has presented his field:

> It has been said that successive and competing theories within the same domain "speak different languages." They cannot strictly be compared to each other, nor translated into each other. (Hacking, 1983: p. 66)

But even if we accept the notion that when articulated in two different theories (or let us say, for today's purposes, "cultures") the same word may not, or, more radically, *cannot* mean the same thing, we can still track the grounds upon which the comparison is made. This is the argument of Dudley Shapere, who puts this succinctly and extremely well:

> If two scientific theories (or more general contexts of scientific thought, such as "traditions" or "communities") differ in so many respects, as they certainly seem to do, in virtue of what do we compare them? Rather than deny that such comparisons can be made, what we need to ask is how it is possible to do so, and what the implications of

our way of doing it as we do are: how we manage to compare and even evaluate such scientific usages and the contexts in which they occur. (Shapere, 1989: p. 422)

That is to say, the focus will shift from the possibility of making comparisons to the conditions of possibility – *how* do we make our judgments, our evaluations about cultures, and peoples, unlike our own, unlike ourselves?

In comparative literature, faced with all sorts of deficiencies (apart from a very small number, we lack the depth and fluency in all our languages that specialists have in their one; by the same token we cannot claim the depth of literary historical knowledge in all our languages that specialists claim in theirs; we are not equally masters of the canons; and of course, we lack a method for comparison). But one could equally say that all critical work is essentially comparative in that even the most isolated and discrete discipline is defined against those from which it distinguishes itself. But beyond that simple fact, in terms of comparative literature, as we now know even "single" literatures and literary traditions are shot through and through with elements from "other" cultures, languages. Our efforts should thus find encouragement. But we should, as we move forward, recognize the historical ground upon which we stand, and the positions we occupy and the institutional as well as intellectual demands that we attempt to meet as we perform these perhaps odious acts. Again, charting the historical distance from the times in which Etiemble and Mead made their proposals for, respectively, comparative literature and a "shared culture," through the instantiation of "multilateral" culture, we might even venture to say that we are in a post-multicultural world, the demands of the post 9/11 world call for an even more critical frame attuned to how difference is produced. There is no doubt – there is a lot of risk-taking, a lot of danger of being wrong, but as a matter of fact, it comes with the turf. But we are not operating without any tools or instruments or resources. Teaching (because this is what this volume is all about, after all), would, in my view, thus involve in a serious way historical work, and "close" reading for the ways that different authors have delineated a set of invariant problems in both congruous and incongruous ways.

NOTES

1   I thank Sylvie Palumbo-Liu for this, as well as several other insights in this chapter.

2   The earliest reference I have been able to find is from 1456, namely Gilbert of Hay's *Prose MS*. The phrase crops up variously in Cervantes, Marlowe, as well as in Donne's Eighth Elegy, "The Comparison."

3   See Genette *Mimologiques*.

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4
Comparisons, World Literature, and the Common Denominator

Haun Saussy

Gilles Deleuze described philosophy as the invention of new concepts, a vocation for which more conservative thinkers blame him as irresponsible. Analogously, and without claiming the mantle of philosophy, I think the job of the comparatist is to invent new relations among literary works (and relations with things that have not been previously classed among literary works). How can we create the best working conditions for this specialist in curiosity? That is the question I want to briefly explore in this chapter about Comparative Literature. And it is the angle by which I would like to approach the current discussions of "world literature."

We are all familiar with the procedure of finding the common denominator for two or more fractional expressions. You do it in order to perform joint operations on the fractions, fractions being relational and proportional numbers (all integers are fractions with a denominator of one). If I ask you what one half and two thirds make, you can reply, accurately but unhelpfully, that they are precisely one half plus two thirds; but to make a single expression out of them, to synthesize and totalize, in other words to give an answer rather than repeating the question, you will have to express the fractions as differing amounts of the same thing, e.g. 3/6 and 4/6, and from that basis derive the answer, 7/6 or 1 1/6.

All this is childishly simple – even a humanities professor can do this kind of math in his head – but it is worth slowing down the instantaneous phrase, "common denominator," to note its subparts and implicit relations, not just to cite it as we so readily do when a metaphor is familiar and the context rich in redundant signals. The process of finding the common denominator is one of *renaming* – of multiplying or dividing numerators in order to find the one among the infinite equivalent and tau-

tologous nominations (1/2, 2/4, 3/6, 4/8, 112/224, etc.) that will be most pliable to whatever operation we have it in mind to perform. This is easy in the world of numbers because those signs are devoid of content apart from their mutual relations — which is not to deny that relations may stumble on incommensurability.

One of Aristotle's examples of a riddling metaphor has an analogous structure: "the cup of Ares." Aristotle contends that the word "cup" asks to be analyzed and manipulated by the reader in such a way that it will not yield the nonsense meaning it offers at first sight, for Ares is not the god who deals in cups; that is Dionysus. For "cup," here substitute "instrument" or "vessel" – a semantic element common to and capable of serving as a vague equivalent of cups, wheels, hammers, swords, shields, etc. A long tradition designates this element as the *tertium comparationis*, the third thing on which a comparison pivots. With that, the bizarre phrase resolves first into an uncontroversial one, "the instrument of Ares" (it is not unreasonable that Ares should have an instrument, only required by public iconography that he have the right one) and then into a more specific answer, "a shield." Aristotle depicts a metaphor as a question in need of a solution. Once you have found the answer, you are left with more than just the analogy of cup and shield (they are analogous as instruments, the cup serving for symposia as the shield for battles, and both are round); you also have the history, the trail, of the process of discovery, which must be a valuable thing or else such expressions would not give people pleasure. Something like the satisfaction of resolving incompatible fractions into a single expression is what Aristotle thinks makes people eager to learn. (The formula for learning, for metaphor, for perception and for digestion in Aristotle is one and the same).

One longstanding challenge to our discipline comes from the philosophers. Benedetto Croce pointed out that "comparison" designates a mere formal operation applicable to any set of objects and therefore cannot designate a field of knowledge. (As if one were to say, "This is the discipline of examples!" – neglecting the fact that every discipline has and uses examples. Not false, but not much of a description either.) I would answer that objection with a note from the sociology of disciplines, namely that the specificity of the comparative derived in Croce's day from the fact that denizens of other disciplines were not performing the kinds of comparison usual among so-called comparatists. Yes, the operation was perfectly general and universally applicable, but its targeted neglect is what needs explanation. A discipline of literary comparison arose as a consequence of the organization of humanistic scholarship along nationalist lines in the nineteenth century, an act of founding and naming that we are still finding it hard to undo. Also, it is the gradual erosion of national boundaries, national differences, national narratives, national languages, that enables us to ask why comparison had to be suppressed, ignored, or relegated to a relatively unfrequented academic asylum. In that sense, we can hail world literature, as Goethe did, as the emergence of the obvious: international literary history, the main mover of literary invention and reception since the days of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

World literature would thus be the discovery of a common denominator that was there all along – an analytically and necessarily true statement that brings us new

knowledge only to the degree that it redirects our attention. This is of course an enterprise worth pursuing, since attention always needs to be redirected; the great enemy of truth may not be error, but myopia or distraction. But the discovery of the fabric of worldwide literary communication, the model of world literature as global literary history, or the history of the global circulation of literary genres, conceives of its object as an archive to be explored, rather than as an as yet nonexistent thing to be constructed.

People express skepticism about a comparative-literary project in a familiar way. You are embarking on a thesis, let's say, about A and B – about Mayan hieroglyphics and the fish markets of Gloucester, Massachusetts. Someone says, "What do those have to do with each other?" In other words, the challenger says, "Tell me the common denominator, the *tertium comparationis*, that makes these two different things somehow the same." One thing they have to do with one another is Charles Olson. When you've named him, you're off the hook, you have offered a solution to the enigma. Charles Olson's own answer, a vast poetic bricolage, amounts to saying, in the most interesting way possible, "They don't have anything to do with each other – yet. What they have in common is me, or my attention." That would sound like taking oneself seriously as an artist, which in the scholar's case would be absurd, though not in Olson's.

One way or another, we will not be free of the common denominator, though we might want to undermine the supposition that it is the thing we are "solving for," the goal of the process of comparison. We could also usefully point out that the third thing is not necessarily a thing or a name; it can be a proportion, an analogical relation, a missing element, a thread of narrative. Indeed, I've elsewhere described the history of comparative literature as a series of attempts to discover or name the *tertium comparationis*, the basis of comparison, the specific object of the discipline. This attempt never succeeds (at least, it never terminates) and needs to be repeated once every generation or so, but the failure is not a disaster and it yields delightful by-products. The distinction I would like to bring forward is that between a common denominator that is supposed to be given, and one that is constructed through the exercise itself. The distinction is anything but hard-and-fast. Some acts of construction stick, give rise to a precedent or even a sub-discipline, as the risk that their original formulator took in fashioning them is spread over so many participants that it approaches zero for any new contributor.

Consider the precedent of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946), a book everyone admires today but which appeared to some of its distinguished early readers, Ernst Robert Curtius and René Wellek among them, as dangerously capricious, arbitrary, artistic, even solipsistic in its neglect of a clearly-stated methodology, terminology, and corpus. It is true that Auerbach was uninterested in the existing definitions of realism and had no ambition of building up the kind of literary history that deals in points of contact and transmission. His version of realism emerges from the examples and from an essay not included in the book, his famous discussion of "figura," which sets out

a frame story for the collapse of ancient rhetorical distinctions of style and level that had to occur so that humble realism could appear – and indeed it appeared more in asides and episodes than as the dominant mode of any European literary tradition before the nineteenth century. Auerbach couldn't present his realism as the generally recognized extant third term under which all the texts he analyzed would have sheltered; his project had a different kind of ambition. He disclaimed continuity and comprehensiveness, properties that in his day were more self-evidently necessary in a scholarly work. Rather, he went exploring, testing his sense of realism against a set of internally diverse examples. And so he incurred the skepticism of less adventurous colleagues.

What is adventurous is a time-bound thing, in scholarship as in the arts or fashion. If someone today proposed to collect a number of texts and analyze them for their qualities of "Auerbachian realism," it would seem not adventurous at all, indeed a little tame and in need of revision. Nor would my enthusiasm be guaranteed, without further information, by the fact that the project about "Auerbachian realism" happened to include, let's say, texts from Chinese or Azerbaijani literature. The category is well enough established by the example of Auerbach's now-canonical book that extending it seems to me a matter of detail – of course requiring intelligence, taste, tact, and plenty of explanation; but the very fact that such an extension can be named and instantly receive an interpretation reveals the degree to which the precedent is conceptually available.

So how does the present practice of "world literature" deal with the problem of common denominators? By obliterating the problem as such, by substituting itself for the missing conceptual or contextual pivot. (How is this different from saying "I am the common denominator," as in my fictional Olson example above? Only because saying "me" is more sheerly and nakedly an acknowledgment of the invented quality of the denominator. This seems like a difference worth noting.) Nonetheless, the substitution is not complete, if you consider the examples I've given. What seems to me incomplete about world literature as a project is its tendency to present itself as a truth awaiting discovery. If the world is everything that is the case, as the young Wittgenstein put it, then world literature is everything that is the case about literature, but what about everything that isn't the case, or that hasn't been proposed as being the case yet? The national literature framework needed to be discarded, but we shouldn't use the epithet "world" in a way that makes world literature ever and only the determinate negation of "national narrowness and one-sidedness." World literature can and should be an assumption about the corpus of relevant documents and therefore unremarkable, a starting-point rather than the goal toward which Goethe urged us to be "hastening." Which is not to say, of course, that world literature is complete, finished, dead or useless as a framework of investigation; only that the ambiguity of its designation, with the unfortunate suggestion of completeness and authority, needs to be corrected by our making space for comparative projects that have as their objects things and relations that are not part of the world – yet.

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Comparative Literature in America: Attempt at a Genealogy

Kenneth Surin

Before the 1960s

The institutionalization of critical and cultural theory as a field within the field of literary studies has taken place through a series of phases and developments. Prior to the 1960s the field saw very little in the way of critical and cultural theory, for a couple of reasons. First, New Criticism was the dominant approach in literary studies in the United States, and its governing precept – that the literary text is a self-contained entity not requiring recourse to any "extraneous" disciplines for its understanding – militated against approaches which hinged on such "extraneous" disciplines as the sociology of knowledge, hermeneutics, the history of ideas, cultural history, and so on. New Criticism's demise coincided with the ascendency of critical and cultural theory in the field of literary studies, and while it would be too facile to suggest that the rise of one was somehow causally connected with the fall of the other, it nonetheless remains true that the circumstances underlying this rise and fall were not a matter of pure happenstance. Second, the dominant paradigm for the American version of comparative literature until the 1960s required the comparison of texts from two or more western European national literatures (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish primarily), with interpretive tools derived from philology serving as the primary basis for such comparisons. Non-western European literatures, Russian and Scandinavian especially, were sometimes allowed into this company, especially if canonical and well-translated authors happened to be involved

(in the case of Russian, such exemplary figures as Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekov, Turgeniev, Oblomov, Lermontov, and Gorky come readily to mind; and in the case of the Scandinavian countries there was of course Ibsen and Strindberg). The foremost exponent of this form of comparative literature was perhaps Erich Auerbach (1892–1957), whose erudite *Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature* encompassed a vast array of texts ranging from Homer to Proust and Virginia Woolf.

By the 1960s, however, this paradigm started to be criticized, on at least two significant grounds. First, the diachronic linguistic methods favored by philology came to be displaced by the synchronic approach associated with Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), whose posthumous *Cours de linguistique générale* pioneered the fields known today as semiology and structuralism. Saussure's techniques were taken up by Roman Jacobson (1896–1982) and Roland Barthes (1915–1980), and the theoretical effervescence of these so-called structuralists soon overshadowed the by now jaded and played-out philological schools of thought. Second, the de facto circumscription of canonical literary texts to those of the western European national literatures (with a little bit of assistance from Scandinavia and Russia, as noted) was increasingly seen to be narrow and even arbitrary. By the 1970s the Nobel Prize in Literature had been awarded to numerous writers not associated with western Europe, including Tagore, Seferis, Agnon, Neruda, and Patrick White (admittedly White was Australian); and, moreover, the writings of other subsequent non-western winners of the Nobel had also achieved prominence by that decade (García Márquez, Milosz, Soyinka, Oe, and Mahfouz, come readily to mind). Philology, dealing almost exclusively in languages of an Indo-European provenance, started to seem much less capacious in its theoretical scope, and the issue of canonicity quickly announced itself. How was one to teach and study Kenzaburo Oe and Naguib Mahfouz (say), alongside William Faulkner and Thomas Mann (say), in an American department of comparative literature? In this new and emerging situation in the 1960s and 70s, notions of diachronic linguistic family trees (philology) and the self-contained literary text (New Criticism) were perceived to be less and less germane, and inherently and insurmountably problematic, for growing numbers of practitioners in the field. The supersession of the "old comp lit" was not however smooth or even decisive. Intellectual skirmishes soon extended across an unevenly contested terrain, as what seemed overwhelmingly to be a battle over fairly abstruse intellectual issues was increasingly amplified, often in egregiously simplistic ways, into the so-called "cultural wars" of the 1980s. ("How dare anyone give equal space in the literary curriculum to a Nigerian or Egyptian writer alongside Goethe or Flaubert?") This, admittedly in a somewhat stylized but nevertheless accurate way, was the situation in which the "new" critical and cultural theory came to prominence in the 1970s and early 1980s. With the benefit of hindsight, it is now clear that a previous paradigm was tottering towards the point of exhaustion and collapse, and that, in consequence, the conditions for the emergence of its putative successor were now more or less in place.

Overview of the Field of Critical and Cultural Theory:
The 1960s to the Mid-1990s

Speaking very generally, critical and cultural theory emerged in the US in the late 1960s and early 70s in the form of a reception of several movements, the most prominent being structuralism and poststructuralism (the latter's provenance was mainly French where representative authors were concerned, though overwhelmingly American when it came to a subsequent institutionalization); hermeneutics (German in inspiration); psychoanalytic criticism; feminist theory; marxist theory; black studies; cultural studies (primarily British in origin), and certain strands of continental European philosophy (the work of the Frankfurt School and phenomenology being perhaps the most prominent). It was not immediately obvious why these very different strands of thought should co-exist in the same curriculum, especially since a number of these schools or approaches were themselves undergoing a kind of internal mutation at the same time. Hence, as we shall see in subsequent paragraphs, Black Studies mutated into Afro-American Studies and its variants; feminist theory was soon complemented by gender studies, so that a Women's Studies department today is likely to place equal emphasis on these two components; and a distinctively American cultural studies soon came to complement the theoretical itineraries of the field's British founding figures Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. A connecting principle for these initially surprising convergences became evident after a while – in their varied and sometimes not compatible ways, these intellectual models contributed to the formulation of a kind of meta-theory not previously available to Comparative Literature departments (this meta-theory took the basic form of arguments regarding presuppositions couched in terms of "conditions of possibility," "conditions of intelligibility," "enabling conditions," etc.) for the reception and interpretation of literary texts and the myriad objects of cultural production more generally.

The above-mentioned developments went hand-in-hand with another profound shift, this time involving the acknowledgment that cultural (and hence literary) production is shaped unavoidably by the standpoint or interests of its producers and receivers, and that, moreover, these respective sets of standpoints and interests may be divergent and perhaps irreconcilable. It no longer became obvious that a literary text could be interpreted by employing such notions as that of "the Elizabethan worldview," or that we could talk of such things as "Oriental despotism," as if these categories possessed a self-evident plausibility. We soon realized that in the absence of a certain historically constituted standpoint or perspective that there really are no such things as "the Elizabethan worldview," or "Oriental despotism." This insight, pursued by the followers of Marx and Foucault, was for instance absolutely fundamental to the argument pioneered by Edward Said in his hugely influential *Orientalism* (1978).

In the 1980s a second phase of the institutionalization of cultural and critical theory saw five significant developments. First, there were transformations within the above-mentioned movements (Black Studies, etc.), as cultural studies took on a more

recognizably North American cast. Second, these movements were (in some cases) augmented by other intellectual shifts taking place in the American academy. For instance, a reworked American pragmatism, associated with Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam, came to be a feature of the philosophical landscape in relation to literary studies; and cultural and literary studies, at the instigation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, started to engage with the writings of historians from the Indian Subaltern Studies group, and so forth. Third, there were fusions and overlaps between movements and paradigms, as theoretical rapprochements were brought about between feminism and psychoanalytic theory (the work of Toril Moi), poststructuralism and American pragmatism (Barbara Herrnstein Smith and Stanley Fish), African American studies and poststructuralism (Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Hortense Spillers), marxism and feminist theory (Meagan Morris), etc. Fourth, new subfields emerged within critical and cultural theory to join their already established counterparts, postcolonial theory and queer theory being perhaps the most notable of these. Fifth, there was an appropriation of work in some of these subfields by practitioners belonging to other disciplines: for instance, cultural anthropologists began to engage with cultural studies, historians with poststructuralism, economists with rhetorical studies, theologians with feminist theory, and so forth.

The 1990s saw yet other developments. With the availability of a substantial body of commentary and interpretive studies built up over two or more decades, the reception of these paradigms and movements could now itself become an object of study: thus it was possible not just to study the writings of Lacan, Benjamin, Fanon, say, but also the explication and elaboration of their work by later generations of thinkers – Slavoj Žižek and Julia Kristeva in the case of Lacan, Michael Taussig and Giorgio Agamben in the case of Benjamin, Homi Bhabha in the case of Fanon, and so forth. Hand in hand with this study of the reception of such thinkers and the traditions associated with them were attempts to use the new intellectual tools available in cultural and critical theory to understand these thinkers' formations and the conditions that made their thought possible. A new theoretically informed kind of intellectual biography was one result of this development. Instances include several recent biographies of Foucault, Toril Moi in the case of Simone de Beauvoir, as well as David Macey in the case of Lacan. These biographies were not of the traditional kind, that is, works which sought in the main to provide details of someone's life, but which sought instead to reveal of the terms and conditions that enabled the construction of a specific and distinctive form of intellectual being (without at the same time leaving out those personal factors which impinged on the constitution of the life in question).

In addition, very new theoretical objects became the focus of attention in some subfields: recent developments in cybernetic and information technologies have made "hypertext" into a new object of study for those working in cultural studies (we'll say more about hypertext and the so-called digital cultures in the next section), and nearly every subfield has had to deal with the phenomenon of globalization (involving among other things reflection on the character of the state, nationalism, the persistence of

collective memory, diaspora as the experience of massive dislocations, etc.). Another development has been the study of the constitution of intellectual fields in terms of their social and cultural conditions of possibility, as science, economics, art history, legal theory, and historiography became objects of study by practitioners working in these fields as well as in critical and cultural theory. Examples abound: Stanley Fish made significant interventions in legal theory, Barbara Herrnstein Smith in science studies, Hayden White in historiography, W.J.T Mitchell in art history, to name but a few. Finally, the 1990s saw the consolidation of a trend that had begun the decade before. With the exception of the creative arts, intellectual traffic and migration between the US and the European countries had pretty much been a one-way street from Europe to the US. Facilitated in part by this American reception of European thinkers, it was now possible for an American movement towards Europe to take place, and American or American-domiciled intellectuals moved to European countries (albeit in small numbers, one thinks here of such well-known figures as John Rajchman (France), Irving Wohlfarth (Germany), Scott Lash, Mandy Merck, and Miriam Rubin (UK)).

Understandably, the kinds of intellectual production associated with a phase that is still in the process of being consolidated will differ in important ways from those that prevail in more established academic fields: approaches here will tend to be more eclectic, publication will be less in terms of the book-monograph written by a single author (in any case the book-monograph is a form that is being bypassed in more than one area of the humanities and social sciences), criteria of what constitutes "professional" merit and excellence are less likely to be settled, and the boundaries between academic work and other kinds of cultural production will be much more porous. The most up-to-date work in such areas of scholarship is likely to be found in journals and collections of essays generated by semi-formal editorial collectives rather than a traditional kind of editorial board officially set up by a university press, with an appeal not just to an academic constituency, but also more generally to informed opinion in the wider and more public domains of media and other popular cultures. Literary studies has always been open to this kind of intellectual activity that seeks to address and include a public domain outside the academy – one thinks here of such long-standing journals as the *Minnesota Review*, *Raritan*, and *Social Text.* In the last decade or so internet journals focused on literary and cultural studies have emerged (*Cultural Logic*, *Culture Machine*, to name a couple), and it is likely that this trend will consolidate itself, as the traditional academic presses compete for diminishing financial resources. One should not however be apocalyptic about such developments ("this is the end of print culture," "university presses will go the way of the dinosaurs," etc.). As long as tenure and promotion in most areas of the humanities accords primacy to a more traditional kind of print culture, a traditional kind of dissemination of knowledge can survive. At the same time any academic field, and not just literary studies, will become unrecognizable from our current perspective when intellectual production in the forms of blogs and Twitter is accorded just as much importance by a university tenure and promotion committee as the traditional monograph or

peer-reviewed scholarly article. Already one encounters academic blogs with a scholarly depth that matches a journal article, as well as possessing a brio and vitality that cannot find its way into something that has been squeezed into stylistic conformity by the peer-review process.

Overview of the Field of Critical and Cultural Theory: the Mid-1990s to the Present

Today (2011) it is clear that there is no normative syllabus or curriculum in literary studies and critical theory, if indeed there had ever been such a thing. As was seen above, a couple of decades ago the field was largely defined by the following features:

1. A movement away from a traditional kind of "comp lit" towards a more intellectually ramified "comparatism" involving a diverse range of theoretical paradigms;
2. This generally acknowledged but assorted array of "key paradigms" included poststructuralism, cultural studies, feminist theory, marxism, psychoanalysis, postcolonial theory, film theory, critical race theory, and so on; and
3. An accompanying canon, also generally acknowledged, of "master thinkers" (Barthes, Baudrillard, Bourdieu, Derrida, Fanon, Althusser, Lacan, Spivak, Raymond Williams, Kristeva, and so forth).

One's place as a practitioner in the field was fairly clearly identifiable in terms of one's research and curricular focus on one or more of these paradigms, the accompanying "master thinkers," affiliation with the concomitant program unit at the Modern Language Association (M.L.A.), American Sociological Association (A.S.A.), etc.

These fairly clear-cut alignments no longer obtain. The paradigms and their associated thinkers have spread beyond "Lit," into cultural anthropology, religious studies, areas studies, women's studies, sexuality and gender studies, and even history and political science departments, to name but a few. As a result of such cross permeations, faculty in Lit are just as likely to give papers at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, the British Sociological Association, the American Academy of Religion, the American Historical Association, etc., as they are to speak at the M.L.A. Equally, many "Lit" syllabuses feature contemporary thinkers drawn from other fields, including cultural anthropologists (Clifford Geertz, Jean and John Comaroff, Michael Taussig, James Clifford, Aihwa Ong, Sherry Ortner, Marilyn Strathern), historians (Dipesh Chakrabarty, Tony Grafton, E.P. Thompson, Quentin Skinner, Sheila Rowbottom, Perry Anderson, Robin Blackburn, Peter Brown, Gareth Stedman Jones), political philosophers (Wendy Brown, Martha Nussbaum, John Rawls, William Connolly), economists (Amartya Sen, J.K. Gibson-Graham, Samir Amin), sociologists (Pierre Bourdieu, Manuel Castells, Alvin Gouldner, Ernest Gellner,

Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi), social psychologists (Erving Goffman), and so on. In such circumstances, the question "Does colleague X *really* belong to a Comp Lit Program?" can be ideologically and rhetorically pointed, but it has also become basically, and for some of us intolerably, unanswerable. This predicament is not unique to literary studies – nearly every field in the humanities and interpretive social sciences is in the same boat, as historians of medicine join departments of psychology, cultural anthropologists join departments of religion, semioticians are hired by departments of cultural anthropology, philosophers and political theorists belong to literature programs, sociologists of development join departments of economics, and literary scholars trained in rhetoric are on the faculties of law schools.

At the same time, extensions of developments inaugurated in the 1990s, and even the emergence of some new paradigms, have clearly taken place. What had been the phenomenon of "hypertext" in the 1990s has now become a full-blown "digital culture," with significant implications for our areas of study, because some of these developments seemingly point in the direction of a "post-textual" culture, especially for those in their teens and twenties, i.e. our undergraduate and graduate students of the so-called iPod generation. A burgeoning intellectual field has emerged around this "digital culture" – it currently takes the form of new media studies, but the field is evolving so rapidly that its more settled forms may look quite different in a decade or so. The relation of this field to a more traditional kind of literary study is still to be resolved.

Also important has been the way in which new developments in the study of gender have begun to influence notions of sexuality and the identities of men and women. Feminist theory has come to engage with these developments, though it should be said at the same time that the impact of these developments is not confined to feminist theory – psychoanalytic theory, cultural studies, and media studies (especially the study of *animē*) are clearly being influenced by new work on conceptions of gender.

The emergence of world literature as a literary subfield has been a striking development in the last decade. World literature courses are taught in English, and so the works of Goethe or George Sand, for instance, are taught in translation (a move frowned upon by purists in comparative literature departments, even though this trend seems irreversible). Accompanying the growth of world literature is the appearance of a new kind of English study. There has been a proliferation of such courses as "global English" and "English without borders," a reflection perhaps of English's current status as a lingua franca or global language. These courses combine features of what used to be called "Commonwealth literature" or "anglophone literatures outside England" with attention to creolized forms of the language (South Asian English, West Indian English, and so on).

In the coming years administrative and financial considerations are going to carry as much weight as intellectual principles and norms when it comes to determining the form and curricular substance of the American comparative literature department. Economic retrenchment associated with the current recession has led to

the consolidation of some departments into schools, and interdisciplinary centers (such as humanities institutes) are being given the kind of tenure line hitherto confined to the more traditional academic department. What these developments will portend is difficult to say. But we can be certain that a comparative literature program structured with these developments in mind will be very different from the kind of 1950s Comp Lit department that Erich Auerbach knew at Yale and Leo Spitzer at Johns Hopkins.

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Part II
Theoretical Directions

6

The *Poiein* of Secular Criticism

Stathis Gourgouris

The best recent arguments that reconsider our understanding of Comparative Literature as a discipline – two trenchant examples would be Gayatri Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* (2003) and Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone* (2006) – emerge from the core experience of so-called "high theory" and carry within them the full historical range of its permutations, including voluminous "post-"s and "anti-"s, attempted turns and counter-turns, proclaimed ends and terminations. Both Spivak and Apter, in terms that ultimately do not diverge, demand that we remain focused on the interminable question of language which, in defiance of the prison house of philosophy (the hegemony of conceptual analysis), continues to reinforce the fact that literature's trajectory across historical, geographical, economic, and technological terrains still remains unpredictable and unmasterable, even if fluid and all-pervasive. Hence the attention of both works on translation as the most evocative trope of literature's unique way of encountering (and occasionally forging) conditions toward planetarity.

Such work springs forth from theory and remains rigorously theoretical, in veritable resistance against those quarters in the academy (but also in the educated public sphere) that, with evident self-satisfaction, hastened to proclaim the death of theory and all its malicious consequences. The anti-theoretical strain that has come into full force in the last decade permeates all disciplines, especially historical and political studies, but it registered with particular vehemence in literary studies itself, no doubt because of the well-honed perception that theory was dangerous to literature and that, as a result, literary studies have been suffering for some time from the incapacity to remain relevant to the contemporary conditions of knowledge production. A succinct

exposition of this perspective can be found in Marjorie Perloff's (2006) Modern Language Association Presidential Address.

From a certain standpoint, Perloff's lament that literary study has been relegated to a secondary position in the research framework of our profession does indeed have merit. This standpoint, however, rests on a kind of retrospective (so as not to say outright, nostalgic) comparison of today's institutional parameters with an era in which literary study enjoyed an enviable autonomy, a self-authorization that went so far as to demarcate not merely the practice of the study of literature (the discipline of literary criticism), but even what we might call a literary way of thinking. This was how the institution of theory took hold in American universities, and it is elementary to recall that many other disciplines, principally in the social sciences but also in the arts, conceded to literary studies the vanguard of the methodological and epistemological reconfigurations of their own disciplinary boundaries. Anthropologists, historians, film critics, or art historians, who suddenly acceded to the position of theorist, came to regard literary studies as an inventory for whatever new terms or concepts they deemed necessary in unsettling their own disciplinary givens. In this peculiar way, the advent of interdisciplinarity in the American academy took place, historically, from within the disciplinary parameters of literary studies, indeed as *excess* of literary studies.[1] Whoever experienced this period firsthand (I would date it from the late 1970s to about 1990) should remember that this excessive condition bore – as the notion itself would have it – something *ecstatic*.

There is obviously much to be said about the advent of this new institution – what was later codified as "the theory turn" – but its heterogeneity was perhaps its most radical element. The achievement of a certain critical perspective that dismantles the self-certainty of hitherto unassailable structures characterizes this shift above and beyond any of the particulars. Let us recall that from the outset this shift was tied to practices of multiple learning and, second – these two moments are linked – it was precipitated by extraordinary experimentation. Contrary to what the enemies of theory have always been arguing, the experience of theory breaking out in American universities was not driven by concepts but by practices. And although it is true that voluminous names emerged, which, by becoming fashionable, began to be traded off as golden concepts, both the speed by which these names were overwritten by others and the ultimate confusion that was produced when anyone tried to work on that basis alone – that is, by reproducing the conceptual terrain suggested by the newest hot theory term, etc. – testifies to what I'm suggesting. The turn to theory was a fecund period of experimental practices of radical interrogation, subversion of established modes of interpretation, daring cognitive ingenuity, and irreverent performativity. It mobilized groundbreaking opportunities for collective learning, oftentimes by relentless argument and counter-argument. It was thus profoundly political, if nothing else in the barest sense of exposing unquestioned domains in the structures of power (of both domination and liberation) and producing new modes of consciousness as to what constitutes authority and agency, even when (or perhaps especially when) the notions of author and agent were attacked head on.

Let us also recall how quickly and vastly this terrain of thought and argument was *internationalized*, much before discussions of globalization came to the forefront in economics journals and market-research media. The advent of interdisciplinarity, in this respect, was hardly aberrant or forced. On the contrary, it was the inevitable outcome of this excessive interrogation of boundaries of all kinds – not merely epistemological, but also historiographical, geographical, and cultural (eventually exported to reconfigurations of *lifestyle* in the larger public sphere) – which emerged out of the academic parameters of literary studies, comparative literature in particular. Our field became a kind of broker of exchanges between specific disciplinary languages as they tried to reconfigure themselves in order to participate in the opening up of new domains of interrogation and make interdisciplinary dialogue possible. Graduate studies in comparative literature in the 1980s posed the formidable challenge of mastering both the canonical knowledge of literary criticism and literary history *and* the rapidly emerging and proliferating new languages of theory that opened paths to other disciplines. The work was double – not in terms of quantity (because, quantitatively, it was tenfold), but in terms of orientation: the learning of tradition and yet the learning of dismantling tradition, simultaneously and polemically conducted. In this sense it was indeed excessive. And, this excessive element came back to haunt the literary studies world, rebounding against it as indication of alleged *undisciplinarity*: lack of rigor, epistemological falsity, disingenuous methodology, contrived inquiry, etc.

In this sense, I do understand that it is not easy to grant genuineness to this condition of excess I am describing, though the allegations as to its consequences are themselves motivated by evident *ressentiment* on the part of traditional disciplinarity. Certainly, for a period of a decade or more, since 1990, the micro-identitarian shift within theory did precipitate conditions of failed self-interrogation, especially regarding the profound paradoxes of the new disciplinary parameters that emerged out of the practice of interdisciplinarity. As a result, literary studies (but, I would argue, other disciplines as well) did suffer, from a certain carelessness, perhaps even arrogance – one is a symptom of the other – which fostered further abandonment of self-interrogation for the comfort of identity politics. In other words, the condition is not external but self-induced.

The difference is decisive precisely where it matters most: on the question of how to assert the different (and differential) epistemologies of a literary way of thinking – or for my purposes, more precisely: the cognitive powers of the poetic element itself (see Gourgouris, 2000, 2003, 2004). My experience does not agree with Perloff's description of the field. This isn't to say that what she describes does not exist; it is to say that what she describes is not entirely accurate. For one, if interdisciplinarity is indeed (and that's an "if") the *modus operandi* of graduate study in literature, the job market continues to punish interdisciplinary work. This often drives us, as advisers, to curtail our students' complex aspirations and imaginations. We do it out of a sense of responsibility, no doubt – we want them to get jobs – but I wonder whether we should rethink our responsibility and pressure instead against the institutional status

quo toward creating the kinds of jobs that demand and reward interdisciplinarity and not so-called expertise. So as not to be misunderstood, I repeat that interdisciplinarity requires, *by definition*, the double work of engaging the canonical *and* the modes of interrogating it. Interdisciplinary training is first of all disciplinary training. It means to take the disciplinary logic to its limit in order precisely to interrogate the construction of the limit. It is thus a transformation of this construction – yes, a *deconstruction*, if you will, so long as the (inter)disciplinarity of deconstruction itself is never reducible to its canon.

Perloff does not account for the phases of this historical trajectory, thereby missing a crucial way out of the quandary she indexes in the present. Her argument rests on a reconfiguration of something archaic:

> Whatever the 'inter' […] there is one discipline that is conspicuously absent, and that discipline is what the Greeks called *Poiētikē*, the discipline of Poetics. (Perloff, 2006: p. 655)

But this reconfiguration remains archaic for two reasons: First, she does not inquire if poetics might be conducted nowadays in an entirely different language, which, at first glance, may seem to have nothing to do with poetry as such; this itself could be or become the work of literary theory or even poetic thinking. Second – and this is symptomatic of the first – Perloff's view of *poiētikē* might be in fact narrowly conceived, even within the terms of its ancient usage, to refer substantively to a skill – like rhetoric, let us say. I prefer instead to counteract the substantive name of a skill (*poiētikē*) with the infinitive verb of a practice (*poiein*), whose precise skills are voluminous and indefinite, never exhausted by the skill of crafting verses, and indeed never immune to the transformational process of the practice. This practice is, of course, an art, but an art that exceeds *Ars Poetica* conventionally understood.

To make a plain point: by the gesture of *poiein* I mean not merely the art of making but the art of forming (thereby, within the domain of history, transforming). The poet as *homo faber* is the outcome of a Modernist aspiration to shake off the sublime burden of the Romantic artist; both notions are themselves historical markings of modernity, no more no less. The most ancient notion of *poiein*, present in Homer – even if not an arbiter of this ambiguity between forming and making – pertains primarily to working on matter, shape, or form, and only secondarily to abstraction, whereby it might suggest availing or producing forms. It is especially interesting to consider that the root reference to creativity (*dēmiourgia*) is instrumentalist. As opposed to a *poiētēs*, a *dēmiourgos* is one whose work derives its primary meaning from the public sphere – the word itself provides the evidence: *dēmos* + *ergon*. This *ergon* covers quite a range of action: a *dēmiourgos* can be a seer just as much as a doctor. The notion is reversed in the modern world, arguably because of the Christian investment in the notion of creation out of the absolute. In Plato, one might say (even though in *Timaeus* you find both notions intertwined) that *dēmiourgos* is in effect a *worker*, one who commits an *ergon*, while the poet is a shaper, one who shapes forms. For Plato, of

course, shaping forms is always, in the last instance, misshaping, de-forming. Hence his alarm for the poet as a shaper who (trans)forms morals – an entirely political, not ethical, decision, which leaves no other place for the poet but exile from the city. Plato's concern is warranted from the standpoint of what will become the philosophical (and theological) desire to harness an unalterable (inalienable) truth. This is because shaping is always altering, and thus to form is always to *transform*, which I conceive, in a materialist way, as the process of bringing otherness to bear upon the world, as opposed to receiving otherness as external authority. In this respect, inherent in *poiein* is also an element of destruction, and there is no external guarantee that would absolve any *poiēsis* of the destructive elements of the alteration it performs.

The modern point of view sustains this creative/destructive action in *poiein*, despite the fact that *dēmiourgein* is the verb that, in its Latin derivation (*creatio*), has taken over the range of signification. The struggle between what we can, abusively, call "private" and "public" poetics has not resolved, historically, the social demands posed by the idea of the poet as a shaper of forms. The force of Plato's political prejudice has been astonishingly long lasting and crucial in the formation of modernity. The transformative power of *poiein*, first of all as a social-imaginary but also as artistic (poetic, strictly speaking) force, is consistently underplayed in favor of a certain analytic relation to knowledge, a philosophical *scientia* which, having fully engaged the permutations of *technē*, has formed the backbone of the pseudo-rationality that animates the instrumental logic of capitalist globalization. I say this because poetry continues to remain intransigent and socially significant in largely pre-capitalist modes of life, even while capitalist logic is raging infrastructurally (economically, technologically, culturally, even politically in some cases) at an extraordinary speed and scale (see Mufti, 2007).

In this respect, *poiein* includes (or is entwined with) a non-instrumentalist notion of *prattein* precisely so as to counter the permutations of *technē* as the primary agent in the production of knowledge and the making of history. The most profound meaning of this entwinement would consist in being attuned to the elusive details of history-in-the-making, which need not be understood in any sort of Heideggerian sense. This is why the poet cannot be equated with the historian, even when a poem is indeed a *bona fide* historical document, a text that produces actual historical knowledge. Even if we accept (as I do) that the most precise historical writing must, at some level, be poetic, there is no equation between, say, *historein* and *poiein* because even the most poetic historical writing, the writing that does indeed *produce the past*, does not (as it should not) obliterate the narrative frame of deciphering already established ways of the world. And although, surely, poetry does also narrate, the force of *poiein* pertains to a radical sense of the present, as something, if not quite boundless, then indeterminately bounded. When I link *poiein* to history-in-the-making, I understand it precisely as shaping matter into form in such a way that the form itself becomes the cipher for the utterly elusive meaning of its own (trans)formation.

This shaping does not really have a precise temporality; hence, traditional methods of historiography cannot grasp it. Its working is a perpetual reworking, a thorough

reworking, which would not spare even itself as an object of that work. (The cliché notion of a poem always being at work on itself, on making itself into a poem, should be understood here as an elemental force of *poiein*.) The duration of shaping matter into form, as Henri Bergson would have it, occurs in (or as) a radical present. This is a paradoxical condition, but that is why its boundaries exceed the capacity of both narration and symbolization (indeed, discipline), and can only be considered graspable in a performative vein. The energy of *poiein* is dramatic: literally, to form is to make form happen, to change form (including one's own). It is an infinitive force, in a strange way an attribute of the infinite, yet not pertaining to space but to action in space – a force that forms and yet, grammatically, bears language's many forms. The political substance of *poiein* is thus not just signified by its constitutively transformative power, which would be a mere abstraction, but by the fact that, since its ancient meaning, it pertains to humanity's immanent (even if perpetually self-altering) encounter with the world.

   On such terms of worldly encounter and as an extension of arguing for a disciplinary deconstruction of the limit of discipline – this, I believe, is essential to the project of comparative literature, the requisite work of which is quintessentially *poiētic* – let me now turn to the notion whose particular *poiein* I am especially keen on examining. Secular criticism did emerge from the core of those polemics over theory I mentioned at the outset of this chapter. The name belongs, as is well known, to Edward Said, and though it appears early on in the essay that introduces *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), it can never be said to have had the benefit of unequivocal definition. Instead of definition of a concept, Said provides multifarious descriptions of a task, which may include conceptual attitudes (without, however, providing safeguard in a concept) but mostly pertain to certain practices of thinking and writing, foremost among which is the essay as a form. In terms of the mode of knowledge it mobilizes, the task of secular criticism, according to Said, is explicitly literary. This is crucial to remember both in light of the discussion above, but also in light of much of the newly crafted terrain around issues of secularism, to which – skewed, as it is, by dominant philosophical or cultural-ethnographic modes of analysis – the methodological and epistemological horizon of literary studies remains incomprehensible.

   Indeed, in this conjuncture I must confess something that might sound naïve, but I feel it needs to be said. In recent years, I have often found myself saying, in conversations with friends or in public, something to the effect of trying to rethink the notion of secular criticism that Edward Said initially put forth early on, but never actually defined, although he practiced it throughout his life, and so on. Well, I've come to realize that what has burdened me about this account, the thing I've always had to defend but never had an answer for, is the phrase "he never really defined." I cannot say anything about Said's reasons or intentions for not in fact defining, at least in a satisfactory way, what he meant by secular criticism. I don't actually know if he really thought about it this way, whether these *Orientalism* era concerns really mattered to him more than a whole lot of others. It is, of course, irrelevant. The fact – and I'm embarrassed to have realized it so late – is that secular criticism cannot be defined. It

is not a philosophical concept that bears the weight of an *archē*, a primary principle, upon which a hypothesis may credibly rest or out of which a set of commands may be issued. It is not a principle at all, in the sense that whatever domain it stakes out can never be delimited *a priori*, which is to say just as well that whatever the limits of this domain they are themselves the conduits of interrogation. In this respect, secular criticism is not a theory but a practice – an experimental, often interrogative practice, alert to contingencies and skeptical toward whatever pretends to escape the worldly. Incidentally, there is a *co-incidence* here between interrogation and imagination, on which hinges whatever path we choose to take in order to evaluate the *poiein* of secular criticism.

Thus, there can never be a theory of secular criticism, which isn't to say that secular criticism does not engage in theoretical problems or indeed produce theories. To provide a definitional framework of secular criticism as theory would mean to set external and *a priori* rules for what would be secular and what would be critical about it, and this would defeat the intelligence of the practice on both grounds. This is a crucial error in Talal Asad's recent attempt indeed to *define* secular criticism against and away from Said's consideration. I'm referring to an article called "Historical notes on the idea of secular criticism," (Asad, 2008), a historically erudite piece that goes to some lengths and with subtle cunning to disorient the discussion about secular criticism so much as to declare it a "modern theology."

I have already argued against what I see as a self-serving equation between the secular and the theological, increasingly championed as a key (and new) theoretical juncture or, worse yet (as far as I'm concerned), as a radical political gesture. No doubt, there is a genuine debate on this issue, and the ire I have duly received testifies to it (see Gourgouris and Mahmood, 2008). I confess that I am still astonished by the extraordinary identification – so as not to politicize it overtly by calling it an alliance – between, on the one hand, exceedingly and dangerously reactionary Christian anti-secular attitudes on a mass scale in American society and, on the other hand, a rapidly increasing number of academics in American universities who become, rather indiscriminately, animated with antipathy over whatever is signified by whatever means as secular. That many of these academics are also considered radical anti-colonial and anti-imperialist thinkers makes this convergence exceedingly puzzling and indeed worrisome. My own sense is that the tremendous hegemony of identity politics, as it developed out of the mid-1980s, still operates as a giant magnet of both ideological certainty and uninterrogated affect over the modes of thinking in these circles. I am not astonished by this ideological persistence, but I am astonished by the lack of radical political imagination, especially when the historical times demand it.

I have thus little patience with attributions of this convergence to the adventures of the post-secular. In any case, I have always felt that the use of the designate "post-" was a lazy way of codifying emergent historical terrains. The facile and proliferating nomenclature of all kinds of "post-" somethings, bears with it the incapacitated response to the emergent and is thereby an already defeated designation. Certainly, it testifies to the impoverishment of the terms of discussion around contemporary

problems and undermines whatever might be those genuine efforts to think differently. The term "post-secular" is particularly nonsensical to me. (So is the term "post-political" but that's another issue.) In order to have any rigor at all, "post-secular" would have to mean that either some sort of pure secularity has been achieved – that the so-called process of secularization has been completed – or that the secular has been left behind, outmaneuvered or indeed abolished by another social-imaginary horizon. We know that entertaining the first possibility is absurd – secularization is unfinishable by its very terms as historical project – and, if the second were indeed to be true, then what is the condition to which we have now newly arrived? Let's give it a name. We don't want to say, religion – in whatever form its linguistic incarnations might take. First, because we have never left the world of religion – one cannot leave a world, except by dying. Second, because we claim to want to deconstruct the word "religion" and, in any case, we object to the ideological notion of the so-called resurgence of religion. Moreover, we do not want to concede to the name secular, yet we invoke it with the generic prefix that, as if by some inordinate magic, re-names it in the very claim to have made it vanish. These are regrettable contortions. To call our present historical moment "post-secular" is testimony to our incapacity to deconstruct the secular. One of the reasons – not the only one – is precisely the unwillingness to confront secular criticism as an experimental and (self-) interrogative engagement with the social-historical, or in the terms I have been trying to outline, as a *poiētic* encounter with the social-imaginary of our times. Instead, we confound secular criticism with the institution of secularism, whose metaphysics we conveniently identify as the new theology and, washing our hands of the latter (for who would dare deconstruct theology anymore?), we settle comfortably in the armchair of the post-secular.

I have obviously engaged in a catachrestic use of "we" for I don't think there is any way to absolve oneself – if one wants to claim having anything to say on this matter – from complicity with/in the secular.

Against this newly achieved comfort, I have proposed that one of the key tropes of secular criticism is to *detranscendentalize the secular*, precisely so as not to get bogged down with such simple equations between the secular and the theological. Indeed, the only possible equation that can be conceived to exist between secularism and religion – the corresponding institutional matrix for the two substantives – is for both to be equally and simultaneously subjected to relentless dismantling. That's why it is an error to ignore the difference between secularism and secular criticism, and Talal Asad reproduces this error unequivocally. The two terms cannot be equated because secularism is one of the objects taken to task – the task of interrogation and critique – by secular criticism. Hence, the really troublesome term here is critique.[2]

The root term of critique, the Greek *krisis*, carries a rather instructive multivalence. At a primary level of meaning, it pertains to the practice of distinction and the choice involved – in other words, the decision to pronounce difference or even the decision to differ, to dispute. In this basic sense, *krisis* is always a political act. In legal or philosophical usage, it is thus linked to judgment, and indeed to the fact that judg-

ment cannot be neutral (which we still see nowadays in the commonplace negative meaning of critique as rejection). In this way, *krisis*, as judgment, distinguishes and exposes an injustice. As extension of this meaning, we also find in the ancient usage the notion of outcome, of finality – again in the sense of the finality of decision.

Whatever it is that might be the modern weight of ethical language on the meaning of critique, its groundwork remains political. Decisions have to be made, and to make them is to be accountable for them, to be judged on their basis. This inevitably happens in – indeed, it produces – a field of contention. The act of differing, even if addressed to an array of neutral objects, can never be disengaged from the subject-position; the one who differentiates is also the one who differs. Considering that no subject-position in the ancient Greek world was conceivable outside the *polis*, the work of the discerning mind, the mind that makes and acts on a decision, would have to be engaged in political matters. Indeed, this might be a way to elucidate the rather conventional notion that, especially in the democratic *polis*, reflexivity and interrogation directed toward all established truths was an expected political duty. Because the one who differentiates is also the one who differs, the interrogation cannot be limited to the objective realm alone; it is, at once, also self-interrogation, which is why critique falters if it's not simultaneously self-critique (this is elementary dialectics). The bottom line: the authorization of critique cannot be assumed to exist in any *a priori* position, but must be interminably submitted to (self-) critique.

Asad attempts a similar genealogy of the Greek term, correctly accentuating the fact that the presumption of critique to any sort of universal reason is entirely the doing of European modernity. He also adds to the mix what I agree to be a crucial affinity of *krisis* to *parrhēsia*, which he indexes through Foucault's rendering of it as fearless speech. An additional way, however, to understand *parrhēsia*, more literally and precisely, is by virtue of the French expression that Derrida insists on, particularly in his discussion of the institution of literature: *tout dire* (see Attridge, 1992). This means not only to say everything (that is, to speak frankly), but also to say anything, including that which may not yet be, strictly speaking, sayable, including what is presently unsayable, perhaps as yet inconceivable, even impossible. Asad, however, leaving behind even Foucault's historical framework, devalues the notion of *parrhēsia* precisely by linking it first to Christian confessional practices, as they arise in the Middle Ages, and subsequently to Kantian critique and its mode of rationalist-transcendentalist ethics. This is because he reads backwards into *parrhēsia* a Christian-derived notion of service to truth. No doubt, both in Christianity and in Kantianism, though obviously in different terms, the critical faculty is authorized by *a priori* structures of truth, whereby the frankness of speech is measured by how faithful the speaker/critic is to truth's dictum. However, what sort of *parrhēsia* is it – indeed, even more, what sort of critique is it – when the ultimate authorizing principle, the *archē* of truth, is not itself subjected to fearless, guiltless, radical interrogation?

If *parrhēsia* or critique must be necessarily hinged onto the regime of truth – this would not be my preferable way to go, but for the sake of argument – it would have to distinguish itself as the great demon that haunts the regime of truth. In other

words, it can never be reduced to what Asad identifies as the core principle of Christian and meta-Christian ethics: "the will to be obedient to truth." If it is going to be worthy of its name and its project, critique cannot be obedient to anything. It must exist outside the command-obedience structure; it must be, in this precise sense, *an-archic*. From the standpoint he cultivates here, Asad would find such a notion preposterous. Even the basic skepticism in critique, which is arguably intrinsic to its most archaic signification, is reduced by Asad to an (at best) ethical-rational but ultimately scientific exegetical apparatus that seeks to exhaust the meaning of any object, to rationally extinguish all mystery. Not surprisingly, for Asad the overall schema is akin to how the textual hermeneutics of Protestantism produce a secularizing apparatus that evolves into the humanist scientism and technologism of today. In both registers, Asad discerns a whole machinery of critique that operates according to "the insistent demand that reasons be given for everything." This then serves to prove that "every critical discourse has institutional conditions that define what it is, what it recognizes, what it aims at, what it is destroying – and why."

No dispute can be made as to the latter – there is nothing neutral in critique, as I have already insisted, and, of course, no critique exists outside of a specific worldly encounter. But what Asad has in mind is essentially the model of a scientific laboratory, where the idea of "reasons being given for everything" is dictated by none other than the regime of calculation: it can only refer to the demand for either aetiology or causality – that is to say the monological arithmetic of *archē* as singular principle and singular origin. What is silenced here is the constitutive demand of the ancient notion of *krisis*: *logon didonai*, of which "reasons given" would be a linguistically correct but rather impoverished interpretation. Instead, the precise translation of *logon didonai* is accountability: the demand to make explicit one's terms of decision. For a critic who understands full well that critical work is never neutral and always takes place in a field of contention, this may often be a polemical task. It is always a *political* task. This is precisely why the conditions of practicing secular criticism, however institutional one wants to interpret them to be, are never reducible to professional knowledge. Let's not forget how vehemently Edward Said assailed discourses of expertise. Secular criticism is a practice that defies mastery. Secular criticism is indeed skeptical to the core, which should hardly be seen as a form of "secular heroism," but does in fact carry certain tragic characteristics.[3]

In a cognitive universe adulterated by Christian (and Christianized) ethics, the tragic is at best incomprehensible and most often abhorrent – this is true even after Nietzsche's unforgettable lesson. Less maligned, but equally misunderstood, is the skeptical, which is either turned easily into the cynical or neutralized by association with some sort of Cartesian faculty. But my sense of the critical and the secular demands that we exceed both the imperious court of Reason and the humble comfort of Piety. The critical and the secular have more to do with the skeptical and the tragic. Their terrain, as I said earlier, is crossed simultaneously by both interrogation and imagination. In my sense of things, this is the crossroads of *poiein*, the political infinitive of altering what exists.

Poetic thinking does not seek to absolve the world of its uncertainty, does not seek the incontestable, but submits its knowledge to the precariousness of living beings making history. Verifiability, in poetic thinking, cannot be an external process – authorized by some other modality or standard. The process of establishing truth is the very process of making truth (in the full sense of *poiein*), a process that is tantamount to the making (and, of course, always unmaking) of history. To submit truth to history is another way of saying to submit truth to critique, as explained above. And the skeptical element of critique, so long as it does not undo itself by serving as an alibi for imposing certainty (Cartesian doubt followed by truth-finding analysis), is indeed an essential element of *poiētic* (trans)forming.

Let me conclude by sharing a chance instance of rethinking that is pertinent to this discussion. Recently I was asked to elucidate a phrase from Aristotle's *Poetics* – a notorious phrase that has caused much consternation: "with respect to the requirements of art, a probable impossibility is always preferable to an improbable possibility" [*Pros te gar tēn poiēsin airetōteron pithanon adynaton ē apithanon kai dynaton*, *Poetics*, xxv.17].[4] I confess that, in light of writing this chapter, this mysterious phrase uncannily resonated like never before. Improbable possibility (*apithanon kai dynaton*) pertains to things that are unlikely to happen, even though they are in the realm of possibility or visibility. They may be rare things, but are indeed mundane things; they belong to an already existing world to which, were they to occur, they would be merely an extension. But the object of reflection in this text is tragic poetics, a kind of *poiein* that must seek to (re)fashion things mythical, things meaningful to this world but constituted of an order that challenges the limits of this world, things that may indeed appear to be impossible in the present time – at this moment in history in which the drama is conducted – but cannot be said to be *generically* impossible, impossible for all time.

The qualifier of the phrase is "with respect to the requirements of art [*poiēsis*]." For art to be poetic, it must engage in creating/shaping/transforming aspects of reality. Hence, for art, the impossible is fair game. However, because art also needs to be valued and evaluated according to certain standards of excellence (this is precisely the agonistic nature of theater in the *polis*), the impossible needs to be qualified as well. Hence, the likely impossible is preferable to what might be unlikely impossible. The likely impossible might be said to stretch the meaning of *adynaton*; it pertains to an impossibility that will ultimately alter the range of *dynamis* (capacity, power). The great poets/tragedians are distinguished precisely insofar as they can bring the impossible within their dynamic range, their *poiētic* power. Of course, for Aristotle, the impossible in art could never have the same status as the impossible in reality. We moderns say it unequivocally: there is nothing impossible in art. But this way we tend to forget that art (like everything else) is not value free – not all impossibles or impossibilities are the same. It is those impossibilities that somehow enable us to shape reality more profoundly – those impossibilities that matter to reality, that are critical to reality, that bring reality to judgment, to *krisis* – which give art (*poiēsis*), its existentially altering, its political, meaning.

NOTES

1 Let us note that this is the only academic space worldwide where one may even make the claim of interdisciplinarity being a reality – despite the fact that this claim is, in practice, still overstated and overestimated – because this geographical site, the living heart of the imperial beast, has served (since about thirty years ago) as the focal point of a worldly intelligentsia in-the-making, expatriate and homeless at the core.

2 I forego here the question of difference between criticism and critique, for it would require a broad tangent. There may indeed be a difference. Paul Bové in his *Poetry Against Torture* argues in favor of criticism as historical practice and against critique as philosophical speculation. Talal Asad, in the piece discussed here, situates the emergence of critique as a practice of theological interpretation (Reformation hermeneutics), which then serves as the platform for Kantian rationalist metaphysics, ultimately to claim that the two terms occupy a similar Christian/ secularist terrain. No doubt, a rather precise genealogy for how the two terms (critique/criticism) form different significations in the various European languages in which they come into use is warranted. However, the Greek significational framework that underlies them both cannot be gotten around.

3 Asad concludes with a single sentence set apart from the previous paragraph: "The 'critical attitude' is the essence of secular heroism." This peculiar wording remains unelucidated. This is unfortunate, for a serious attempt to confront the meaning of this usage would bring Asad's thinking regarding the secular straight up against the question of the tragic. This is a question he does not address, because it is a perplexing question, a question that trips up the easy narratives of both secularization and critique of secularization that implicate Judeo-Christianity with secularism.

4 The phrase also occurs earlier in the following variation: "Accordingly, [the poet] should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities" [*proaireisthai te dei adynata eikota mallon ē dynata apithana*] (Aristole. 1995: p. xxiv.10). Using *eikota* instead of *pithana* is not curious and gives us further insight into this otherwise inscrutable phrase. Though the two words are within the same range of signification, *eikota* can also be rendered as *euloga* – things that are well within reason, even if yet impossible, things that, were they to become possible, would belong to our language, to our horizon of visibility, our phantasmatic inventory.

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Vanishing Horizons: Problems in the Comparison of China and the West

Eric Hayot

Introduction

It would seem as though history had first to make this whole people drunk before it could rouse them out of their hereditary stupidity. (Karl Marx, 1853)

Against the most common mode of analysis governing the act of comparison, which involves measuring one thing against another, there are two lessons:

(1) That any comparison is, inevitably, not just a comparison of two things that pre-exist the comparison, but itself an attempt (conscious or unconscious) to determine their natures, to solidify their outlines, to locate them in some social, political, or historical space: in short, to know them *through* the act of comparison.

(2) That any comparison expresses, inevitably, not just a comparison of two things, but also a theory of comparison, of comparability, that is an act of philosophy and an act of practice. Any comparison shapes what it compares; and it shapes the theory of comparison that makes what it compares comparable.

Applied to the history of East/West comparison, of which the China/West comparison is a constitutive subset, these lessons allow us to notice that the terms "East" and "West," as names for two complex constructions of culture assumed to be encountering one another across some cultural divide, are themselves the historical functions of a series of comparisons. To write the history of East/West comparison requires us

first to observe, then, that the terms of the comparison are effects of the history they produce. No East without a West, conceptually or historically, not only because the fixed difference between the two cardinal directions that lend their names to the cultural formations "East" and "West" emphasizes their construal as opposites (hence Kipling: "never the twain shall meet," though he was mostly speaking of South Asia!), but also because in the history of East/West comparison we are always speaking, first, of a horizontally conceived structure that is not, given the particular shape and arrangement of the planet, geographically arbitrary; and second, because the East and West imagined as opposites are culturally and historically particular to one another (that is, they are opposed along geographic and cultural boundaries). True structurally – the "West" most obviously opposed to the "East" is not the same "West" that can be most obviously opposed to, say, the "Orient" or the "native" – and true historically – the "East" opposed to the "West" since roughly the seventeenth century has grown up around that opposition, learning to behave and think (if cultural constructions can be said to behave and think) as the West's East, with all the complexities and developmental paradoxes that such a learning and thinking imply. Both East and West have come to know what they are partly by knowing, and naming, the other that each is not.

There is, therefore, no East, no West (and likewise no "China"), without the comparison that locates them in some similar and thus legitimately comparative space (the famous *tertium quid* of comparison), and that differentiates them in turn from one another. This is probably true of all structural comparisons. But few comparative structures have had (and still have) as much cultural traction as the one between East and West, even today, when news of a new Asian century is marked by commentators on the political left and right (and in the East and West) as the inevitable next stage in world history, or as the last gasp of the local prior to its absorption into a fully global-capitalist ecumene (see Arrighi, 2007).

Partly this is so because, I think, the comparison between East and West presents the comparer (whose professional adjunct is the comparatist) with some fairly compelling structural and historical features. The major one is that for most of human history it is quite difficult to find direct literary and cultural influences between East (conceived largely as the geographic region covered by the modern nations of China, Japan, Mongolia, and North and South Korea) and West (conceived generally as Europe, plus or minus its cultural ancestors, the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, plus or minus its settler colonies in the Americas and in Australia).[1] Thus the literary comparatist's first tool – the connect-the-dots-style linkage of one book to another book, one person to another person, one idea to another, and all this, finally, to Kevin Bacon – simply doesn't work in the East/West context. If you want to compare the Chinese essayist Li Zhi to the French essayist Montaigne, both writing in the sixteenth century, you simply can't show that one of them read the other, or that either one of them read any text that the other did.[2] Getting around this impasse requires shifting your comparative strategy, possibly by changing disciplines: for economic historians enough data is available to produce comparative analyses across the East/West "divide" as far

back as 1400, and even as far back as turn of the first millennium (see Pomeranz, 2000; Frank, 1998; Abu-Lughod, 1991). Literary critics, who have traditionally focused on sequential comparatism and far less on contextual comparatism, have to wait till the seventeenth century to get any decent material to work with.[3]

The absence of direct connections between East and West is all the more exciting because for most of human history, since the late sixteenth century, the East has been the home to what Europeans have recognized as a "civilization:" a set of continuously existing, continuously self-renewing texts, histories, and traditions that legitimate a culture well beyond the success of any of its nations and empires. In the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cases, the tradition has the important advantages of, first of all, mostly not having been destroyed or erased by invaders, either European (who through indifference and violence sped many of the texts and traditions of the Mesoamerican empires into oblivion) or local (the Mongols, the Khitans, the Manchus); and second, of being written in a script that operated for hundreds of years as the intellectual lingua franca across a very large geographic region including a number of different cultures (much as did Latin and Sanskrit), with all the happy results that such a state of high communicability and cross-cultural engagement produces. What we have, or seem to have, in East Asia is, therefore, a fully *separate* tradition: a "civilizational" record of texts and thoughts that cannot, or apparently cannot, be connected to any of the major source-texts of the Western one, which operates in a cultural and histori-cal space that belongs fully to itself, and which is nonetheless entirely coeval with the Western tradition in terms of its historical depth, philosophical complexity, literary output, and geographic range (and is often deeper, longer-lasting, more complex, and more *continuous*).

The historical importance of this tradition is thus that it seems to present philoso-phers and literary critics (not to mention anthropologists, economists, and sociolo-gists) with *two worlds:* that is, two fully developed, self-contained and non-intersecting structures of the most complex possible arrangements of society, life, and thought.[4] The comparative value of that worldly difference is felt not only abroad, but at home, where a glimpse of the otherness of the other can produce new perspectives on our own faces in the great mirror of culture. Hence A.C. Graham:

> The great interest in exploring alien conceptual schemes is in glimpsing how one's own looks from the outside, in perceiving for example that the Being of Western ontology is culture-bound, not a universally valid concept. (cited in Saussy, 1993: p. 7)

If China is a world, then so too is the "West" that encounters it. Two worlds: but one species. And "species," the theoretical zero degree, the final *tertium*, of all compara-tive activity, becomes in the East/West case an historical zero degree, a material, lived "natural experiment" for the production of civilizational culture.

The opportunity such a mental structure and historical claim would present to comparatists, if it were true, would be absolutely immense: two huge, coeval archives of human possibility, each uncontaminated by the other, each self-generating and

self-regarding within its cultural and geographic sphere, each establishing complex worlds of human life and human experience. Thus two possible models for everything: for governance, for language, for philosophy, for medicine, for poetry, for music, for economic activity, for social life, for literature, for feeling, for science. And though it is true that any number of smaller, uncontaminated groups (tribes on islands or in certain pockets of jungle, for instance) have allowed anthropologists to make many of the comparative gestures that the East/West comparison seems to allow, the general absence of written records and the lack of "civilizational" status in those cases mean that the East/West case is, as constituted, historically and critically unique.

In fact one might say that East/West case is constituted *as it is* precisely in order to be the unique case that I have been describing here: to provide, as it did for the Europeans who invented it, exactly the kind of historical situation that would justify the purest possible comparative partner for a Europe which by the nineteenth century wanted to know a great deal about its own status (historical, literary, philosophical, economic, scientific) as it related to the field of the entire planet. In this sense "East/West" is the name, also, of a model of total comparability: one that arises at a particular moment in human history and social life, and whose trials and tribulations inside the discipline of Comparative Literature extend and ramify that moment and its imaginaries.[5]

What follows reviews the history of East/West comparison in the field of comparative literature, beginning with some brief remarks on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries but focusing mostly on the ways in which China and the West have been thought philosophically and comparatively in the US academy. That something changes in the transition from "East/West" to "China/West" goes perhaps without saying, but it must be said, as must the fact that the shift from "East" to "China" produces differences not only on the left side of the solidus but also on its right side, positionally Occidental one. I will attend to some of those differences below, as I outline some of the major "problems" that have constituted the field of comparison for the Chinese case, and govern, more broadly, the concepts of universal and particular, comparable and incomparable, that such a field imagines into being.

The Modernity Problem

What it means to compare East and West is inseparable from the problem of modernity, the history of its appearance in Europe and export through trade, exchange, and violence, to the rest of the world, including East Asia. The proper or native fields of the literary comparatist – poetry, drama, fiction, philosophy – develop their relations inside this larger ideological structure, in which the very meaning of the literary and the aesthetic are also always in play in the act of comparison.

The first great period of contact between East and West belongs to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries to China. This contact, which began in the late 1570s and continued through the middle of the eighteenth century, occurred

at a historical moment at which Europe's great leap forward, the series of scientific, cultural, economic, and political shifts that helped the continent move from a cultural and economic backwater to world dominance in the space of a couple centuries, was still in its infancy. The early Jesuit missionaries thus encountered a China that seemed to them remarkably civilized, technologically adept, politically well governed, and in many substantial respects superior to Europe.[6] The conundrum this created from a comparative perspective is easy to imagine: since for the Jesuits of the period the major document governing the passage of world history was the Christian Bible, and the Chinese were not mentioned by name anywhere in it, they had to reconcile the presence of the Chinese (and their obvious civilizational success) to a world-historical narrative that did not explicitly include them.

The form this conflict took was classically comparative. It revolved around the question of whether a series of Chinese ritual practices, including both folk rites and the forms of ancestor-recognition common to Confucianism, constituted a philosophy or a religion. If the former, then no major obstacles stood in the way of the Chinese becoming Catholics (good news); if the latter, then they were idolaters, and needed to be treated as such. The Jesuits assigned to the Chinese mission, eager for converts, made the former argument, and supported it with selective readings and equally selective dismissals of Chinese texts and patterns of religious life, lumping for instance Buddhist salvational ideology and Daoist longevity practices together as two kinds of paganism, while insisting on the true and fundamental Chineseness of the Confucian classics, which they interpreted in turn as theological and philosophi-cal cousins to the Catholic tradition. So they argued to their masters in Rome and to a series of Chinese officials and emperors that the Chinese were in some sense already partially oriented towards Catholicism – that the Chinese were, in essence, already part of the Christian world. Thus they produced typological interpretations of the classics "that separated them from their native context and presented them as shadows and prefigurations of the spiritual reality of Christ and his teachings" (Zhang, 2005: p. 13). Among the strategies devoted to this end was the Jesuit Matteo Ricci's translation of "God" as 天主 *tianzhu,* a term that associated the Catholic deity with the pre-existing Chinese concepts of religious space (天, heaven, sky, and 主, lord).[7]

Following Ricci's death in 1610, the Roman church became gradually suspicious of the interpretive strategy laid out by Ricci and his Chinese collaborators, and a series of visitors to the mission in Beijing (Niccolo Longobardi prominent among them) attempted to determine whether Chinese converts who still performed rituals designed to honor their ancestors were engaging in idolatry. The resulting "Rites Controversy" lasted for almost another century before being officially resolved in 1704 (and again in 1715), when Pope Clement XI outlawed the practice of ancestor worship for Chinese Christians. The Chinese emperor Kangxi responded by banning Christian missions in China in 1721. In 1742 Benedict XIV reiterated the Church's rulings on the matter; and the matter was closed, at least in the official register, though the debates it caused remained very much alive (and on occasion, life-threatening) for Chinese converts to Christianity well beyond that period.[8]

The Papal rulings on the Rites Controversy articulate an important formal decision about the nature of China and the West as subjects of history, and indeed on the ways in which the limits of universalism can be discovered, contested, and solidified in key moments of cultural contact and anthropological interpretation. At once generous in its sharing of the grace of God's gift with strangers, and blind to that generosity's culturally narcissistic origins, the Jesuits' attempt to think the Chinese into the Christian universe – no matter how clearly that gesture now strikes us as culturally suspect – marked both the beginning and the end of an era. For in the Rites Controversy we see how clearly the question of universalism encounters the question of cultural difference, and we witness, too, a moment at which the West's encounter with China as a relative cultural and technological equal made it desirable to translate *both* cultures into a mutually comprehensible (and ecumenical) language. If, for Ricci, "converting the Chinese required, as a first step, converting the [Confucian] Classics" into the language of the Christian Bible, let us recognize that the second step it required was converting the Bible into the language of the Confucian classics as well (Saussy, 1993: p. 36). Hence 天主.

By the nineteenth century the theological universals of the Christian church had been replaced, in Chinese comparison, with the secular universals appropriate to the renewed disciplines of the European Enlightenment, including political economy, philosophy, aesthetics, and history, each of which expressed the more general and more powerful universality of "science" as an organizing field for European mental life. The development of these large-scale comparative models in fields as varied as political economy (Adam Smith, Karl Marx), world history (Hegel, among many others), and moral philosophy (Chateaubriand, briefly, and Balzac), occurred alongside a vastly more dynamic set of trade and political relationships between Europe, the United States, and East Asia, including by the middle of the nineteenth century the first major migrations of East Asian people to the West (mainly the Americas). The new models of East/West comparison thus took place in a cultural and economic context radically different from that which had governed the earlier encounters.

Together the universalist models that dominated European thought in this period – themselves partially the function of major changes in cultural life, the prevalence of capitalism, the Scientific Revolution, the Columbian voyages, and the rise of militarized imperialism – helped establish the next great comparative context to govern East and West: modernity. Whereas the Jesuit universalism relied on a tertium quid whose ontological ground was the universal presence of the Deity, the nineteenth century's more secular universalism made its ontological ground the presumed singularity of all human history and intellectual development that made concepts of world history or science possible, and in which, as Jack Goody puts it, Europe's "historically specific advantage was generalized into a long-standing, indeed permanent, almost a biological superiority" (Goody, 1996: p. 2).

Arjun Appadurai writes:

Modernity belongs to that small family of theories that both declares and desires universal applicability for itself." (Appadurai, 1996: p. 3)

Modernity's universalism means that it relies heavily on internal comparison, defining itself partly as the mode that encompasses the difference between the present and the past, the modern and the non-modern. To be modern, to write about politics, history or economics in a modern way, means not only developing a theory of what economics or history was, but also showing how the expression of history or economics developed out of a consideration of and comparison with the non- or pre-modern that *nonetheless belongs to the same life-sphere and philosophical ground as the modern*. Modernity as a cultural practice is thus universal in a particular way, in the sense that it incorporates the non-modern not as an ontological other (that is, as something different from the modern in some fundamental and irreconcilable way) but as a historical one. The concept of modernity as universal thus involves the sense of temporal dislocation or disruption provoked by the ongoing presence in the modern of the primitive, under-stood as the fossil of modernity's own past in the present. Because the pre-modern is included in the system of the modern, the pre-modern constitutes a "world" of its own. The relation between that pre-modern world and the modern one changes his-torically: in the earlier, idealist (Hegelian) phase a vision of modernity as a collection of qualitatively heterogeneous times (in which China will never "catch up" with the West), whereas in the era of development theory (more or less after World War II) moder-nity theory presumes the possibility of total homogenization. In this later moment moder-nity is a theory of the universal possibility of its own becoming. It makes cultural difference a form of temporary, rather than ontological, distinction, which will ultimately be folded into modernity's realm of the same, whenever it finally arrives.[9]

In a gesture widely attributed to Kantian philosophy, the aesthetic in its modern form is widely assumed to constitute itself as a separate realm, a closed off portion of the world governed by rules that remain immune to the developmentalism, econo-mism, and technologism of the modern project; the "purposiveness without purpose" of the aesthetic object expressly removes it from a judgment of utility, if not a judg-ment of value (see Cheah, 2007; Lovell 2006). The aesthetic, like the person, does not (or should not) operate solely as a function of its material effects; this constitutes its particular dignity. Aesthetic culture thus becomes over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries one of the few places where a "two worlds" or indeed "many worlds" model of ontologically disparate comparison still applies, even as the universalism of capital-ism or liberal democracy is imagined to follow a fairly steady and common path to a singular end that had been already, or almost already, reached by modern Europe and/or the United States.[10]

What does this have to do with East/West comparison in the modern period? Everything. Because from the earliest gestures of modern comparison East Asia has functioned, as it did for Smith, Hegel, and Marx, as a significant counter-example to Western economic and historical development, with China's "early" successes (leading to its high levels of life expectancy, its complex governmental systems, and its tech-nological advantages in the manufacture of certain important goods) simultaneously acknowledged (as Smith wrote, China, "though it may perhaps stand still, does not seem to go backwards") and dismissed (Smith, 2000: p. 83). Chinese success in

agricultural irrigation, Wittfogel suggested, led naturally to despotic rule that choked historical development off at the knees; Chinese history, a mirror of its language, Hegel wrote, is unhistorical, the empty worship of empty signs (Wittfogel, 1981). The developmental narrative governing these attitudes was confirmed in the two Opium wars fought between the Western powers and China in the middle of the nineteenth century, both of which were won easily by Western forces. By the early twentieth century, such ideas were commonplace in East Asia as well, where Li Dazhao, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, argued, echoing Marx, that the spirit of democracy (of which communism was an elevated form) had "awakened an Asia asleep in despotism through the use of machine guns, steamships, and the media" (Zarrow, 2005: p. 37). The conception of Asia as an animal (usually a dragon) awakened by Western intervention became a commonplace of the European imaginary by the late nineteenth century (see Hayot, 2008)

In the sleeping dragon we see consolidated one of the major intellectual formations governing East/West comparisons: that East Asia, formerly home to a great civilization, had Rip van Winkled its way through the centuries, and needed now to remake itself in the image of modernity, to revitalize and renew itself in order to belong fully to a modern world that illustrated its potential future. By the late 1880s the two major East Asian powers (with China benefiting extensively from translations of Western texts first done in Japan) were actively pursuing modernization projects and expanding dramatically the amount of state support given to the study of Western and comparative science, as we can see from a question given for the Prize Essay contest of the Shanghai Polytechnic in 1889:

> With respect to the "Science" referred to in the [Confucian] "Great Learning," from Ching-kang-ching to the present, there have been several tens of [Chinese] scholars who have written on the subject. Do any of them happen to agree with Western scientists? Western science began with Aristotle in Greece; then came Bacon in England who changed the previous system and made it more complete. In later years, Darwin's and Spencer's writings have made it still more comprehensible. Give a full sketch of the history and bearings of this whole subject. (cited in Elman, 2006: p. 237)

Such a question teaches as much as it asks, since the framework of the responses it might reasonably expect are derived in part from the historical model of Western science that it lay out in its third and fourth sentences. Opposed to a far vaguer mention of "several tens" of Chinese scholars, Western science appears here as its own avatar, emblematizing in its very narration the organizing principles – progression, discovery, development – that govern its beliefs about knowledge. We can contrast the question's earnest broadcast of the ideology of science with a brief moment in the unfinished notes to Gustave Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, published a few years earlier in 1881, in which Bouvard's "rosy view" of the planet's future is expressed partly by his belief that "Europe will be regenerated by Asia. The law of history being that civilization goes from East to West – role of China – two branches of mankind will finally be merged" (Flaubert, 1976: p. 286).

Between the gesture that thinks the continued relevance of Chinese learning to Western science and the one that forecasts the merger of the two branches of mankind – between modern pragmatics and mystical universalism – appears the full range of ideological possibilities for East/West comparison in the modern period. The range is captured, and its differences adjudicated, in Zhang Zhidong's famous 1898 phrase, 中学为体, 西学为用 *zhong xue wei ti, xi xue wei yong*, usually translated as "Chinese learning for fundamental principles, Western learning for practical use." The line captured perfectly modernity's organization of the relationship between culture and technology, particularly as it appeared outside the West. It imagines a system in which the adoption of Western science does not erase the cultural inheritance or particularity of the non-West, but remains controlled by them. By insisting that Chinese principles (whatever they were) would govern the application of modern technology, Zhang effectively ceded the ground of the practical or the functional to modernity and its cultural others, while retaining for China a set of values that could subtend those practices and functions. Here we see how the critical division modernity establishes between the scientific or practical and the cultural (which includes philosophy and the aesthetic) plays out in the non-Western intellectual context: the non-Western or the local becomes in effect a cultural base, a sort of style or tone, and grants to a universal field of practical effects the management of everyday life.[11] In this sense the non-Western or the non-modern approaches, in the general ideological sphere of modernity, something of the status of an aesthetic object.

In the Chinese (and to a lesser extent the Japanese) contexts, then, the fundamental comparative question in the realm of modernity inevitably pits the truly "Chinese" or "Japanese" thing – whether that thing is philosophy or literature, an object or a set of cultural or religious practices – against the modern. The histories of the Chinese and Japanese encounters with Europe differ significantly. Beginning with Japan's victory in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), and especially with its victory over the Russians in 1904–1905, Japan's position in the European and US political imaginary diverged drastically from China's, since the military triumphs signaled its entry into the group of modern military powers. Significant differences between China and Japan in the post-World War II phase, largely oriented around political and economic developments, meaning that the imaginary roles they play in comparison with the rest of the world (and with each other) as we attempt to construct theories of world history or world literature continue to diverge in crucial ways. Indeed, Japan's status as a "modern" or "industrialized" nation throughout the twentieth century provoked an intense scrutiny of the difference between Japan and the rest of East Asia, a search for the Japanese "difference" that would explain its success. This pattern is repeated in the 1990s discourse on the East Asian economic miracle.

By definition though, more or less, the truly East Asian is therefore relegated to the realm of the pre-modern, and thus the realm of culture (including science and medicine) that developed prior to the East Asian encounter with Europe from the seventeenth century onward. Beyond the temporal and comparative boundary established by that encounter, "contamination" with the West renders suspect the nature

or quality of East Asian authenticity, and reifies it as much as possible in the realm of culture – though reifying in this way is, as I have suggested, a very modern thing to do.

The Metaphor Problem

The concept of the metaphor, a crucial part of the European aesthetic tradition since Aristotle, functions in contemporary literary criticism as a quasi-universal attribute of poetic language, if not, as Heidegger had it, a "basic feature of what is called 'metaphysics,' […] which confers on Western thought its essential characteristics" (Heidegger , 1997: p. 72; see also Yu,1981; Ekström, 2002). Heidegger's claim, though he was not thinking specifically of China, constitutes one possible opening gambit in the ongoing debate over the nature of the Chinese aesthetic, one significant strain of which has focused on whether or not Chinese poetry uses metaphors.

This is because, as Pauline Yu argued in 1981, the general cosmography of the Chinese lifeworld prior to its encounter with the West was metonymic, not metaphorical, organized along horizontal relationships that placed the variety of participants in the universe's workings, from natural forces to objects to human beings, in the same ontological plane. Thus no "super"-natural beings, no great leaps between beings of structurally different types, and thus no need for anything like a figure, metaphor, whose major function is to leap across the barriers established by the strong boundaries of *kind.* When Chinese poetry compares, Yu argued, the comparisons it makes do not create new "worlds" of meaning, or establish quasi-metaphysical equivalences between the known and the unknown.

> The things in a [Chinese] poem […] do not just mean "what they are," [and] refer to something other than themselves; but that other thing is part of the same world {as the first thing], and often a very specific part of it. The realms are not as different as even Aristotle suggested they might be, and we certainly find none of the "metaphysics of metaphor" endemic to the Western tradition. (Yu, 1981: p. 217)

Even when, as Yu suggests, a specific poetic object "cries out to be read as something more" than its literal meaning, it tended to be read along the lines of a "fixed, closed" set of conventional meanings, a tendency that subtended (and was abetted by) the tendency in the Confucian interpretive tradition to read that "more" as an allegory of a specific historical or political situation. The other realm to which such objects might have appealed, a transcendent space "autonomous and different in kind from the sensory world of the poet and his readers," simply did not exist in Chinese cosmology (Yu, 1981: p. 219).

That Chinese poetry affirms connections in the world, but does not create them, constitutes one major strain of twentieth-century Sinological literary criticism, where

it is largely read as a positive feature of the Chinese aesthetic, superior in many ways to the West's more anxious, grasping, and desperate figuration. This position draws together the work of such scholars as Stephen Owen, James J.Y. Liu, and François Jullien, where it functions consistently as a mark of interpretive sophistication and a mark of the appreciation for (rather than the dismissal of) non-Western cultural difference.

As Zhang Longxi notes in his extensive discussion of the trend, one of its major effects is to affirm the two-worlds thesis of East/West comparison and, by extension, to suggest that the philosophical or interpretive discourse governing one of those worlds cannot successfully be applied to the other. We would need Chinese theories to interpret Chinese texts, to develop terms like 賦 *fu*, 比 *bi*, or 興 *xing* (without translating them simply as "tone," "comparison," or "metaphor") that we would then apply to those texts, while reserving the Western terms for Western ones, at least for the pre-modern period. From such a perspective the non-existence of Chinese metaphor, like the non-existence of Western 賦 *fu*, would not be a sign that either side is ontologically poor, but simply a mark of the general untranslatability of figural language across the East/West divide. At the far end of such a position we reach a world of pure untranslatability, in which non-native speakers of Chinese would simply never be able to read Chinese poetry, much less say anything about it; the same would go for non-native speakers of Western languages. In such a world comparative categories would be impossible, since to name two things "literature" one must have a good theory of literature that stands outside them. That is, to repeat now the major argument of the first several chapters of Haun Saussy's *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, the relativism of the position take up by Yu, Owen, and others, which grounds its respect for Chinese difference in the claim of an absolute difference between Chinese and Western aesthetics, is not nearly as relativist as it would like to be, since the very observation of those differences presumes the possibility of occupying a point of view that could actually arrange them into a system of differences. The conversation goes something like this:

A: China and the West are different; China has no universals and no metaphysics; you
        can't use Western categories to understand China.
B: OK, then what categories can you use?
A: Chinese categories for Chinese texts; Western categories for Western texts.
B: Are the categories totally different?
A: Yes.
B: So the two categories are ontologically separate?
A: Yes.
B: But how do you know? Doesn't that mean that your theory of the categories is
        Western, in your terms? What categories are you using to understand the
        categories?
A: No, you don't understand. China and the West are different.
B: But what categories are you using to understand that difference?
… and so on.

The problem is that Yu, Owen, and others have confused their legitimate critique of the way that categories have been researched and understood with a critique of categories as a heuristic element of thought. Though it is true that the categories through which aestheticians and critics trained in European and US universities have not taken into account a wide variety of kinds of difference or texts produced outside the West, the solution to this problem is not to abandon categories but to make them better. To require first philosophy, in short, to live up to its promises by insisting that "the more diverse the literatures drawn on for evidence, the better founded will be any poetics we derive" (Miner, 1990: p. 238). The struggle is, if possible, to derive a poetics, which will of necessity be comparative, inside the framework of the history of the human labor in literature.

Here the most promising directions seem to me to lie in the work of comparatists like Martin Svensson Ekström, who in a series of recent articles on the history of metaphor and poetics in the classical Chinese context seeks not only to establish the presence of metaphor in the Chinese classics, but also to use that discovery to produce a better theory of metaphor than the one we would have if we grounded such a theory exclusively in examples from any one tradition (Ekström, 2002; 2004; 2006). This is at some level a simple point, and when you make it in other contexts almost everyone will agree – that you shouldn't have a theory of the Spanish novel that relies only on one novel, or on novels written by men, or in the nineteenth century, seems to me to be a well-recognized principle of literary scholarship, and one that doesn't for all that, invalidate the prospect of coming up with a theory of the Spanish novel. That when it comes to East Asia and to China in particular a similar claim – that you shouldn't have a theory of metaphor, or of poetics, that relies only on examples taken from one literary tradition – has so consistently produced instead a rejection of the very idea of comparability (however philosophically incoherent that rejection is) suggests how deeply the historical experience of East Asia as another "world" affects our ability to think about it, or through it. It is not just the case, I am saying, that we need to apply to East Asia a theory of comparative poetics that we accept readily when it comes to comparisons inside Europe, but also that the resistance to such a theory results from the ways in which the ideology of "East" and "West" organizes knowledge *against* just that form of comparison. Here as in so many cases we see how the concepts governing the history of East and West interfere with the philosophy not simply at the level of the example but also at the level of method (see Hayot, 2009).

The Authenticity Problem

East/West comparison on work done after the seventeenth century takes on a more familiar mien, adopting most of the strategies (and potential difficulties) of the influence-study model. Here we may identify as a crucial turning point the 1978 publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. *Orientalism* significantly recontextualized the history of cross-cultural representation and influence by suggesting that these latter

belonged, also, to the history of imperialism, attributing to the entire apparatus of European and US representation *and* scholarship a significant role in the ethical justification of the West's domination of the rest of the planet in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Said's immediate impact helped create the field of postcolonial studies, whose major geographic foci were, perhaps inevitably, those places where the European and American powers had had their most profound political and military influence on the world: Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

Even as the field of postcolonial studies developed in those areas, generating itself partly through the energy of conflicts between the new postcolonialists and the older generations of Orientalists whose work Said had so severely taken to task, comparative work on East Asia remained largely outside its imaginative sphere. This was because, everyone seemed to agree, China and Japan had never been colonized, a position held just as strongly by specialists in Europe and the US who had no desire to see their field criticized as complicit with imperialism, as by specialists in East Asia who wanted to insist (sometimes with pride) that the differences between East Asia and Said's "Orient" meant that China and Japan had never really been dominated by the West. As late as 1995, in the first pages *Orientalism and Modernism*, Zhaoming Qian attempted to wrest the meaning of the term from Said for a different use in an East Asian context:

> For Said the Orient is specifically the Muslim Orient. For me it is the Far East, particularly China. […] For Said "Orientalism is a cultural and a political fact." For me the concept is primarily a literary one. (Qian, 1995: p. 1)

Though Qian's redefinition never gained much critical traction, the attempt signals how uneasily comparatist work on East Asia would fit with the then-dominant model for thinking comparatively between the West and the rest of the world – and, to my mind, the degree to which an attempt to position China as an equal player in modern cultural production could lead to a rejection of Orientalism on essentially nationalist terms.

Qian's work on Ezra Pound belongs to a more general efflorescence of East/West comparative work that began with the work of Rey Chow (see Kern, 1996, Cheadle, 1997; Guiyou, 1997; Xie, 1998: Yao, 2002; Katz, 2008; Park, 2008). From her first book, *Woman and Chinese Modernity,* published in 1991, through the rest of the 1990s, Chow was by far the most prominent US-based scholar to bring postwar literary theory into the East/West context. Her transformative effect on the field can be measured by the fact that for the latter half of the decade she was almost inevitably the only China-oriented scholar to appear in conference panels, essay collections, or journal issues devoted to postcolonial or poststructuralist work. This pioneering role helped legitimize the work of the other scholars who followed her, even as her incisive and subtle essays and books challenged and elevated our thinking and helped us imagine that our own work might be relevant beyond the confines of its own specific geopolitical interests.

By the end of the 1990s, we can trace a number of contending factors at play in the general field of East/West work, as well as a number of different critical and comparative positions. One strand, with Chow as its avatar, produced interventions into "generic" categories of contemporary literary theory, particularly poststructuralism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism, that either drew on Chinese examples for their critical material, or made explicit the largely ignored importance of Chinese material to European philosophy, to American culture, or to tactics in filmmaking (see Goody, 1990; Liu, 1995; Lowe, 1991; Kern, 1996; Zhang, 1992, 1999, 2005; Shih, 2001; Porter, 2001; Huang, 2002; Bush, 2010; Hayot, 2004; Heinrich, 2008). Another strand, stemming from more traditional influence studies, revolved around what I came to think of at the time as the "authenticity problem." The problem, emerging partly as a response to postcolonial work on Orientalism, and, more largely, as a form of resistance to the new studies in cultural discourses, pushed a great deal of work into debates whether European and US "uses" of or references to East Asia were accurate. If they were – if Ezra Pound's translations could be shown to more or less correctly render their originals, for instance – scholars might then defend them against the charge of participating in Europe's postcolonial project, or of expressing an essentially unethical carelessness with regards to the cultural products of the rest of the world. Literature would be rescued from politics by the assurance of its fundamental realism, producing a world in which the literary critic's adjudication would largely involve setting a variety of historical and semantic records straight.

That the authenticity problem presupposes a strong theory of (and capacity for elucidating) the real world is its most obvious weakness. That it is in effect a theory of reference and of language can be deduced by recognizing its connection to another critical habit prominent in East/West comparison, which I will call the problem of "figural insignificance." Figural insignificance is a strategy for simultaneously acknowledging the appearances of Chinese material in Western work – "yes, Brecht (or Benjamin, or Foucault, or Pound) did refer to China" (see Tatlow, 1977) – and dismissing it – "but he wasn't really referring to real China; for him it was just a metaphor or a fantasy" (see Bush, 2010). This procedure, with its strong insistence on the difference between "real" reference (for example, Benjamin to Kant) and "fake" reference, develops along the lines of a suspicious geographic habit, since it is invariably the non-Western reference whose relevance it diminishes. A third member of this extended family, and an equal participant in the general structure of the East Asian comparative response to Orientalism and postcolonial theory, involves a defense of the European writer on the grounds that he or she was genuinely interested in (and cared about) East Asia (and its people) (see Laurence, 2003).

Between figurality and authenticity as potential objections to the politics of postcolonial influence study in the China/West field, we see emerging what one might think of as a "realist consensus" that aimed to restore to the field a "proper" relation between its two cultural behemoths. This consensus, now largely passé, allows us to observe once again the most consistent pattern in Chinese/West comparison: the way in which the terms that a critical practice is allegedly attempting to elucidate and

explain turn out to be exerting a strong pressure on the very categories used to explain the terms. Here, we might say that the tendency of China to merely "figure" in the work of European writers and philosophers, like the idea that the only true descriptions of China (or Europe) come from its natives (as though the natives do not, also, have a stake in the fantasy of representation!), borrows from more general patterns of thought in literary criticism, and inflects those patterns with a geographic logic. The tendency to judge certain forms of reference figural or fantastic, for instance, or to assign the right of authenticity to privileged people, goes directly to the heart of the "two worlds" model of East/West interaction. From its point of view *no Western reference to the East can be anything but fantastic and unreal*, since it can only guess wildly at the cultural logics or meanings produced by people who remain fully outside the bounds of the comprehensible.

One might expect that Eastern references to the West would be subject to exactly the same set of patterns, since one discovers in Chinese texts on Europe (or Chinese translations of French, German, or Spanish literature) an equal frequency of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and confusion as one does in their European counterparts (see Chen, 1995). But here modernity intervenes: Chinese figurations of the West end up looking like failures of imitation or failures of understanding – like, that is, intellectual and circumstantial failures rather than ontological ones. One example would be Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang's description of the work of Taiwanese modernists of the 1960s:

> Although these writers appropriated the techniques with considerable competence, and the outcome usually served the artistic purposes of individual works well, such an appropriation showed no sign of the essential modernist spirit of experimentation and innovation. (Chang, 1993: pp. 63–4)

The difference between West and East, viewed from the West, is a difference in which "they" are the products of an other system; whereas that same difference viewed from the East is simply the historical effect of the East's belated (literary and technological) development. This final twist suggests that even the most basic terms that we might use to discuss East/West comparison, namely "history" and "ontology," are themselves already players in the debate for which they should serve as guides.

New Horizons

The energy and excitement generated by the problems I have outlined so far should not be taken as evidence that East Asia was in the 1990s or even early 2000s immediately or professionally relevant to the vast majority of scholars in national language departments, or even to Comparative Literature. Even as the postcolonial world emerged into critical visibility across the literary disciplines, East Asian literature and its comparison remained on the outside of theory and necessity, looking in. The

pattern of attention that made South Asia, Latin America, and Africa so crucial for all serious people to know at least something about resulted from the fact that those places were in fact heavily colonized by Europe, and continue to speak European languages. One could consider, for example, the fact that most people have heard of the writer Salman Rushdie, but almost no one knows a contemporary writer working in either Hindi or Gujarati. Struggling against this sense of East Asia's limited relevance to postcolonialism and to Europe, Rey Chow wrote in 1993 that the question should be:

> How, *in spite of* and perhaps because of the fact that [East Asia] remained "territorially independent," it offers even better illustrations of how imperialism works – i.e., how imperialism as ideological domination succeeds best without physical coercion, without actually capturing the body and the land. (Chow, 1993: p. 7–8)

By the late 1990s, despite the appearance of a number of books pairing "Orientalism" and East Asia, as well as a brief flurry of essays and articles comparing French post-structuralism to Daoism, Chow's call had still gone largely unheard outside the field of Comparative Literature.

A decade later, however, the growing prominence of China as an economic and political power, as well as a dramatic increase in literary critical attention to concepts of transnationalism in a number of fields connected to East/West comparison, including Asian American Studies and Chinese Studies, has significantly changed the place of China in contemporary critical and cultural discourse (see Lim *et al.*, 2006; Chan, 2006; Lee, 2005). Will the now-mandatory recognition of China's relevance to the modern world, as evidenced by its economic "rise" and the ideologies of a new Asian century, significantly undermine the longstanding cultural habits that have governed the discipline of comparison? In some places, presumably yes, since the developmental story governing a Hegelian teleological version of history must now contend with evidence that the history of the planet does not move, as Pécuchet had imagined, inexorably from East to West. In other places, no, as ongoing debates on the potential role of Confucian philosophical concepts as alternatives to Western ontologies, or on Chinese economic development as an alternative model for modernity, suggest – the difference being that these debates now emerge more forcefully than ever from China itself, where they serve a prominently nationalist and consolidating function that obscures that nation's own complex internal history and its colonial or pseudo-colonial relations to Tibet and the Xinjiang Autonomous Region (see Bell, 2008; Avonius and Kingsbury, 2008). An expansion of the field of stupidity to include China does not constitute a significant advance in the problem of comparison.

From this perspective "vanishing horizons," a phrase that indicates both the infinite philosophical regression of "East" and "West" as categories of analysis, and my hope for a moment at which those horizons themselves might no longer dominate the comparative process, articulates more a wish than a prediction. If since the seventeenth century the major philosophical limitations on the problem of East/West comparison

have been constituted by the historical and geographic ideologies of modernity, and if, as I have suggested, the ramifications of that encounter continued to be felt and reinforced by comparative work in both the pre-modern and modern periods, might it be possible that another world-view, no longer dominated by the kinds of modern historiography and cultural logic that have given us the two-worlds model, could provoke new strategies of comparison? Such strategies would have their flaws, surely, but in a perfect world those flaws would be tactical, not strategic. Beyond the East/West horizon, conceptually beyond it, is the place where the horizon folds, becoming the ground from which it is "seen." Reading from that folded ground remains the best way I know to live up to the demands of a self-reflexive, self-challenging model for comparison – any comparison.

Notes

1   Here the role of India (as a place through which a variety of transactions pass, especially as they involve Buddhism) makes clear how the notion of "the West" depends on the separation of the "Indo" from the "-European" in the long history of Europe.

2   Rebecca Handler-Spitz manages just that situation through recourse to comparative models of urban and commercial development that rely mostly on the work of economic historians.

3   On "contextual" and "sequential" models of comparativity, see Hogan, 1996.

4   It is of course true that the West's sense of what counts as a "fully developed" life-world or as a "civilization" is very much a function of its own self-regard. This is also true in the East. We must therefore think of East/West as the name of a historical structure that privileges a version of historical importance that is itself already a function of the comparison, and of the historical position of those doing the comparison.

5   The "total," like the "universal," is in European philosophy after the Columbian voyages a figure for the globe, the planet, or the actual universe, which relate to it as does manifest to latent content. With the new rational perspectives developed in the seventeenth century, writes Ken Robinson, "there began to crystallize a more modern concept of the physical, of a material something independent of observers and existing unaltered beneath the various changes in the form of things" (Robinson , 1992: p. 91).

6   The fact that the Chinese had documents that recorded a history that extended beyond the agreed-upon Biblical dates for the creation of the Earth created another kind of historical dilemma for the Jesuits.

7   In the Chinese concept of 天 *tian* we glimpse a model of universality similar but not identical to the dominant European cosmological models, either pre- or post-Copernican. The concept of a 天 -based ecumene, based on a reading of the Confucian term 天下 (under the sky/heavens), has been deployed in the last decade as a philosophical and political alternative to Western models of universalism by Zhao Tingyang (see Bell, 2008: Ch. 2).

8   This summary is deeply informed by Saussy's *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic* (see also Mungello ed. *The Chinese Rites Controversy*).

9   See Christopher Bush's forthcoming work on *japonisme* and the aesthetics of globalization for a discussion of the way in which modernity's horizon of fulfillment settles, as though accidentally, on Japan (Bush, 2007).

10   For one modern, Hegelian source of such a view, now an emblem of the immediate post-Cold War period, see Fukuyama.

11   The appearance of the phrase "socialism with Chinese characteristics," which has described the official economic policy of the People's Republic of China since the mid-1980s, is in some sense a modern descendant of the

中学为体 model, though it appears to have reversed its polarity. Though this reversal is significant (it is "socialism" that now provides the "fundamental principles"), the sense that China needs its own particular brand of socialism – and that this need could become in effect a slogan for a major economic transformation of the country– belongs to the general intellectual structures of modernity's division between the pragmatic-universal and the cultural-local.

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Art and Literature in the Liquid Modern Age: On Richard Wollheim, Zygmunt Bauman and Yves Michaud

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Introduction

Until the 1970s a considerable number of theorists of art and literature were still looking to cast a wide enough net to capture all of artistic or literary production.[1] This was an uncertain task given the sheer diversity of artistic production within the Western tradition in the first half of the twentieth century, not to mention the diversity of non-Western traditions. A significant attempt to address diversity while accounting for all artistic or literary practices was formalism. In literary studies many critics and scholars shifted their attention from the study of content to literary form or to underlying structures; and prominent analysts of contemporary art gave pride of place to abstraction as the pinnacle and measure of all other artistic production. In their own time, Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg were serious contenders in their attempts to offer a new synthesis of all the visual arts that would seamlessly take into account the work of the most abstract of painters; but today their names evoke a closed chapter in the history of art criticism.

Clement Greenberg was a vigorous proponent of formalism in the visual arts. For him, the study of artistic form was the key to appreciate the full diversity of artistic production. Greenberg championed abstract painting because the criteria with which one should judge art was, for him, a description of form rather than content; and he thought the same criteria applied to the works of the past, or even to works from non-Western traditions which, according to him, can also be considered great if they matter from the point of view of their form.

Harold Rosenberg, Greenberg's most important rival, was also a champion of abstract art (and of abstract expressionism in particular), not because of its form, but on account of the lived experience of the artist who leaves traces of his/her self in their works. Rosenberg was particularly fond of those works, which exhibit the energetic brushwork of a painter, or works, like Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, in which the canvas offers evidence of an artistic experience. As Roberta Smith summarized:

> Rosenberg saw painting as a spontaneous, existential act, a raging with brush against the universe that conveyed the very essence of the artist's being. Rosenberg famously characterized the painter's canvas "as an arena in which to act." (Smith, 2008: p. 1)

Until the 1970s positions of the kind Greenberg and Rosenberg espoused were considered viable candidates for a comprehensive approach to contemporary art, and even for the renewal of art history. Unfortunately for them, the move away from abstraction in the art-world, pulled the rug out from under their feet: artists began to produce works that were ephemeral, that engaged with pop culture, that involved the celebration of cultural identities of various kinds, or the creation of new personal identities. A myriad of artistic practices emerged, which could no longer be reduced to abstraction or to traditional genres such as painting on canvas. Artistic happenings or the use of an artist's own body as part of the work of art are examples of practices that can no longer be accounted for by either of the kinds of totalizing views of art Greenberg and Rosenberg had been advocating. The two critics were not impressed or persuaded by these new ways of producing or experiencing art, but as Roberta Smith has pointed out, "art went on without them" (Smith, 2008: p. 1).

Art went on without them, not on account of new or better theories, but on account of its heterogeneity, which challenged traditional genres, and openly defied formalist reductionism. The new artistic practices can no longer be accounted for by a single set of criteria for aesthetic evaluation, not even by postmodern approaches, which were ingeniously integrated into some artistic endeavors, but not into others. The problem with Greenberg and Rosenberg is not that they failed to come up with the proper view of art that would account for its diversity, but that they were unable to appreciate that totalizing views are neither viable nor desirable in our times. The same can be said about the valiant attempt of formalists, structuralists and deconstructionists to offer a mechanism to account for any possible work of literature by giving pride of place to form, or signifying processes rather than content, even if those signifying processes are fraught with ambivalence or disorder. Formalist approaches to art and literature are no longer preeminent; they are no longer studied with enthusiasm as ways to make sense of literature, but as methodologies of the recent past. In recent anthologies and histories of literary theory formalism and new criticism are rightly placed together as antecedents to both structuralism and deconstruction, as approaches that converged in their purpose, rather than as competing approaches in the cutting-edge.[2]

Richard Wollheim, a major philosopher of art, developed his general views about art around the same time as Greenberg and Rosenberg, but today his contributions are more relevant than theirs, and his case is more instructive, because he was lucid enough to recognize – against his best efforts – that he could not offer a totalizing view of art, including literature, at a time when the art world was shifting its focus from the creation, consecration and conservation of great works, to concerns involving the experiences and identities of individuals and communities. It is symptomatic that for many people in our contemporary situation aesthetic considerations about what to do with their bodies, their identities, their property or lives (or how to express themselves about these matters) have become urgent.

Part One

"What is art?" is the question with which Richard Wollheim (1980) opens *Art and its Objects*. Wollheim does not give an answer to the question in this book, or in any other of his seminal writings on painting and aesthetics. In the process, however, he offers a powerful view on art that involves what he called the two-foldness of aesthetic experience:

(1)   The attention one pays to the medium of the work, like the brush strokes in a painting, or the linguistic aspects of a work of narrative fiction; and,

(2)   The attention one pays to the aesthetic qualities of the work of art, which, for Wollheim can be reduced to representational and expressive ones.

The minimal condition of art, even the most abstract work of art was an expressive quality for Wollheim, so that expression was more important than representation. One of the most attractive aspects of Wollheim's aesthetics was his insistence on the practices of the artist in the study of art. Art is not, for Wollheim, a reflection upon an independent and self-sufficient object, but the search of a correspondence between the activity of the artist and the understanding of the spectator. In this process, the artist is constrained by her ability to master her medium and the procedures of her art; and the spectator is constrained by the activities of the artist in order to determine which aspects of the work came about through design, accident, error, changes of mind, failures, etc.

Wollheim argued vigorously against strong versions of institutional theories of art according to which the institutions of art define what art is. That being said, his own views on art rely on a sociological component, namely on the assumption that an artist's activities, and the concept of art under which she is working, have institutional characteristics:

> We should not think that there is something which we call the artistic impulse or intention, and which can be identified quite independently of and prior to the institutions of art. (Wollheim, 1980: p. 105)

In *Art and its Objects* Wollheim attempts to find a balance between a psychological view involving an individual's impulses to express himself artistically, and a sociological view which underscores that an artist's intentions are exercised in institutional contexts:

> … for there is no way in which we can ascribe manifestations to this artistic instinct until there are already established in society certain practices recognized as artistic. (Wollheim, 1980: p. 106)

Wollheim thought that the question "What is art?" could not be properly disentangled from a number of other challenging questions regarding values and evaluation, most notably how art is valued by artists, how value plays a role in an artist's decision to make a work of art in the first place, how it plays a role as an artist is making choices in the process of making a work of art; and how those who scrutinize works of art choose the objects of their appreciation, or appreciate the objects they have chosen to scrutinize. In the 1968 edition of *Art and its objects* Wollheim recognized that the question of the value of art was a deliberate omission of the book, but he did not indicate why. In the 1980 edition he gave several reasons for the omission including a strategic one, namely that an engagement with the question of aesthetic value would have diluted the main objective of his polemic book, which was to privilege the role of the artist as a fundamental theoretical concern of aesthetics. Polemical considerations aside, for Wollheim,

> … evaluation [has] its own role to play both in the spectator's attitude towards art and, very importantly, within the artist's involvements in art or the creative process. Within the latter it functions regulatively, and it controls how and whether the artist should go on. Its role for the spectator is no less obvious. (Wollheim, 1980: p. 229)

Wollheim wanted to highlight, theoretically, the role of the artist in his views about art. Notions of evaluation might muddle the point, but when he took up the question of evaluation in "Art and evaluation," a supplementary essay to the 1980 edition of *Art and its Objects*, he remained tentative, limiting his remarks to a brief sketch of realism (the view according to which attributions of aesthetic value involve truth-value), objectivism (the view according to which art depends on the experience of humanity at large), subjectivism (the acknowledgement that certain experiences or occurrences can endow a work of art with importance), and relativism (the view according to which art is dependent on properties of specific human beings or specific groups of human beings, but not on properties that are applicable to all) as four competing views on how art can be evaluated. However, he did not make a strong commitment in favor of any one of these positions. In short, Wollheim acknowledged the fundamental importance of artistic evaluation, but he did not resolve the matter in his philosophical writings, and, therefore a central question in his theory of art remained unanswered.

There is an historical reason why Wollheim hesitated with respect to the question of artistic evaluation. It involves a tension between his psychological and sociological assumptions in the light of changes that took place with the proliferation of artistic practices in the twentieth century, the same changes which eventually relegated the views of Greenberg and Rosenberg to the history of art theory and criticism. In recent decades many artistic practices sanctioned, celebrated and valued by artists and by the art-world did not meet Wollheim's minimal conditions for conferring upon an object (or a practice) the status of art: *an expressive quality, even if it is conveyed in the most oblique or tenuous of ways*.[3] By insisting on this minimal condition, the only concepts of art, and the only institutional contexts Wollheim could take seriously were, in the final analysis, those, which were open to minimal psychological criteria for conferring value on art.

As a result of the tensions between Wollheim's psychological and sociological assumptions given the rise of artistic practices that were not predicated on any expressive qualities, and the fact that psychological considerations were more significant to him than sociological ones in the appraisal of art in the first place, the apparent symmetry between psychological and sociological assumptions outlined in *Art and its Objects*, gave way – in Wollheim's later writings – to a view according to which psychological considerations were privileged more openly, and decisively trumped sociological ones. In his later writings psychological considerations are necessary but not a sufficient condition for conferring artistic status to an object or a practice (in addition to the psychological considerations the artist must also engage with a medium); whereas sociological considerations are empty without the psychological one (even if the artist masters the medium). This is in keeping with Wollheim's vigorous rejection of institutional theories of art according to which the institution defines the work; but also of relativism, formalist paradigms, and cognitive appraisals of abstract art or of the languages of art that preclude expressive content with a psychological underpinning.

Wollheim was lucid enough to acknowledge that, in his own time, there was a plurality of competing and contradictory ways to define and to value art in general, specific works of art and artistic qualities; and in this climate he was willing to engage with philosophers and art historians who had meaningful things to say about components of his views on art even if they did not share his psychoanalytical presuppositions. But he was not willing to acknowledge that his psychological commitments to art might not resist the weight of that plurality, at least in the case of a considerable number of works of art that mattered to him. In short, his adherence to a view of art that relied on psychological considerations, made him give up his attempt to offer a totalizing view of art; and he stuck to the analysis of artistic practices for which psychology continued to matter.

Part Two

Other philosophers in the Anglo-Saxon tradition have agreed with Wollheim that the notion of "value" is a central consideration in the definition of art, a notion that can

demarcate the artistic from the non-artistic, the literary from the non-literary, the art from the craft, and the like; but they have been more sanguine about defending universal notions of aesthetic value that may no longer be relevant. In their book, *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*, Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (1997) launch a vigorous attack against realists and relativists in the name of objectivism, the view that art, at its core, involves some sort of shared human experience. They reject the view that art has any truth-value, and they spend a considerable amount of energy in their attempts to debunk postmodern, multicultural and postcolonial approaches to literature because they fear that postmodernists and identity theorists may devalue both the Western literary tradition and the appreciation of its great works. In their view a work of literature develops general themes, which a reader identifies through the appreciation of thematic concepts. Their ideal literary works display a harmony between a "perennial value" linked to a concern that happens to be topical. For Lamarque and Olsen, literature is an imaginative application of thematic concepts. So that, for example, in *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare is making the topical perennial in exploring innocent love in the context of specific family rivalries in Verona as imagined by the bard. Lamarque and Olsen assume a view of human nature that is unchanging, that can be articulated conceptually, and that the artist can express thematically.

For Lamarque and Olsen literature does not generate nor constitute "perennial themes." It is literature's undertaking to access them in relevant ways. Creativity, for them is limited, therefore, to imaginative application. Lamarque and Olsen are particularly strong and suggestive in their analysis of certain cognitive aspects of the literary enterprise, in their analysis of narrative, and especially in their study of fiction as a social contract of sorts. They also have an important point to make when they argue that to demarcate the literary from the non-literary the notion of value is necessary, and their impulse to defend literature from facile and uninformed attacks is commendable; but their approach to literary value leaves much to be desired. It is limited in several ways:

(1) They overlook the possibility that literature can generate experiences and emotions, that a work of literature can express what has not been expressed before, that it can offer unprecedented possibilities to orient our world of experiences and feelings.

(2) Their view does not account for a vast amount of literature designed to resist interpretation, or literature for which interpretation is beside the point. The aporias, paradoxes, contradictions, ambiguities, and willful strategies to defy interpretation of writers like Borges, Kafka, or Beckett would be beyond the purview of Lamarque's and Olsen's aesthetics because the failure to identify a universal theme topically applied is, for them, a failure in the work. Indeed, the writer who can no longer underwrite the unity and universality of the human condition, even when writing in the ruins of humanistic projects, does not fit their scheme.

(3) Finally, the authors of *Truth, Fiction, and Literature* portray postmodernist, multicultural and postcolonial approaches as a nuisance, rather than

responding to the substance of their challenge to literary studies. In fact they conflate the merits of the cognitive approach to art with their justification of literary value; because the usefulness of the cognitive approach as a descriptive methodology in artistic and literary analysis does not, in and of itself, underwrite any artistic canon.

The critiques of postmodernist, postcolonial, gender, and identity theorists directed at the canons of great works have been an open challenge to traditional literary study. If nothing else, they bring to light the conformism of those who take for granted the cultural value of works, the unexamined nature of some hierarchies, and, they also challenge those who overlook the possibility that a serious engagement with writers like Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes or Racine may require an initiation, special training, and efforts of a particular kind. Furthermore, competence in any one of these canonical writers does not guarantee competence in another: in fact the trained sensibility that allows a reader to enter into the profundities of one, may pose additional challenges to appreciate the complexities of the other. It was a weakness of traditional literary studies to assume that access to various kinds of consecrated works, genres, and cultural forms were natural or self-evident, rather than acquired.

This does not mean that hierarchies should not be discussed or affirmed, but only that they can not be taken for granted. Thus, Lamarque and Olsen's justifications will not do. Their presupposition that we are still living in an artistic universe whose value depends on the imaginative application of thematic concepts that link a topical situation to a predetermined set of perennial human values, to a hardened reality of the human condition, is no longer tenable. There may well be anthropological reasons why human beings need to tell stories, to produce images, to sing, or to dance; but these anthropological considerations are intransitive: we may well be able to work back from an artistic practice to the social context of its production, and then to an anthropological bed-rock common to humanity; but the anthropological bed-rock will not give us much guidance to determine the contexts in which artistic activity takes place in any given society, and even less so if we are seeking criteria to understand a specific artistic practice.

Part Three

Lamarque and Olsen are mistaken to think that by rejecting the relativism of postmodernists or identity theorists the dust will settle so that the great works of literature can continue to be appreciated, and perhaps new works can be identified as classics because they apply perennial values to new circumstances. The relativism of some postmodern or identity theorists may or may not be persuasive to some, and may even be irritating to others, but it is neither trivial nor arbitrary. Rather, it is symptomatic of a recent social transformation, which has had a decisive bearing on the artistic realm. The transformation has been hinted at and diagnosed from a myriad of intel-

lectual traditions. Isaiah Berlin's contention that the most cherished values within the same culture are incommensurable is symptomatic of an intellectual environment where perennial values are no longer self-evident. From a different intellectual tradition Niklas Luhmann has argued that the various realms in which an individual is obliged to function in our social world may involve values that cannot be reconciled, even if we can live comfortably with these contradictions. Peter Sloterdijk and Bruno Latour both argue that the time to unmask the illusions of the past must give way to an attempt to understand the new and unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves. Zygmunt Bauman has usefully called the new period "liquid modernity" to distinguish the social changes that have taken place since the 1970s from an earlier regime he calls "solid modernity" (Bauman, 2000). Bauman's account of the metaphors he uses to explain the transition from one kind of modernity to another is worth quoting at length:

> We are now passing from the "solid" to the "fluid" phase of modernity; and "fluids" are so called because they cannot keep their shape for long, and unless they are poured into a tight container they keep changing shape under the influence of even the slightest of forces. In a fluid setting, there is no knowing whether to expect a flood or a draught – it is better to be ready for both eventualities. Frames, when (if) they are available, should not be expected to last for long. They will not be able to withstand all that leaking, seeping, trickling, spilling – sooner rather than later they will drench, soften, contort and decompose. Today's respected authorities will be ridiculed, snubbed or despised tomorrow, celebrities will be forgotten, trend-setting idols will be remembered only in TV quizzes, cherished novelties will be dumped on rubbish tips, eternal causes will be elbowed out by other causes similarly claiming eternity (though, having repeatedly singed their fingers, people will not believe their claims any longer), indestructible powers will fade and dissipate, mighty political or economic establishments will be swallowed up by other even mightier ones, or just vanish, the foolproof stock will turn into the fools' stocks, promising lifelong careers will be found to be blind alleys. All that feels like inhabiting an Escher universe, where no one, at no point, can tell the difference between a way uphill and a descending slope. (Bauman, 2004: p. 51)

In fact, Bauman is one of many philosophers and social thinkers who have made the diagnosis of a contemporary individual who feels disoriented and who is aware of his or her disorientation. At the level of the individual we oscillate between concerns about our identities in as much as they require the analysis of our biography, or the accidents of our personal history; and another kind of identity, which involves our agency, our ability to transform ourselves, to turn our selves and our bodies into projects. It is also possible to have multiple and contradictory identities in different realms of our experience.

Thus, for Bauman and others, postmodernism, more than a lasting condition, signaled a transition between two types of modernity, and Yves Michaud's analysis of the current artistic regime makes the point that art is part and parcel of this situation:

> We have entered a new era. Modernity has come to an end two or three decades ago, and postmodernity was a convenient name […] to acknowledge the passing of modernity. It is now time to acknowledge that we have entered into a new mode of aesthetic experience, and a new world of art – one in which the aesthetic experience tends to color our experiences, in which life is presented in the modality of beauty, in which art becomes ornamental. (Michaud, 2003: p. 18)

Michaud's starting point is Wollheim's proposal for identifying artistic objects in terms of their artistic qualities, of the responses to those qualities by artists who engage in artistic practices, and by spectators who chose to engage in those practices. Ours is an age of diversity, which makes us rethink and question the unacknowledged diversity of the past, and to appreciate diversity in other places. Michaud is not committed to Wollheim's psychology, or to his related notion that expressiveness is a minimal criterion for conferring artistic status to an object or a practice. His focus is on the impact of our pluralistic world on artistic practices. For Michaud art is no longer necessarily aesthetic, and the aesthetic is no longer monopolized by art:

> Art today involves functions that include cognitive, pedagogical, ecstatic, and political. It also plays an important role as a means of collective communication and of community affirmation. […] In the current climate it is possible for an artist to lucidly engage in artistic practices that have nothing to do with aesthetics; practices that mock pleasure and sensibility, in order to value the process of making something for its own sake. (Michaud, 2003: p. 213–214)

According to Michaud we may be at the end of an era, but hardly at the end of art. On the contrary, we are experiencing a mind-boggling proliferation of artistic forms and experiences. In our pluralistic times it makes no sense to seek universal criteria to evaluate any specific work of art (see Michaud, 1999). The fact that we no longer have general criteria does not mean, however, that we no longer have criteria. Michaud argues that we have many domains with local criteria, and the criteria in one domain may well jar with the criteria of another. For Michaud aesthetic qualities are not akin to the establishment of a social world or an intersubjective community (neither Dilthey's *Lebenswelt* or Wittgenstein's "ways of life"). The aesthetic involves agreements or disagreements within a social world or an intersubjective community. It involves issues of sensibilities which may or may not be shared.

For Michaud, aesthetic value is an expression of the subjective experience of the artist, even if that subjectivity becomes normative for a group of individuals. Michaud is a relativist in as much as he acknowledges a plurality of artistic practices, but an objectivist in that aesthetic judgment may correspond to different sets of criteria for different practices. His is a theory of connoisseurship inspired by Hume's seminal essay on the judgment of taste relativized to account for a plurality of connoisseurs.

Artistic practices involve rules and conventions, and these rules and conventions allow us to determine aesthetic qualities. Michaud accepts Wollheim's general view according to which there should be a connection or interplay between the observations

of the spectator and the qualities that the artist has inscribed in his object, but not Wollheim's idea that expression is a minimal condition for art. For Michaud other aesthetic criteria can range from exactitude in repetition, resemblance, monumental character, virtuosity of execution, inventiveness within rules, rejection of rules, ability to frighten, obsessional proliferation, etc. The list of criteria is as heterogeneous as the practices that abound in the artistic world, but diversity does not preclude objective criteria in particular domains.

Wollheim's general framework has considerable explanatory power in the contemporary situation since any artistic practice requires mastering rules and conventions, most require the mastering of a medium, and aesthetic scrutiny involves an appropriate response to appropriate objects. Aesthetic experience, for Michaud, can have a wide range of possibilities; and aesthetic appreciation is relative to specific practices. To enter into the game of artistic evaluation one needs to use a complex and technical vocabulary which will be different if one discusses a sculpture by Tony Cragg, a rap song from the West Coast, or the success of an installation by Kineholz or Richard Serra. Those who become interested in an artistic practice transition from likes and dislikes, to stereotypical responses, to developed responses appropriate to the experience: from the experience of those who can't say anything about their experience, to the enthusiasm of those who have just learned a language, to the more subtle observations of those who have a considerable experience with the practice and with the practitioners. The language with which one engages with a practice can change as the practice changes. Here Michaud follows Wollheim once again in the view that significant changes in an artistic practice can come about not just through design, but also through failures, accidents, false-starts, and the like.

Michaud is particularly interested in understanding how localized artistic practices open up ways of feeling. He makes the point that significant ways of feeling open up in limited aesthetic contexts that are not accessible through universal principles applicable to all the arts. There are no universal or absolute criteria to understand every artistic practice, and there is no need to lament it, or to feel nostalgic about the past when art theorists sought such overarching assessments. Michaud's is not a theory of decadence or decline, but a recognition that aesthetic practices open up ways of feeling that are heterogeneous, rather than universal; and an acknowledgement that there are mechanisms to broaden agreement, including persuasion, seduction and coercion, which may or may not succeed.

Michaud agrees with Wollheim that Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades demonstrate his understanding that the art-world can confer artistic value to objects that may not otherwise be considered artistic. But whereas Wollheim can only take Duchamp seriously up to a point, Michaud sees in Duchamp's provocations the watershed moment that signaled the slow but decisive process where the boundaries that used to separate the artistic from the non-artistic can blur, where it becomes possible for attitudes and intentionalities of various kinds to matter more than procedures. In Michaud's account of the contemporary artistic situation it is important to acknowledge that the once transgressive gestures of Duchamp with his ready-mades, or Andy Warhol with his

pop-art transformation of Brillo Boxes into museum pieces no longer shock. These gestures have become so natural, commonplace, and ubiquitous, that today anything can become a work of art. In our time, the boundaries between high and low culture, between advertising and art have been erased.

In the new regime the procedures of the artist and the experiences of the spectators may matter even more than the artistic objects themselves. Indeed, the production of experiences and the affirmation (or creation) of identities have become central to the artistic world. Art has become a way to affirm one's own individual identity or one's solidarity or belonging to a community. A considerable amount of energy in literary studies in academia reflects the same concerns. This situation in the art world and in contemporary literary studies corresponds to the strategies of the denizens of the "liquid" modern who are preoccupied with their lives as projects which can be individual or collective, in a world in which individuals are able to plug themselves in and out of situations, the way one can plug devices in and out of a network. For Michaud the modernist attempts to find universal principles that account for the diversity of specific artistic practices is bankrupt, and institutional theories, formalist paradigms, or postmodern claims unable to go beyond irony all miss the point that the practice of art in the contemporary world has changed and that everyday life has become aestheticized to an unprecedented degree.

Richard Wollheim's conundrums about art and artistic value were symptomatic of an important change in the world of art. Wollheim's views on the psychology of art do not have the universal force he had hoped for; but its explanatory power is hardly spent. His general framework involving the two-foldness of artistic experience thus becomes particularly useful in order to account for understanding how art is produced and experienced. Wollheim's insistence on paying attention to a dynamic between the purposive activity of the artist and the artistic qualities that ensue is a rich way to think about art whether or not one is committed to psychological considerations, and even if expression is not the minimal condition that confers artistic status to objects and practices. At the level of the art-world, Wollheim's general views work well in accounting for heterogeneous artistic practices, and at the level of the social world, these views help to define the condition of the denizens of what Bauman has called our "liquid" modern world. Like Wollheim's artists, they are confronted with problem solving operations of various kinds, but their medium of operation has become their individual and collective identities, and these confrontations are equally central to contemporary literary studies.

NOTES

1   It is worth noting that since the 1970s there have been parallels between developments in literary theory and the visual arts. The art world has been as seamlessly receptive to theoretical discussions in academia, as literary scholars have been receptive to expanding their concerns beyond traditional literary genres. The same cannot be said of literary production, whose most radical experimental heights were reached in the modernist period; even if the

literary world has made considerable inroads in expanding its corpus, making it significantly more inclusive.

2   The general view is that formalisms of various kinds focused their attention on the text, that structuralism combined close textual analysis with attentiveness to phenomena underlying the text, and that deconstruction which argued that the order of structuralism "are founded on an essential endemic disorder in language and in the world." Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (1988). M.A.R Habib (2008), makes analogous points in his *History of Literary Criticism and Theory.*

3   In one of his last essays, Wollheim made a strong case for as aspect of the psychology of the individual as a minimal condition of art: "It is individual style that accounts for aesthetic interest and for the possibility of expressiveness, and that has psychological reality" (Wollheim, 2002: p. 85).

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9
A Literary Object's Contextual Life

Michael Lucey

Literary Objects and their Publics: Transmission, Circulation, Use

Whenever we sit down to read a book, it would be possible to pause and reflect on how and why we have ended up reading this particular book now. That is, how did the situation come about so that in this place I am reading this book? What histories led up to this situation, and how is this situation structured? How did the book come to be in front of me? How did I get here? How do the particulars of these histories and of this reading situation impact the reading that will take place?

In a set of lectures given in 1985 and published a year later under the title *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts,* D. F. McKenzie suggested that we find ways of renewing our attention to "the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission and consumption." Paying this kind of attention, he noted, would also alert us to "the roles of institutions, and their own complex structures, in affecting the forms of social discourse, past and present" (McKenzie, 1986: p. 6–7). We might then find ways of thinking about the production of meaning that happens not just "in" texts, but in the ways texts circulate, the ways they are transmitted and reproduced. To think in this way would be to "unit[e] us as collectors, editors, librarians, historians, makers and readers of books" and to encourage us to think about the significance of (or the signifying potential of) "the processes of their transmission" (McKenzie, 1986: p. 8).

It can be surprising and invigorating, especially for those of us trained to "read" a text "closely," when we make the effort to reorient our thinking long enough to realize how much of a text's meaning is not held in the text per se but in its *use* and in its users, in the uses we make of it, in the histories that accumulate around its use and

that shape its users, in the histories of its transmission and circulation. As practitioners of comparative literary study we regularly involve ourselves in the use of literary works; we subject ourselves to training in how to use them; we become part of their circulatory patterns; we transmit them (or parts of them) to others. It can become part of our critical practice to learn to watch ourselves doing those things, to find ways to objectify our own relations with literary objects, to objectify the set of practices that make up our "approach" to literature, to study the history (in which we ourselves are caught up) of the use, circulation, transmission of this or that literary or cultural artifact.

Our own ability to experience this book or that, will depend to some degree or other, on the history that brought us to it, on the institutional situation in which we find ourselves together with it, as well as on the history of our own formation as (more or less) skilled readers. John Dewey in a chapter of his book *Art as Experience* called "Criticism and Perception," speaks of the "endeavor to find out what a work of art is as an experience: the kind of experience which constitutes it." The critical apprehension of, for instance, a novel does not simply consist in coming to understand what that novel *is* or *says*, deciphering the meaning the novel *holds*. Both we and the novel bring something to the moment of experience in which an act of apprehension takes place. The novel itself provides part of the occasion for the experience, as does the structure of the situation in which the experience happens. The endeavor Dewey speaks of will include an effort to grasp the "instrumentalities of personal experience." That is, the critical encounter with the work of art is, of course, necessarily about the work, but it is about the work "as it enters into the experience of the critic by interaction with his own sensitivity and his knowledge and funded store from past experiences" (Dewey, 1980: p. 322). If we understand an individual's acquired knowledge, sensitivity, and fund of experience as acquisitions that are not simply personal, if we understand that they are socially structured, related to that person's trajectory through a particular social universe, related to her or his interaction with that universe, we can perhaps appreciate the degree to which the collected experience of a work of art by many people over time helps to produce its *public* meaning – a meaning that exists within and depends on the work's *circulation* and *transmission* as well as depending on the circulation, transmission, and inculcation of the modes of apprehension that enable its experience by any individual. There is usually something profoundly social in even the most private, isolated experience of an aesthetic object – perhaps all the more so when the object is made out of language, which is itself an irreducibly social achievement.

Even the earliest moments in a literary object's life can be helpfully understood as fundamentally social, involving an ongoing encounter (sometimes a partly imaginary one) between an author and a public, mediated by a variety of textual forms including literary works themselves. One helpful account of this primary stage in the establishment of the public aspect of the meaning of a given work can be found in an early essay by Pierre Bourdieu, "Intellectual Field and Creative Project." Bourdieu describes in that essay the way that "society intervenes at the very centre of the creative project,"

the way artists (and writers and intellectuals) have to "face the social definition of [their] work […] the success or failure it has had, the interpretations of it that have been given" (Bourdieu, 1969: p. 95). This is the case, Bourdieu points out, even for works that seems to disdain any relation to a public:

> The relationship between the creator and his creation is always ambiguous and some-times contradictory, in so far as the cultural work, as a symbolic object intended to be communicated, as a message to be received or refused, recognized or ignored, and with it the author of the message, derives not only its value – which can be measured by the recognition it receives from the writer's peers or the general public, by his contemporaries or by posterity – but also *its significance and truth* from those who receive it just as much as from the man who produces it. (Bourdieu, 1969: p. 97)

Literary objects often bear the traces of an imaginary interaction between an author and that author's image of the public being addressed. That is to say that often some aspect of the image of a public being imagined is recorded in the work itself. (We will see how this is the case in a novella by Balzac (1835), *The Girl with the Golden Eyes,* in a few pages.) Sometimes, for instance, works can be quite directive regarding how they are meant to be perceived. Sometimes they (or aspects of them) are only easily intelligible if you have already received the directive regarding how they are to be perceived through other channels. (We will see this in a couple of short texts by Colette, 1983a, 1983b)

Whether we are contemporaneous with the moment of production of a literary work or part of its posterity, when we write about it we contribute to what Bourdieu calls the "progressive objectivation of the creative intention" associated with the work, we contribute to the establishment of the "*public meaning* of the work and of the author" (Bourdieu 1969: p. 100, emphasis his). That public meaning is "necessarily collective," and may or may not be in close accord with what the author imagined as this or that stage of the creative process:

> That is to say that the subject of an aesthetic judgment is a "one" which may take itself for an "I:" the objectivation of the creative intention which one might call "publication" (in the sense of "being made public") is accomplished by way of an infinite number of particular social relationships, between publisher and author, between author and critic, between authors, etc. (Bourdieu, 1969: p. 104)

We might of course add to the list of social relationships Bourdieu gives that are capable of having an impact on the meaning assigned to a literary work, that of professor to student. Dewey, in *Art as Experience*, writes of "the function of criticism" as being "the reeducation of perception of works of art; it is an auxiliary in the process, a difficult process, of learning to see and hear" (Dewey, 1980: p. 338). Schooling in literature and culture is both about the production, conservation, transmission, and contestation of the value assigned to given literary and cultural artifacts and about the transmission of the forms of knowledge and experience, the techniques and prac-

tices of apprehension and interpretation, that enable that value to exist. Bourdieu, citing Erwin Panofsky, refers tellingly to the school as a "habit-forming force." That is:

> The school provides those who have undergone its direct or indirect influence not so much with particular and particularized schemes of thought as with that general disposition which engenders particular schemes, which may then be applied in different domains of thought and action, a disposition that one could call the cultivated *habitus* […] The school […] is entrusted with the function of transmitting consciously (and also in part unconsciously) the unconscious, or more precisely, of producing individuals who possess this system of unconscious (or extremely obscure) schemes which constitutes their culture. (Bourdieu, 1969: pp. 117–18)

Colette

It is instructive to think about the French author Colette (1873–1954) in this regard. It was in the 1920s and 1930s that certain texts by Colette began to be read in French schools, to be taken as appropriate introductions for French schoolchildren to a certain kind of "literary" writing that merited their study. (Note that there is, of course, a big difference between being accepted into the canon of literary texts read in secondary schools and that of literary texts studied at the university level.) A book by Marie-Odile André published in 2000 gives an interesting account of how Colette and certain of her critics constructed and disseminated a way of experiencing (of reading, of using) certain of her works that rendered them particularly suitable for inclusion in a school curriculum. André calls this process "classicization," and notes:

> Colette's work for the School can essentially be reduced down to three essential works, *My Mother's House*, *The Tendrils of the Vine*, and *Sido*. It would hardly be an exaggeration to claim that Colette is classicized thanks to three privileged excerpts, one from each of these books: "The Watchman," "The Last Fire," and "The Pleasures of the Dawn." (André, 2000: p. 349)

For our purposes, it will be most helpful to concentrate for a moment on *The Tendrils of the Vine* [*Les vrilles de la vigne*], a collection of short prose pieces first published together by Colette in 1908. "The Last Fire" was in that early context of publication dedication to "M … ," and we can reasonably assume that the person so designated was Colette's female lover of about that time, Mathilde de Morny, known to her friends as Missy. A number of texts adjacent to "The Last Fire" in that 1908 edition were similarly dedicated to "M …," including the one called "Nuits blanches" [Sleepless Nights]. (Most of the dedications would disappear in later reprintings of the anthology.) One particular letter of the final sentence of "Nuits blanches," a single *e*, carries a lot of weight. Many editions over the years, including some editions in print today, have chosen to leave that single letter out. Here is the sentence in French and in English:

Tu me donneras la volupté, penchée sur moi, les yeux pleins d'une anxiété maternelle, toi qui cherches, à travers ton amie passionnée, l'enfant que tu n'as pas eu. (Colette, 1984: p. 972)

Translation:

You will accord me sensual pleasure, bending over me voluptuously, maternally, you who seek in your impassioned loved one the child you never had. (Colette, 1983b: p. 93)

The *e* in question is the one at the end of *penchée*. If you take that *e* away, it is a man that bends over a woman as they make love. With the *e* present, it is a scene of two women making love.

If you were a fan of Colette's in the first decade or so of the twentieth century, along with reading her literary output, you could easily have followed the turns of her love life in the Parisian press.[1] Her affair with Mathilde de Morny was fairly common knowledge at the time. The text that would become so popular in French schools a few decades later, "The Last Fire," was, like "Sleepless Nights," a short meditation in prose, addressed to an unspecified "you," an intimate partner whose sex remains unspecified throughout the piece. Here are the final few sentences of "The Last Fire," a text set on a day in early spring, the last day on which a fire may be necessary to warm a cottage:

Later on, when I take off my dress, you will see me all pink like a painted statue. I will stand motionless before it, and in the panting glow my skin will seem to quicken, to tremble and move as in the hours when love, with an inevitable wing, swoops down on me […] Let's stay! The last fire of the year invites us to silence, idleness, and tender repose. With my head on your breast, I can hear the wind, the flames, and your heart all beating, while at the black windowpane a branch of the pink peach tree taps incessantly, half unleaved, terrified, and undone like a bird in a storm. (Colette, 1983a: p. 99)

What would there be to say about this text when it was read in a school room? What would that situation do to the text?

In fact, ten different selections from the short texts collected in *The Tendrils of the Vine* made their way into the school anthologies examined by Marie-Odile André, appearing on a total of forty-seven occasions. "The Last Fire" was indeed the text most frequently chosen, appearing fourteen times. "Sleepless Nights" appeared only once, with, one assumes, the final *e* of *penchée* removed. Doubtless what would have been taught in schools was Colette's rhetorical mastery of the short prose form, her attention to detail, to sensory perception, to sensuality itself. It seems unlikely these texts would have been read for their links to the subcultures of same-sex sexualities through which Colette moved in the early decades of the twentieth century. As likely as not, "The Last Fire" and "Sleepless Nights" would have been understood in these contexts as representing a man and a woman together.

Contexts come and go as works circulate through time and space. With the rise of lesbian and gay literary studies in the late 1970s, the importance of the original context of *The Tendrils of the Vine* began to be reasserted.[2] Another way to say this would be to say that if some of Colette's early texts were strongly recontextualized as they were made eligible for inclusion in French school anthologies, they would later be given a different form of *entextualization* by critics (often located in North American universities) who were interested in reading them both in relation to their context of origin and in relation to a context in which the work of literature in representing same-sex sexualities was taking on new forms of importance. Colette has had multiple publics, you might say, for whom her work (sometime the very same texts) *means* differently, publics who learn to experience what she has written in markedly different ways, publics who also learn to read and prioritize different parts of her total output.[3] Various bits of what Colette wrote move in different circuits, and are used to different ends. The pages you are reading here are thus part of an ongoing discussion regarding the context and meanings of these texts by Colette, an attempt to keep these works and certain of their meanings in circulation. The production and maintenance of those meanings is an ongoing project.

Entextualization

Most of the academic forms of literary or cultural analysis with which we are most familiar can be understood as practices of entextualization. As Jan Blommaert writes:

> Analysis is entextualization – a term pointing towards processes of lifting text out of context, placing it in another context and adding metapragmatic qualifications to it, thus specifying the conditions for how texts should be understood, what they mean and stand for, and so on. (Blommaert, 2001: p. 18)

In literary and cultural studies, we frequently speak of *contextualizing* critical practices (practices that involve presenting a cultural artifact surrounded by information related to the social and historical circumstances of its production, information that is taken to be helpful to understanding it) or of *decontextualizing* critical practices (practices that involve presenting a cultural artifact as if it somehow stood on its own and then analyzing it only with respect to what we take to be its formal, intrinsic, and perhaps ahistorical features). It is sometimes taken to be a central characteristic of a successful literary text (or other aesthetic object) that it be capable of surviving repeated decontextualization, that it have the resilience to go on shining across a long series of repeated entextualizations.

Context in relation to literary objects has traditionally been understood as those elements of a social surround that are relevant to the meaning that some text, or other kind of artifact, can be said to harbor. Such elements can be recalled in later attempts to make sense of such a text or artifact. In recent years, scholars and researchers in a

number of fields, including sociology and linguistic anthropology, have been developing a more dynamic notion of contextualization as a process, and their work has interesting implications for the study of literary texts in relation to various kinds of social issues such as (in the case of the examples from Colette and Balzac that I am using here) sexuality.

Consider the intriguing possibility, for instance, brought out by Blommaert, that aspects of an initial context for some kind of verbal interaction or for the production of some kind of aesthetic artifact, aspects that would arguably not have been taken as relevant initially (or might simply have escaped notice because they "went without saying"), could be "*made* relevant by later re-entextualizations" (Blommaert, 2001: p. 19). Only *later* would something a work was doing *at its moment of inscription* become salient. This would be one application of a way of thinking about contextualization dynamically, taking context as something subject to repeated negotiation, which would imply that the meaning that it contributes to producing is somehow dynamic, never finalized. Such thinking assumes that:

> Context […] is not just given as such in an interaction, but is the outcome of participants' joint efforts to make it available. It is not a collection of material or social "facts" (such as the interaction taking place in such-and-such locality, between such-and-such roles-bearers, etc.), but a (number of) cognitive schema(ta) (or model(s)) about what is relevant for the interaction at any given point in time. (Auer, 1992: p. 22)

Much of the work on context and the activity of contextualization that I am referring to in these pages has been generated in the study of live talk – talk which at some point moves into written form (a transcription) in order to be studied. But it is relevant as well to texts that begin their lives in written form. Sometimes people assume too easily that pragmatic characteristics of language (those parts of language that link an utterance to the moment or the scene of its production, to its context) fade or even disappear from written texts as they move on through time. A famous example of this is Paul Ricœur, who, in his article, "The Model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text," wrote that:

> … written discourse cannot be "rescued" by all the processes by which spoken discourse supports itself in order to be understood – intonation, delivery, mimicry, gestures. In this sense, the inscription in "external marks," which first appeared to alienate discourse, marks the actual spirituality of discourse. Henceforth, only the meaning "rescues" the meaning, without the contribution of the physical and psychological presence of the author. But to say that the meaning rescues the meaning is to say that only interpretation is the "remedy" for the weakness of discourse which its author can no longer "save." (Ricœur, 1973: p. 96)

But the pragmatic or indexical side of language does not for all that simply disappear within written discourse, and indeed the indexical functions of signs present in written texts, the semiotic features which are involved in putting these texts to use,

in reusing them, continue to provide a great deal of meaning throughout the career of written texts.

Otherwise, of course, no one would ever speak of context as something that can be brought to bear in a clarifying way on a text. But suppose, instead of imagining context as a fixed, existing set of recoverable features of the initial time and place of production that can provide clarification to a text (or a similar set of features from a later moment in the diffusion of the text), we keep our attention focused on contextualization as a process. Suppose that we take contextualization to be comprised of, in the words of Peter Auer;

> … all activities by participants which make relevant, maintain, revise, cancel […] any aspect of context which, in turn, is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence. (Auer , 1992: p. 4)

Or, perhaps, in the case of a literary text as it circulates through time and space, in any given locus of its *re*occurrence. Written texts draw, of course, on their context of initial occurrence or inscription as they are written, but any subsequent act of reading, retransmitting, or reentextualizing them is self-evidently a new act of contextualization. Each new act draws on cultural schemes of relevance envisioned or evoked by the agent performing the contextualization, as well as on acquired knowledge and acquired practices of reading, and perhaps leaves the trace of a set of socially determined intentions registered in this new contextualization. We might say that contexts can be laminated one on top of the other over time. They can also be forgotten for a time, or for ever.

This focus on the *dynamics* of contextualization differs in important ways from the more traditional view of contextualization that grounds the practice of much cultural and literary criticism. That traditional view tends to begin from the assumption of the coherent nature of a given text as a set structure for meaning with a given set of interpretative possibilities, some of which can be produced or revealed by making reference to relations between particular aspects of that text and related aspects of the socio-cultural world in which it was produced. Here, on the other hand, is a description by Michael Silverstein of the more challenging view of what contextualization might be:

> This broad construal of "contextualization" seeks to know how language *use*, among other sign phenomena that constitute social interaction, indexes – brings into contextual "reality" – those implicit values (better: valorizations, emphasizing the processuality) of relational identity and power that, considered as an invokable structure, go by the name of 'culture' (in the social anthropological sense). (Silverstein, 1992: p. 57)

The production, transmission, and interpretation of literary objects all form part of the interactional patterns that make up the culture that produces them or maintains them. These activities create, sustain, and transform concepts, forms of knowledge, and associated ascriptions of value that enable culture to perform its social work,

including the purveyance of meaningful social roles for the various participants in the activities that surround literary objects (author, reader, fan, publisher, agent, critic, professor, journalist, librarian, archivist, bookseller, blogger, student, aspiring writer, etc.). A given literary work owes its status not simply to its own intrinsic character; rather, that status is the result of the set of entextualizations in which it has been caught up across its life. Those entextualizations are tied to the persons and institutions that perform, enable, transmit, and preserve them. A literary work is thus a collective achievement, arrived at through a chain of interactions (some written, some oral) that have each evoked a variety of structures of symbolic value that are or were present in their given cultural moment.[4] As it moves through time and space it accrues meaning, sheds meaning, provokes meaning. Understanding its dependence on the process of contextualization for its meaning can inspire forms of historical inquiry as well as simple attempts to understand it *now*.

Balzac

Let me use the example of Honoré de Balzac's *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* to expand on some of these points. It's an important French nineteenth-century text for anyone interested in the history of same-sex sexualities or their literary representation. One might even say it has earned iconic status in this regard. For me, it's a remarkable text for the way it demonstrates Balzac's own sociological and epistemological curiosity about the same-sex sexualities he observed in the world around him – sociological in that he seemed to understand that the social forms that help shape same-sex sexualities are multiple, and are distributed and circulate in particular ways within a given cultural universe; epistemological in that he understood that available forms of knowledge about same-sex sexualities affect the very conditions of their perception.[5]

Now to make that kind of claim about Balzac and his novella, I am myself implicitly assuming a lot about the process of contextualization, and I am making a particular use of this particular literary object, *The Girl with the Golden Eyes,* taking it as providing evidence about the social world in which it originated, imagining it as referring indexically to that social world, implicitly invoking that world's systems of symbolic value, imagining it as being critically aware of some of the work it is doing in manipulating the symbolic values of its cultural moment. I am imagining my critical project as an investigation of this processual relation of the text to its own context and also an investigation of the text's ongoing production of meaning. I do some of this critical work by relating the text and its context to something salient within our own contemporary context (assuming you share it with me). In order to see what I want to see about a text like *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, I need to suspend it in a version of its own particular context (to entextualize it), and then to think about how the suspension itself, rather than the text or the contexts on their own, reveals to us now something about the history of sexuality, about the use of this liter-

ary text within the history of sexuality, and also about the ongoing production of meaning through repeated contextualization.

When you suspend a text in a particular context, you reveal how it points to that context, how it indexes it. Of course indexing (pointing outwards towards) a context is not just part of what *texts* do, it is also part of our own daily practice of existing, of rendering our lives intelligible to ourselves and others. Making ourselves intelligible in different ways in the different contexts through which we move is one of the most basic forms of social competence we all possess to some degree or other. *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* is, as it turns out, about social intelligibility in general, and about the social intelligibility of certain sexual practices and cultures in particular. Balzac's story casts different people, most notably the narrator, as arbiters of cultural intelligibility. But the narrator, to the extent we take "him" to be a coherent entity, is not the only arbiter of intelligibility in the novella. By having multiple such arbiters of intelligibility present within the same story, Balzac helps us to see that intelligibility itself is a cultural resource that is unequally distributed in a given society; that people both acquire intelligibility and acquire the skills at rendering something intelligible to different degrees; that different kinds of intelligibility sometimes compete with each other. Consider the way the story opens:

> Undoubtedly one of the most fearsome spectacles in Paris is the general aspect of the Parisian population: a population revolting to look on – gaunt, yellow, sallow. What is Paris other than a vast cornfield whose waving stalks are incessantly swayed this way and that by the winds of self-interest – a swirling harvest of men and women which the scythe of death cuts down more ruthlessly than anywhere else, even though it springs up again as dense as ever: a sea of faces, twisted, contorted, exuding through every pore of the skin the toxic lusts conceived in the brain? […] A few reflections on Paris as a moral entity may help to explain the reasons for its cadaverous physiognomy. (Balzac, 1974: p. 309)

The narrator here takes up a tone we might nowadays associate with the voiceover of a documentary film. Despite the objective sounding tone, the "information" and point-of-view he offers are ones we might more readily associate with a slightly suspect expert of dubious credentials appearing on a slightly sensationalist talk show. A sensationalist attitude is present here and there throughout *The Girl with the Golden Eyes.* How could it not be, given that the novella recounts the somewhat improbable story of the encounter between a young rake, Henri de Marsay and the mysterious Girl with the Golden Eyes, Paquita, whom he comes across by accident in the Tuileries Gardens one day? Each of them seems to hold an intense fascination for the other. Paquita is, however, extremely well protected by a mysterious set of servants, making it difficult for Henri to further their acquaintance. He ultimately schemes successfully to find a way to spend a few passionate nights with her; during the course of those nights he comes to the realization that she is using him as some kind of an erotic stand-in for an unspecified other lover. Insulted, he melodramatically concocts a plan

to assassinate her. Arriving to fulfill his murderous plans, he finds her already dying at the hand of her secret lover, a woman revealed to be a half-sister he didn't even know he had, but to whom he bears an astonishing resemblance. Paquita had been what we might euphemistically call this half-sister's lover, but might more realistically call her sex-slave.

The sensationalist tone, presentation, and subject matter might well be taken to be part of the point, part of what *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* is offering as a way of understanding its world – or parts of it. It offers an image of and an attitude towards a sexual culture that it ascribes to a certain set of aristocrats. We could say that the story offers its readers an attitude towards a certain kind of sexuality, that it suggests schemas and "cultural concepts" to its readers, that it suggests or purveys what it would like its readers to take as "authoritative knowledge," that it presumes upon or encourages shared attitudes toward the different cultural phenomena it represents (see Silverstein, 2004: pp. 631–34).

Of the many types of contextualization that could contribute to understanding a story like *The Girl with the Golden Eyes,* of course the kind that explains the historical situation of France in the 1830s, when the story was written, and of France around 1815, when the story is set, could be quite helpful, as could the kind of contextualization that would explain what kinds of associations the story's first readers might have had with all the places named in the story from which various of its characters hail (Paris, England, Spain, Havana, Georgia), a sense of its symbolic geography. I'll come back in a moment to the symbolic importance of the contrast between England and Paris. It's worth insisting first on another kind of contextualization that can be brought to bear on the story, that would situate it in a particular way within the discursive universe of its moment, in particular that part of the discursive universe that consisted in discussing aristocratic sexuality. *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* is a contribution to such an on-going discussion. It draws on the implicit knowledge of its readers of this on-going conversation, and the purposes it served for different kinds of people. The novella serves to draw people into that discussion (to generate more discourse) in a particular way – or perhaps in several particular ways. "To investigate the contextualization of language," Michael Silverstein reminds us;

> is […] to follow out the politics, the interested contestation of identities, that may not at first be apparent in a particular interaction but becomes apparent in a more enveloping (contextualizing) order of phenomena for which any particular interaction must be seen as the very site of manifestation. (Silverstein, 2004: pp. 638–39)

Now coming to an understanding of ways of conceiving of and talking about the sexuality of perverse aristocrats may no longer seem a pressing issue, but it's easy to imagine that it might have been one at a different time; it's easy to imagine that you could identify yourself as a particular kind of person by the way that you discussed sexually perverse aristocrats. Silverstein again:

> The participants' use of certain expressions […] indexes – invokes – structures of knowledge about the world […] What type of person, with what social characteristics, deploys such knowledge by using the expressions that actually index (invoke) it in a particular configuration of cotext? (Silverstein, 2004: p. 632)

What kind of a person, for example, would say something like this:

> Society people have warped natures at an early age. Having nothing to do but create artificial means of enjoyment, they have been quick to misuse their senses, as the working man misuses alcohol. Pleasure is like certain medicaments: in order to keep on obtaining the same effects one has to double the doses. (Balzac, 1974: p. 323)

These remarks come at the end of the opening passage of *The Girl with the Golden Eyes,* which offers a survey of the different kinds of people found in Paris.

Now in point of fact, the tone of *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* is quite unstable. On the one hand there is the kind of tabloid sensationalism that invokes what would seem to be a fairly standard set of prejudices about the perverse sexual mores of the aristocracy. On the other hand, there is another current in the novel that makes fun of those in French society (or in nearby countries) who are unsophisticated about the diverse sexual practices attested to in the world around them.

Henri de Marsay, the story's protagonist, is the illegitimate son of a certain Lord Dudley, who is apparently a man of wide-ranging sexual proclivities. We are told that in 1816 Lord Dudley "came to seek refuge in Paris in order to escape legal proceedings in England, where, of all things Oriental, only merchandise is protected" (Balzac, 1974: p. 331). That oblique reference to same-sex sexualities (which were treated extremely harshly under British law) could perhaps be called coy, or knowing, or sophisticated – a way of making a typically Gallic jab at English prudery. Later in the story, Henri de Marsay will himself make reference to that particular English quality: "We are taking on so many English things at the moment," he says to his friend Paul de Manerville, "that we are in danger of becoming as hypocritical and prudish as they are" (Balzac, 1974: p. 347). He makes this observation one morning when Paul has come to visit him and has invited him out to lunch. Henri asks Paul if he would mind waiting while Henri gets ready to go out. It will take him about two and a half hours and the help of his manservant to prepare himself, and Paul will indeed be prudishly shocked. His cultural frame of reference is not the same as that of his friend. He is less sophisticated, more prudish, more bourgeois, and yet an admiring friend of Henri's.

Of Henri, at precisely the moment in the story when he realizes that during their passionate lovemaking Paquita is using him as a sexual surrogate for a woman, the narrator will say:

> Since no form of social corruption was a closed book to him, since he professed perfect indifference with regard to all kinds of moral deviation and believed them to be justified by the mere fact that they were capable of being satisfied, he took no umbrage at vice,

being as familiar with it as one is with a friend; but he smarted at the thought of having provided it with sustenance. (Balzac, 1974: p. 377)

The tone of the story here seems sometimes to suggest a sympathetic allegiance on the part of the narrator with the blasé sophistication of Henri and a corresponding amusement at the naive and slightly bourgeois provincialism of Paul. (One late nineteenth-century commentator on Balzac's life wrote that "He [Balzac] claimed not only indifference, but rather absolute tolerance where mores were concerned; that is what his classical studies had taught him" [Lambinet 68].) Yet at other times the novella and the narrator are clearly invested in a sensationalist attitude (disparaging as regards aristocratic morals) that we might associate with the tabloid press or the gothic novel. This wavering tone is the source of the novella's rhetorical complexity; it opens the story to different kinds of responses.

The "Postface" that Balzac published in the first edition of *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* provides some evidence, perhaps a bit unreliable, of one kind of response to his writing from some of his contemporaries. It's also interesting to reflect on the effect of the removal and then the absence of this bit of paratextual or contextualizing material from many subsequent editions and translations of the novella. *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* is one of three novellas making up a cycle called the *History of the Thirteen*. In the postface, Balzac comments that many people have been asking him about the veracity of all three of the episodes in the *History of the Thirteen*. In a manner typical of many a realist narrator, Balzac asserts that:

> *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* is true [vrai] in most of its details, and the most poetic circumstance, which lies at the heart of the story, the resemblance of its two principal characters, is quite exact. (Balzac, 1976–1981: p. 1111)

He further insists that the real-life person on whom Henri de Marsay is based told him the story. Then he adds:

> If there should be anyone interested in the *Girl with the Golden Eyes*, they can see her again after the curtain has come down on the play, like an actress who, to receive her ephemeral crown of glory, rises up in perfect health after having been publicly stabbed. Nothing ends poetically in nature. Today, the *Girl with the Golden Eyes* is thirty years old, and her beauty has faded. The marquise de San-Réal [Henri's half-sister], who has rubbed elbows with certain readers of this tale this very winter at the Opera or at the Bouffes, is now of an age that women do not admit to […] This marquise was raised in the tropics, where Girls with Golden Eyes are accepted by custom to such an extent that they are practically an institution. (Balzac, 1976–1981: pp. 1111–12)

A number of details of this passage are intriguing. If some aspects of the make-up of the sexual triangle at the heart of the novella were "true," the murder which ends the story was not. What we now call sexual trafficking was certainly as real in Balzac's time as in ours, yet the postface seems to suggest that the trafficking and the murder

of Paquita in the novella belong to its "poetic" elements rather than its "real" ones. What does all of this information from the postface tell us about the *uses* of the text by Balzac and his contemporaries? What does my own use of the postface itself tell us about the uses to which it and the novella can be put today?

Additional elements in this passage from the postface call for commentary. If the revelation that both of the two women involved in the novella's torrid love affair are in fact still alive years later deflates to a certain extent the spectacular violence with which the story ends, it also calls our attention (and the attention of Balzac's contemporaries) to a subculture of women sexually interested in other women, a subculture that knowing observers should easily be able to find all around them in Paris – perhaps particularly at the theater, both on stage and in the box seats. The postface thus helps us to confirm a particular understanding of the novella, as a story both investigating the social distribution of ideologies and epistemologies of sexuality, of historical knowledge about sexuality's evolving forms, and also participating in the circulation of those ideologies, epistemologies, and knowledges.

Interestingly enough, *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* in fact had some early difficulty itself circulating as a text, at least in English. Sharon Marcus notes that:

> As late as the 1890s George Saintsbury excluded it from an English translation of *The Thirteen*, noting in his preface that "[i]n its original form the *Histoire des Treize* consists […] of three stories: *Ferragus* […] *La Duchesse de Langeais* […] and *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*. The last, in some respects one of Balzac's most brilliant effects, does not appear here, as it contains things that are inconvenient." (Marcus, 2002: p. 256)

In 1900 the New York publishing house of P.F. Collier reprinted Saintsbury's "complete" edition of Balzac, while continuing to leave out *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*. (Yet around the same time Harper and Row also reprinted the Saintsbury Balzac for an American audience, while choosing to include the novella in their reprinting.) Marcus goes on to note:

> In 1896 Leonard Smithers, known as a publisher of both Decadent literature and expensive pornography, published a limited, illustrated edition of *La Fille aux yeux d'or* with a translator's preface by the poet Ernest Dowson. Given its reputation as a work about forbidden sexual practices, it is not surprising that until 1886 no [British] review of Balzac's work referred to *La Fille aux yeux d'or* directly by name. (Marcus, 2002: p. 256)

The decision to remove an *e* from a past participle in a text by Colette in order to change the sex of one of the two people in a couple of women is a strong form of editing that has something to say about the way knowledge of certain kinds of sexuality is allowed to circulate or disallowed from circulating in a culture or across cultures. A similar observation could be made about the various choices made to limit the circulation of Balzac's *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*. Marcus argues that the nineteenth-century English resistance to texts such as *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* that represented same-sex relations between women is not only due to English prudery, but also

to differing French and English conceptualizations of and valuations of what is *real* or *realistic* in literary representations. That is to say, English critics wanted to encourage a different *experience* of literature (and therefore a different concept of literature and the literary) than the one they took to be encouraged by and instantiated in texts such as *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*. Marcus takes *idealism* rather than realism to be the dominant Victorian school of thought regarding what literary experience should be:

> Victorian critics […] assigned pride of place to their own version of idealism, reserving their greatest praise for novels whose characters exhibited the ideal and idealizing qualities of faith, altruism, self-sacrifice, and love […] British critics were suspicious of detailed descriptions of material objects and bodies, as well as of plots that established self-interest, knowledge, and power as the engine of social life […] British idealists […] [believed] that literature should communicate a moral vision shaped by accepted religious and social values. Although British idealists insisted on the novel's moral purpose, the rejected romance, melodrama, and fable in favor of everyday life, unity of plot, developed characters, and plausibility […] British idealists saw no contradiction between plausibility and conformity to a moral code. (Marcus, 2002: p. 267)

Marcus thus uses her comparison of the differing "aesthetic tendencies" (Marcus, 2002: p. 276) of France and England to demonstrate why there was, in some way, no mainstream space within English culture in which Balzac's novelistic project (in its aesthetic, sociological, and epistemological dimensions) could be received, understood, or experienced.

Resistance to circulation is, of course, part of what produces the patterns of circulation that come to define the place and stature of any given literary text. It is evidence of what McKenzie called "the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission and consumption" (McKenzie, 1986: p. 6–7). Those motives and interactions produce both the circulation and the different *uses* of literary texts. (Saintsbury had no use for Balzac's story, but Smithers did, and so do many literary scholars today.) Sometimes the different uses a text may have for different users leave their traces in the material absence of a letter or of a whole story, but sometimes their traces are those "virtual" ones that link text to context in the everyday performance of culture – traces whose reconstruction doesn't so much recover meaning as it moves on with it.

NOTES

1 For more information on this period in Colette's career, see Lucey (2006), *Never Say I*, chapter three.

2 See, for example, Marks, "Lesbian Inter-textuality," or Ladenson, "Colette for Export Only."

3 See Warner for a classic statement of what a public is.

4 "The broader concept of 'contextualization,' let us now contrastively recall, understands discursive interaction to be a multi-party accomplishment that indexically evokes the

structures of symbolic value lying behind both the ability of participants to interact in generating interactional text, and their sense of participation in interactional text (the two

being dialectically related)" (Silverstein, 1992: p. 69).

5 For a fuller treatment of these questions, see Lucey (2003), in particular, pp. 82–123.

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10

The Theater of Comparative Literature

Sharon Marcus

What has Comparative Literature been? What has it not been? What can it become? The first part of this chapter explores how scholars of the last hundred years have defined the field and concludes that the impulse to expand beyond national frameworks has often yielded a paradoxically narrow object of study. The second part takes up an example of such narrowness: the scant attention paid to theater by Comparative Literature in general, and theater's almost total absence from comparative studies of nineteenth-century literature in particular. This absence is puzzling, because theater was arguably the most important cultural form of nineteenth-century Europe and the United States, and certainly had the broadest appeal. The lowbrow status that accompanied its allure, along with the fact that nineteenth-century authors produced few plays of lasting quality, may begin to explain theater's exclusion from Comparative Literature, a discipline that has emphasized high art and print culture. That restricted definition of literature, however, is exactly what this chapter proposes to challenge.

As the only site in the academy for studying language-based cultural forms outside and across national limits, Comparative Literature should embrace the study of theater, which for many eras was not only supremely popular, but also supremely international, and never more so than during the nineteenth century. For most of this period, playwrights in one country freely borrowed the work of those in others, while actors transported works globally through world tours made increasingly easy by newly rapid and extensive transportation and media. The overtly transnational circumstances of nineteenth-century theater frequently led reviewers in every country but France to assert that there was no such thing as a national drama. Until the 1890s, when international copyright laws changed, most English plays were based on French or German works, a fact that Allardyce Nicoll suppresses in his still widely cited bibliography of "British" drama. Even the hair used in English stage wigs was, like British theater

itself, a global commodity, a blend of German, French, Italian and Spanish source materials (Booth, 1981: p. 5). National differences, fiercely contested throughout the century, became equivalences on the stage. Victorian dramatist Dion Boucicault transformed *Les Pauvres de Paris* (1856) into *The Poor of New York* (1857), *The Poor of London* (1857), and *The Poor of Liverpool* (1864), boasting, "I localize for each town" (Walsh, 1915: p. 95). What 1860s theater critic Theodore Martin called "adapting the French dish to the English palate" (Martin, 1889a: p. 192) was so commonplace that an 1849 newspaper article subtitled "Charge of Plagiarism" concerned a British playwright accused of stealing, not from the French original he had freely translated, but from another Englishman's adaptation of the same French source ("Dramatic Authors").

Given theater's internationalism during the nineteenth century, why is it almost nowhere to be seen in Comparative Literary studies of that period, and rarely discussed in Comparative Literature more generally? After providing some answers to this question in the second part of this chapter, I conclude by asking how the methods and goals of Comparative Literature would have to change for it to be able to include nineteenth-century theater in its purview, arguing that incorporating the methods and insights of cultural studies and the sociology of literature would allow comparatists to study cultural forms better grasped as processes than as products.

Comparative

The academic study of Comparative Literature has multiple points of origin that converge on one definition: the study of literature written in more than one language, usually in order to identify commonalities, differences, and points of contact (Rod, Weisstein, Friederich, Saussy, Trumpener). The classifiers of literary study, comparatists themselves fall into three categories: particularizers, synthesizers, and intersectionists. *Particularizers* compare national literatures in order to understand what makes them unique, viewing them as expressions of specific cultures, milieus and historical circumstances. To make such claims often requires knowledge that goes beyond literature, and cultural particularizers thus often become synthesizers with respect to the disciplines. Franco Moretti's (1987) *The Way of the World*, a study of national variations within the European *bildungsroman*, is one influential example of particularizing comparison; Walter Cohen's (1985) *Drama of a Nation* and Loren Kruger's (1992) *The National Stage* are two instances of such work in the field of theater studies. *Synthesizers* develop categories of analysis that hold steady over space and time. Up through the 1960s, synthesizers emphasized supranational literary terms such as form, structure, genre, themes, and motifs; beginning in the 1970s, synthesizing comparatists began to focus more on theories of representation and subjectivity. In both cases, the results were book-length studies that drew on texts written in multiple languages and historical periods but did not make strong claims about national differences, commonalities, or contacts: Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, Ross Hamilton's *Accident: A Philosophical and Literary History*,

Adam Potkay's *The Story of Joy*. *Intersectionists* are often both particularizers and synthesizers, since they focus on concrete interactions between national literatures, studying influences, circulation, reprints, and translations to show how literary developments depend on transnational contacts. For much of the twentieth century, intersectionists focused on particular authors and their international relations: George Sand in England, Matthew Arnold and France. Recently, intersectionists have expanded their scope. Works such as Meredith McGill's (2008) *The Traffic in Poems*, Mary McMurran's (2010) *The Spread of Novels*, and Amanda Claybaugh's (2006) *The Novel of Purpose* reconstruct entire networks of authors, publishers, translators and political performers and chart how their various links forged transnational genres and literary movements. Much comparative work combines all three kinds of comparison; the recent interest in world literature, for example, synthetically defines this supranational form, attends to the particular circumstances of individual works, and studies processes of intersection such as translation (Apter, 1994; Casanova, 2004; Damrosch, *et al.,* 2009; Moretti,1999; Puchner, 2006; Walkowitz, 2007).

To identify these categories is not to say that Comparative Literature has no history, but that its history has primarily consisted of alternately privileging one type of comparison, then another. The rise of vernacular literatures encourages particularizers; the emergence of new media tends to make it easier for synthesizers to construct frameworks that transcend linguistic and national particularities; and wars, revolutions, large-scale emigration, imperial colonization, and economic expansion all promote the kinds of contacts and commerce on which intersectionists thrive. Comparative Literature's cycles are also tied to those of literary studies more generally. From the 1870s through the early 1900s, when the critic's task was to evaluate, scholars read multiple national literatures in order to rank them (Gayley, 1903: p. 91). For the first half of the twentieth century, comparatists emphasized the particularities of philology and concrete influences, then in the 1950s and 1960s became preoccupied with the more synthetic activities of devising taxonomies of themes and modes. In the 1970s and 1980s, when theory became a lingua franca throughout national literature departments, Comparative Literature became a key site for doing theory; in the 1990s, when new historicism, feminism, and postcolonialism took hold among many literary critics, comparatists became more interested in studying power relations and working at the intersections of disciplines. In the last two decades, scholars have become more aware of the global dimensions of national literatures, and comparatists have similarly begun "to put the very concept of the nation in crisis" (Chow, 1995: p. 112).

These changes over time appear to be cyclical rather than linear. Although comparatists often adopt a rhetoric of rupture, a century of statements about the field reveals more continuity than change. Indeed, the evocation of radical beginnings and endings is itself an ironically durable claim, with comparatists regularly declaring every decade or so that the field is in crisis, either just born or on the verge of dying (Bernheimer, 1994: p. 2; Etiemble, 1963: p. 1–3; Wellek 1963; Higonnet, 1994: p. 156; Spivak, 2005; Greene, 2006: p. 214). For over a century, comparatists issued

calls, only recently heeded, to make the field less Eurocentric (Stallknecht and Frenz, 1971: p. xi; Bernheimer, 1994: p. 30). A tone of exile, dislocation, and marginality has pervaded Comparative Literature, and constitutes a significant continuity between mid-century comparatists and the postcolonial critics who in other respects effected a seismic shift in comparative literary studies (Apter, 1994: p. 94). The recent interest in studying international exchanges echoes much earlier scholarship, such as that of Australian philologist T.G. Tucker, whose *Foreign Debt of English Literature* was an erudite history of "literary borrowing" (Tucker, 1907: p. 3).[1] In 1993, Charles Bernheimer represented interdisciplinary approaches as a radical disruption of literary theory's insistence on decontextualization (Bernheimer, 1994: p. 41), but the call for interdisciplinarity can arguably be dated back to 1886, when H.M. Posnett advocated studying "the influences of social life on literature" (Posnett, 1886: p. 10). In 1903, Charles Mills Gayley, one of the first professors to create a Comparative Literature curriculum in the United States, wrote;

> I believe that without difficulty one could indicate a forerunner earlier than 1830 for every doctrine or ideal comprised today under the term Comparative Literature […] and for much of the method. (Gayley, 1903: p. 65)

Even the notion that there are no new ideas in Comparative Literature turns out to be an old one.

Literature

If the activity of comparison has remained fairly stable, its periodic shifts tied to regular cycles, what of the notion of literature attached to it? How do comparatists define literature? Is their definition any different from that of non-comparatists, and if so, how much does it vary?

One of the promises of Comparative Literature, and a source of its appeal, has always been the allure of knowing more. Comparatists hope that by reading works from multiple countries, we can attain a better understanding of literariness, literary history, literary production and consumption. In practice, however, it is more often the case that the greater the scale of reading (many nations, many genres, many time periods), the smaller the range of works read (Rod, 1886: p. 10–12; Damrosch, 2006: p. 4). Compare and contrast becomes compare and contract; to make their gargantuan task manageable, comparatists not only often read less, but deploy a very restrictive notion of what counts as literature. Thus, despite occasional calls to turn Comparative Literature into comparative media studies, most comparatists still adhere to the Romantic concept of literature as autonomy. Few would explicitly defend that autonomy, and almost none would grant credence to its Romantic formulation as the originality and genius of a uniquely great author. Instead, the autonomy of the literary object appears in more modernist and postmodernist guises: as difficulty; as refusal

of commercial mass culture; as overt citation of other literary works; as use of defamiliarizing tropes; and as incorporation of non-literary media. The tendency to gravitate to works that foreground autonomy intensified in the 1970s, when comparatists began to organize the field around theories of "literariness" (Peter Brooks, 1994: p. 101; Culler, 1994). This approach created a new canon of Comparative Literature consisting of intricate and ambiguous works that were anti-mimetic, highly figurative, and formally self-conscious. While such criticism overtly questioned the unity of authors and texts, in practice it elevated a few authors whose personae and writings exemplified extravagant or extravagantly ascetic literariness: Rousseau, Keats, Hölderlin, Flaubert, Mallarmé, Kafka, Benjamin, Beckett, Celan, and, more recently, Rushdie, Coetzee, and Sebald.

Even scholarship that breaks wholeheartedly with the idea of literary autonomy continues to organize itself around the categories of author, work, and genre. In recent decades, many scholars have shifted their attention from decontextualized literariness to the ways that political contexts and material conditions of production, distribution, and consumption shape literature. But individual titles attached to the proper names of individual authors remain the ground of many such studies. Take, for example, Lynn Festa's brilliant essay "Sentimental bonds and revolutionary characters: Richardson's *Pamela* in England and France." In it, Festa shows how Samuel Richardson's novel traveled across national borders to become "an overflowing storefront chockfull of saleable items" Festa argues that the mass market dissolves the artwork's "sacred singularity," and that we cannot understand *Pamela*'s transnational effects if we read only Richardson's text (Festa, 2001: pp. 77–79). But she makes this point by following the roads taken by a single work whose mobility depended not only on its mutability but also on its powerful self-branding. The work's spin-offs were valued precisely because they were spin-offs of *Pamela*, and we can see the hold of the singular text in Festa's terminology, which compares "*Pamela* the novel" to "mass-market *Pamela*," retaining the unitary work's tellingly monomymic title on both sides of the equation. Some of this is heuristic convenience; it is easier to track one novel's dispersal than to follow the complex paths of multiple kinds of objects traveling in numerous directions and shifting shape as they go. That heuristic convenience, however, inadvertently reinforces the very autonomy of individual literary works, and of literature in general, that the most innovative comparative work seeks to question.

Parallel Universes

So ingrained and self-perpetuating is our habit of thinking about literature in terms of individual works and discrete genres that readers at this point might reasonably be asking themselves, "What else could we do?" One answer, as my title suggests, is to pay more attention to theater, not only for its own sake, but for the methodological lessons it can teach us. While critics often distinguish between "drama" as literature

and "theater" as performance (Diamond, 1988: p. iii), I will use these terms interchangeably, because dramatic texts are always tinged by theatrical performance, with its intrinsic dependence on commerce, politics, collaboration, and the bodies of performers and spectators (Puchner, 2002; Jackson, 2011). Indeed, theater's lack of autonomy may help to explain drama's low profile in Comparative Literature. Drama is not literary enough for comparatists preoccupied with literariness, and too literary for those interested in orienting the field towards interdisciplinarity, the "sister arts," and media studies. As a result, drama plays no role in most of the comparative work I have cited so far, and is absent from most major statements about and examples of comparative literary study.[2] This is all the more striking because the many scholars of early modern literature who focus on drama and pay ample attention to its transnational dimensions could offer excellent models for defining Comparative Literature – if their work were taken into account when Comparative Literature sets out to define itself. The A.C.L.A. reports on the state of the field issued each decade, however, tend to focus on literature of the last two centuries, and offer only a few scattered mentions of drama; articles in Comparative Literature journals focus on prose and poetry, as do Comparative Literature textbooks, anthologies, and surveys of the field. Encyclopedic comparative studies tend to scant drama; who remembers (or reads) the few chapters on plays in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, most of which disparage their insufficient realism (Auerbach, 1953: p. 441)? Both high theory and materialist history ignore drama; with the exception of Julie Peters' magisterial study *Theatre of the Book*, studies of the transnational circulation of literature and comparative theories of literariness focused on the centuries after the Renaissance have emphasized poetry and the novel. A 1988 collection of essays that sought to introduce interdisciplinarity into Comparative Literature included articles on novels, poetry, biography, and case histories, but so normal is drama's absence from Comparative Literature that the editors did not even note its nonappearance when apologetically listing the genres not represented in their collection (Koelb and Noakes, 1988). The editors of *The Princeton Sourcebook on Comparative Literature* define the field as straining against limits in order "to grasp the infinite variety of the world's literary production," and therefore ask, "why stop with literature," listing film, art, music, history, anthropology, and biology as ways to extend Comparative Literature's scope (Damrosch *et al.*, 2009: p. ix). But they do not observe that it would be reasonable to add drama to their list, given its negligible presence in their own anthology.

The pervasive absence of drama from Comparative Literature is especially perplexing given that drama studies has long been deeply comparative in practice. World drama by world authors with world audiences has long been the default framework for drama and theater studies. Many influential surveys of drama that appeared from the 1940s through the 1960s, such as Francis Fergusson's *The Idea of a Theater* (1953), Robert Brustein's *The Theatre of Revolt* (1962), and Lionel Abel's *Metatheatre* (1963) adopted a transhistorical, comparative standpoint that encompassed authors as various as Racine, Calderón, Schiller, Wagner, Ibsen, Chekhov, Shaw, Brecht, Pirandello, and Genet. Unlike their scholarly counterparts, however, who were busy providing

theories and methods of Comparative Literature while creating journals, associations, departments, undergraduate curricula, and graduate programs, the authors of those works on drama never explicated what licensed them to write about works from such disparate languages, nations, and historical periods. A grant to foster work in Comparative Literature helped George Steiner to write *The Death of Tragedy* (1961), but his book neither acknowledges nor justifies its comparative armature. Similarly, in *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (1952), later revised as *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (1969), Raymond Williams shows no signs of his signature investment in the local, historical, and material circumstances of culture. Instead, he analyzes works with little regard for whether their authors are Russian, French, Italian, or Irish, offers no account of how authors in such disparate countries and circumstances came to share the same "structures of feeling," and never explains how plays written in multiple languages all became accessible to him in English. Written years later, Austin Quigley's *The Modern Stage and Other Worlds* (1985) similarly finds motifs that unite British, German, French, Scandinavian and Italian drama, but never explains how playwrights in such different locations all converged on the same theme. Quigley identifies the existence of multiple, irreconcilable worlds as the unifying concern of modern playwrights, making it even more noteworthy that the disciplinary norms of drama studies do not require him to address how authors obsessed with heterogeneity all came to express themselves so homogeneously.

Relative to the novel and poetry, drama thus spawned a large number of comparative studies whose authors appeared to have had little contact with the discipline of Comparative Literature, which, in turn, rarely included drama in its purview. It is as though comparatists and drama scholars occupy parallel universes: in one, the comparatists compile bibliographies, develop methods and theories, and edit textbooks, journals, and anthologies that never take account of drama, while in the other, drama scholars remain blissfully unaware that placing Calderón alongside Schiller and Pirandello, or even Cocteau alongside Pinter, might require some justification. The absence of drama is an unexamined norm of Comparative Literature, and unexamined comparison is the default mode of drama studies for every period except the early modern, where drama attains the status of literature. Recently, some theater scholars have begun to ask comparative questions about the links among theater, religion, and politics, about theater's connections to other art forms and media, and about intercultural transactions between regions with major power disparities (Kruger, 1992: Fischer-Lichte, 1997). But doing so has still not brought drama studies into the sights of those defining the institution and theorization of Comparative Literature.

Found in Transit

The paucity of drama in Comparative Literature and the ubiquity of comparative frameworks in drama studies is a conjunction puzzling enough to merit exploration.

What has caused it, and what might happen if we brought together ideas, knowledge, approaches, and texts that scholars have kept apart?

There is no obvious explanation for the slightness of theater's presence in Comparative Literature. There is a rich body of work at the intersection of theory and theater; theorists of the last two decades in particular have drawn on ideas about performance and the performative dimensions of language, while theater scholars have used the work of Benjamin and Derrida to interrogate the mimetic illusionism of naturalist drama and stagecraft. The mutual engagement of theater studies and Comparative Literature with theory, however, has not produced an equally vital link between Comparative Literature and theater. Comparative Literature continues by and large to ignore theater, and, with some notable exceptions, most recent studies of drama and performance either operate at the level of the individual nation, region, or city, or continue theater criticism's tradition of naïve, unreflective comparison.[3]

Drama's slight presence in comparative literary studies probably reflects its marginal situation in academic departments based on national literatures. Most professors in English and French departments do not consider it essential to know much about drama. Because theater studies has tended to thrive most when established as a distinct discipline, with its own departments, journals, and conferences (Jackson, 2004), literature professors can go about their business and rarely hear about drama. While scholars of nineteenth-century literature, for example, have produced brilliant studies of how novelists engaged with theatrical modes such as melodrama (Peter Brooks, 1995; Hadley, 1995) and with structures of theatricality and spectacle (Litvak, 1992; Samuels, 2004; Allen, 2003; Kurnick, in progress), their work has focused on novels, and thus done little to integrate dramatic works into the study of British and French literature. Most reading lists for qualifying examinations in nineteenth-century British literature include one or two plays by Wilde, and perhaps one or two Romantic closet dramas, but no plays written between 1820 and 1890. French lists might include one Hugo play, though more commonly the sole representative of nineteenth-century French dramatic literature before the 1890s is Hugo's unproduced play *Cromwell*, usually read only for its preface's declaration of Romantic aesthetics, rather than for its dramaturgical ideas.

Why do scholars of nineteenth-century British and French literature ignore drama? Was it a dying form? No; throughout the nineteenth century, the number of theaters in both England and France grew, as did the number of plays produced; the class composition of audiences expanded as ticket prices dropped and theatrical entertainment became more diverse. The number of people who went to the theater far outnumbered the number of people who read novels and poetry, and for those who wanted to read plays as well as to see them, cheap editions were usually available for purchase within a week of a play's premiere (St. Clair, 2007: p. 565–66). Was nineteenth-century theater cut off from novels and poetry? No; most of the period's major novelists and poets attended the theater regularly and enthusiastically; many wrote plays, with varying degrees of success, and most saw their novels staged multiple times. *Jane*

Eyre was adapted eight times between 1848 and 1882, by British, North American, and German playwrights; one 1870 German adaptation was produced by a New York City stage company that specialized in German-language theater for recent immigrants (Stoneman, 2007: p. 141–42). Charles Dickens borrowed heavily from theatrical conventions to produce novels frequently dramatized in multiple versions, sometimes even before their serial publication was complete. Although his library contained few contemporary French novels, Dickens made sure to attend French plays and meet French playwrights when he visited Paris in 1850 (Van Amerongen, 1926: p. 244, 102). Emile Zola wrote drama criticism, as did George Eliot's partner and close interlocutor, George Lewes, who, under the pseudonym Slingsby Lawrence, also adapted French melodramas into English (Rowell, 1978: p. 29). Writing for the theater was less prestigious than penning novels and poems, but major Victorian playwrights including Tom Robertson, Dion Boucicault, Charles Reade, and Sydney Grundy received recognition in their day, while some of France's most popular playwrights, including Scribe, Augier, Dumas, and Sardou, were elected to the Académie Française.

The most plausible account of nineteenth-century drama's otherwise inexplicable exclusion from both comparative and national literary studies of the nineteenth century is that both approaches remain invested in studying literature that exhibits high degrees of autonomy. Both thus find it a struggle to attend to nineteenth-century drama. As noted earlier, drama is inextricable from theater, and theater depends on authors, actors, costumers, lighting technicians, stagehands, and manager/directors (who in the nineteenth century were usually also actors and authors). Drama is equally dispersed between performance and print, and its performances are ephemeral, shifting as they repeat themselves over time, and dependent on the presence of an ever-changing audience and a rotating cast of actors, whereas print works acquire a physical existence separate from that of their producers and consumers (Fischer-Lichte, 1997: p. 19–20). Drama's lack of autonomy in any era is overdetermined, but especially so in the nineteenth century, when it not only lacked economic autonomy but also had little aesthetic distinction and consisted largely of works that did not even have clearly defined authors or national identities.

Lack of Economic Autonomy

The production of plays was often more costly than the publication of books (Lionnet, 1994: p. 173). The expense of mounting a play, coupled with theater's reliance on a large workforce and on ticket sales, made it highly vulnerable to economic conditions. Theater is not only an art form but also a service and an industrial product (Davis, 2000: p. 6), two categories difficult to align with high art. "No pay, no play," went a saying that expressed theater's intimacy with commerce (Davis, 2000: p. 19), and as Pierre Bourdieu has shown, art tends to derive its aesthetic prestige from its perceived autonomy from the market.

Nineteenth-century playwrights also lacked economic autonomy relative to other kinds of writers. Although theater was a highly profitable commercial arena, the authors of even the most successful plays were poorly remunerated and had few intellectual property rights until the 1890s, when they first began to get money for the publication of plays. Novelists were paid ten to a hundred times more per work than playwrights were (Stoneman, 2007: p. 3) and had more control over what they wrote, but people continued to write for the theater, not least because it took far less time to write a play than to write a novel. It took even less time to translate a play than to write one from scratch. An author like Dion Boucicault could, in 1844, get £100 for an original play it took him six months to write, or £50 for an adaptation from the French that he could do in two weeks (Walsh, 1915: p. 40–41). Until 1860, when Boucicault became one of the first authors to ask for a share of box office receipts, playwrights did not profit directly from their work's success (Emeljanow, 1987: p. 6). Such conditions fostered the production of plays that had weak identities as works and blurred, composite entities for authors.

Lack of Aesthetic Distinction

Nineteenth-century dramatists aggressively avoided complex figurative language and embraced the conventions of melodrama and sentimental comedy: sensational staging; simplified, contrasting, and strongly typed characters; plots structured around coincidence, sudden reversals, and heightened suspense and momentum. Though many of those conventions require skill and talent to execute, and survive in television and film, nineteenth-century plays are rarely revived for production and are infrequently reprinted. Even when nineteenth-century plays do receive the literary imprimatur conferred by publication, it is difficult to grasp what made these plays so compelling if one encounters them only in book form. Thus any field organized around literary works of superlative aesthetic merit whose virtues are best apprehended through reading is unlikely to include plays in its canon. In other words, few literary critics and theorists are likely to become interested in nineteenth-century theater, since aesthetic merit remains the most important filtering mechanism in practice even among literary scholars who do not subscribe to it in theory.

Lack of Autonomous Authors, Works, Nationality, and Genre

What is most striking about nineteenth-century drama, however, is its radical lack of autonomy with respect to author and work, the weakness of its generic and national identities. The constant movement within Europe and across the Channel and the Atlantic of acting troupes performing in their native languages made theater an inescapably transnational arena. English, Dutch, and Italian actors had been on the road since the sixteenth century, introducing plays from their native countries to other

nations, making performers a key vector of what Erika Fischer-Lichte has called "cross-pollination" among European cultures (Fischer-Lichte,1997: p. 158). Although the French imported few foreign plays, they did host English actors; during the 1820s, visiting British troupes performing Shakespeare in Paris helped to launch French Romantic drama and inspired Alexandre Dumas to write a play about the actor Edmund Kean. In the nineteenth century, a constant influx of foreign performers made English theater a polyglot experience. In any given season, multiple French ballets, operas, and operettas played on London stages, along with a steady supply of Francophone dramatic repertoire. Actors such as Rachel, Coquelin, and Sarah Bernhardt and companies such as the Comédie Française regularly sold out large London houses while performing entirely in French. Queen Victoria, the epitome of the British nation and an avid theatergoer, saw fourteen French plays in 1847 alone (Rowell, 1978: p. 152–53).

British and French drama both lacked generic autonomy; in those nations and many others, a large number of plays were adapted from novels or from other plays. National autonomy was almost non-existent for drama outside France. Between 1780 and 1815 alone, there were eighty-eight English adaptations of French plays, during a period when adaptations from the German were the dominant trend (Wray, 1928), and for most of the decades that followed, the majority of British plays were modified translations of French works. As late as the 1870s, theater critic Theodore Martin could still refer to "the small knot of living writers for the [British] stage who are not adapters from the French or German" (Martin, 1889b: p. 169). Works by Kotzebue, Pixérécourt, Scribe, Augier, Dumas, Labiche, Sardou and many less well-known authors (often writing in teams) dominated the British stage (Emeljanow, 1987: p. 5–6, 17). Nor was this practice unique to England. Thirty of Scribe's plays were translated into Spanish; Copenhagen theaters alone produced seventy-two plays by Scribe between 1825 and 1881 (Koon and Switzer, 1980: p. 119); and Ibsen directed about seventy plays adapted from the French during his years at Norway's Bergen theater between 1851 and 1856 (Stanton, 1955: p. 52).

In the years between 1830 and 1890, I have found over fifty examples of English authors who published French plays under their own names. They presented them not as English translations of French originals, but rather as something both new and old, original and copied, appropriated and transformed. Under such conditions, the very notion of an author and a work as we use them today start to blur. It was common practice for British stage managers to travel to Paris to crib the latest French plays (Moody, 2000: p. 81). Advertisements for productions and printed editions of these plays openly described them as "based on," "suggested by," "derived from," "altered from," "after," or simply "from" a foreign work. No attempt was made to hide the author or title of the foreign work, but no sense was thereby conveyed that the English plays were faithful to their sources. Reviewers and audiences were fully aware of the pervasiveness of adaptation and viewed theater through a comparative, transnational lens. When Henry Irving revived his first great hit, *The Bells*, in 1887, the reviewer for the *Daily Telegraph* knowledgeably compared its plot structure to the French play

on which it was based, by Emile Erckmann and Pierre Chatrain, which Leopold Lewis (among others) had adapted soon after it premiered in 1869. The same review also compared Irving's performance in the English version to that of the French actor Coquelin in the French one, a task made easier by Coquelin's frequent appearances in England, where he performed in French (Mayer, 1980: p. 106, 9).

In some cases, overt derivation from a French or German source gave a British production added cosmopolitan flair, but even more interesting are the number of plays considered exemplary of British national drama that in fact had French roots. Two of the most popular plays of the 1850s and 1860s, written by two of the better-known British dramatists, Dion Boucicault's *The Corsican Brothers* (1852) and Tom Taylor's *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* (1863), were both adapted from French plays. Boucicault, who lived in Paris from 1844 to 1848, based his hit on Eugène Grange and Xavier de Montepin's dramatization of a Dumas novel, and Taylor derived his from a French play called *Léonard*, by Edouard Brisebarre and Eugène Nus (Morley, 1974: p. 17, 54). Tom Robertson, another one of the rare Victorian dramatists to distinguish himself as an author, is viewed as having spearheaded the revival of English national drama, but he too based one of his best-known works, *Progress*, on a French play, Sardou's *Les Ganaches* (Van Amerongen, 1926: p. 81). Sarah Lane, who ran a London theater from 1873 to 1881, regularly produced plays she had written based on Sardou's work (Davis, 1999: p. 129). Sydney Grundy wrote several plays "suggested by" or "adapted from" works by Scribe, Dumas, and Labiche. Oscar Wilde derived the plot of *An Ideal Husband* from Clement Scott's *Diplomacy*, in turn adapted from Sardou's *Dora* (Stanton, 1955: p. 83).

Such exchanges make it difficult to assign nineteenth-century theater a clear national identity, not least because the transactions moved in multiple directions. British stage managers found the German author August von Kotzebue's work so congenial in the early decades of the nineteenth century because the German dramatists who influenced Kotzebue had themselves already imported English dramatist George Lillo's *London Merchant*, and in so doing, launched a whole new type of bourgeois drama (Fietz, 1996)). Sebastien Mercier translated Lillo's play into French in 1778, adding to the transnational dimensions of French theater, already strongly influenced by Italian drama and the novels of Samuel Richardson. German playwright Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer wrote over a hundred plays, many of them based on novels by Sand, Hugo, Dumas, and Dickens; her German dramatization of *Jane Eyre* was in turn translated into Spanish, Italian, Danish, and even back into English (Stoneman, 2007: p. 151). Boucicault borrowed liberally from French sources, but two of his Irish-themed plays were turned into successful French productions (Walsh, 1915: p. 103). While working as a reader for the French publisher Hachette, a young Emile Zola translated British realist Charles Reade, who wrote novels and plays. Reade had himself begun his theatrical career by using French plays as foundations on which to build freely, and late in life he based a play, *Drink,* on Zola's collaborative dramatization of his novel *L'Assommoir*. The canonical status of Zola's novel makes it tempting to reduce *Drink* to a British adaptation/translation of a French

text, but to do so would be to lose sight of the vertiginous series of exchanges that render it difficult to identify a national origin in this process, since Zola's novelistic aesthetic emerged in part from his translations of a British author whose writings openly riffed on French ones.

The majority of nineteenth-century British plays, up through the 1890s, were what I will call "naturalizations." English authors usually anglicized the names of a play's characters, replaced French settings with English ones, and modified plot points involving adultery, a topic as offensive to British sensibilities onstage as on the page. In so doing, they assimilated French plays to British theatrical conventions and audience expectations, neither altering them beyond recognition, nor attempting to keep the original sources recognizable. Naturalization entailed and legitimated modifying, pruning, and augmenting the source in order to accommodate it to local circumstances so that it would succeed in its new habitat. English naturalizations of French drama were thus not translations in any usual sense, since the translator does not normally replace the author's name with his own, and whatever liberties she takes or betrayals she effects are in the service of faithfully conveying the letter and spirit of an original. Nor were these plays good examples of adaptation, since theorists tend to reserve that term for the process of shifting from one medium or genre to another, such as novel to film, or from one mode to another, such as telling to showing (Hutcheon, 2006). The differences between British plays and their French templates was greater than that between translations and originals, but slighter than that between originals and adaptations.[4]

Nineteenth-century theater thus poses an interesting challenge to Comparative Literature because it frustrates the very notion of literature on which the field has relied. If theater consisted almost entirely of transnational correspondences and conjunctions, how are comparatists to formulate the relations of similarity, difference, and intersection on which acts of comparison depend? *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* was certainly not an original, but that did not make it in any rigorous sense a copy. It was not simply a spin-off, parody, sequel, translation, or even adaptation of *Léonard*, because audiences received it as a freestanding work, despite knowing that it was based on another work. Nor was it a copy, because it had no original, in the sense of a work whose temporal priority and cultural authority would make its accurate replication the standard by which to judge any work based on it. Spin-offs of *Pamela*, as we saw earlier, were still spin-offs of the particular, unique, triggering work called *Pamela*. When people copied *Pamela*, they added to and borrowed from its prestige; when Taylor wrote *Ticket-of-Leave Man*, he did little to bolster the reputation of *Léonard* or its authors, Brisebarre and Nus. The dispersal of *Pamela* into imitations illustrates the porousness of generic and national borders but does so by reinforcing the distinctiveness of the one stable point in those transnational exchanges – *Pamela* itself. Theatrical naturalizations, by contrast, leave us with works whose own borders barely exist if viewed from the perspective of their composition and circulation, but which have surprising definition if considered from the perspective of their reception and commoditization.

Conclusion

As I have shown, to bring nineteenth-century plays into the purview of Comparative Literature would require that we seriously modify the discipline's theory and practice. As we have seen, nineteenth-century theater's dependence on performance, spectacle, melodrama, commerce, and legally permissible piracy, all make it alien to the field's narrow definition of literature. Only a handful of nineteenth-century plays fulfill those restrictive criteria, and even the works of Hugo, Ibsen, Shaw, and Chekhov receive less attention than one would expect, given their quality and global significance. Nor would it be a solution to focus on the rare works of theater that qualify as literature, for we would then continue to ignore the bulk of work whose transnational production, circulation, and reception independent of aesthetic quality are precisely what make theater so interesting for comparative study.

Current models of Comparative Literature are better at locating mobility in what appears initially to be fixed than they are at grasping processes in perpetual motion, and nineteenth-century theater, with its constant recycling of bits of works in ever-changing forms, was just such a process. To incorporate theater into Comparative Literature, we would need to move away from the assumption that works always have distinct authors and national origins, and that as a result it is scholars who do the comparing, who reveal that what appear to be national cultures in fact depend on transnational exchanges. The overlaps between British and French plays go beyond the mere influence of one discrete author on another. They make it difficult to use these works to identify national similarities and differences, since they themselves perform the operation that the comparatist model assigns to the critic, that of connecting national cultures that initially appear distinct, even opposed. Nineteenth-century theater already was Comparative Literature, a precursor of what Rebecca Walkowitz calls "comparison literature" (Walkowitz, 2007: p. 223): an ongoing process of transnational interaction that does not leave much for the comparatist critic to reveal.

Few nineteenth-century plays will ever have a place in Comparative Literature as it is currently defined, but nineteenth-century theater can serve as a helpful reminder of the limitations of present approaches and prompt us to imagine a comparative cultural studies and a comparative sociology of literature. By being receptive to interdisciplinary approaches, and by going outside the canon, comparatists have learned a great deal about how novels and poetry interacted with the political, economic, and social realms on a transnational level (Cohen and Dever, 2001: p. 9–10). By turning to cultural studies and giving it a more historical dimension, comparatists can investigate the literary field's relationship to a broader realm of popular culture that is often erroneously defined in strictly national terms. Mary Louise Pratt proposed in 1994 that Comparative Literature could become interdisciplinary and multicultural by including "expressive culture" in its purview (Pratt, 1994: p. 63). Fifteen years later, few have heeded her call. Doing so will require including performers, adaptors, managers, designers, publicists, and audiences alongside authors as agents of cultural

expression. Theater and performance studies have been doing this for years, but using primarily national frameworks.

Paying attention to theater can change how we understand the nineteenth century, how we research and write about it and therefore how we teach it. As literature scholars, we are used to translating paradigms and claims into the limited number of textual examples we could reasonably ask others to read during a one-semester course: to understand realism, read *Père Goriot*; to understand the lyric, read Hölderlin. The nineteenth-century plays that most reward this kind of reading (works by Hugo, Musset, Wilde, Ibsen, Shaw) are least exemplary of the larger theatrical world that housed them. Rather than simply assimilate theater to literature, I am suggesting that we study theater in ways that go beyond close readings of select dramatic texts, in order to expand our knowledge base so that it includes cultural processes as well as cultural products. To do this, we have to acknowledge that what makes for inferior literature (in the restricted sense of the term) can nonetheless result from significant literary practices. Comparative historians spend a great deal of time deciding what to compare and determining appropriate units of comparison (Cohen and O'Connor, 2004). By contrast, comparative literary scholars operate by rote, almost always confining our comparisons to authors, genres, movements, and literary works published in book form. Only rarely and recently do we compare readers, markets, publishing houses, advertisements, editions, title pages, serial or chapter forms, and even when we do, we are still confining ourselves to the world of print.

Nineteenth-century theater, with its mobile, flexible practices of displacement and dissemination, is especially relevant for comparatists interested in theories that deconstruct the institution of literature, as well as for materialist critics seeking to show how fluid and porous national borders can be and how easily genres, forms, and works move across them, often changing as they go. We will only be able to do justice to the transnational dimensions of nineteenth-century theater, however, if we expand our discipline so that we not only track discrete cultural products but also map dynamic activities of production, circulation, and consumption, each mobile enough to destabilize the rigid concepts of author, work, and genre that have grounded Comparative Literature for over a century. This will mean changing how and what we study, and adapting the methods of scholars who work on national theater history to more comparative ends. For those who work on the nineteenth century, this would mean using images, musical scores and material artifacts, along with accounts by journalists and ordinary playgoers, to articulate the multiple sensory dimensions of specific productions and of playgoing in general. It would mean using print, microfilm and digital archives to explore the full range of published drama. It would mean delving into the records of censoring bodies such as England's Lord Chancellor, and of copyright agencies such as the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques, in order to find manuscripts of unproduced plays as well as produced ones, and then use them to examine how the political and economic pressures on theater varied over place and time. It would mean venturing into printed ephemera housed in theater museums and in collections such as John Johnson's at Oxford, in

order to become familiar with the stagebills, tickets, programs, and posters that are also part of the literature of theater.

The best reason for doing all this is not that it will subvert tradition, but that it will extend the quest for more general, inclusive, and responsible knowledge – a quest that has always motivated the comparatist drive to remove national blinders. Writing of realism in *An Introduction to Romance Languages and Literature*, Erich Auerbach could as easily have been writing about Comparative Literature:

> By closely following the rapid changes in our life, and encompassing more and more the totality of human life on earth, it permits men a *vue d'ensemble* of the concrete reality in which they live, and gives them an awareness of what they are. (Auerbach, 1961: p. 250)

To encompass more of the cultural field, to grasp it in ways that do not fix its mobility, in order to understand better what we study, is the most basic and most persuasive reason to bring together Comparative Literature and theater. After all, they already have so much in common; for over a century, both theater and Comparative Literature have shared, often without knowing it, a healthy disregard for national and linguistic boundaries.

Notes

1 Interestingly, Tucker was one of the only theorists of comparative literature in the last century to have identified nineteenth-century drama as a chief example of the French influence on English literature. His transnational model of national literature, his metaphor of debt, which allows economics and art to intermingle, and his philological interest in language as a whole rather than in a limited subset of great works, all facilitate his inclusion of "imitations or plagiarisms of French comedy" within the purview of "English literature" (Tucker, 1907: p. 177).

2 One significant exception to the rule of drama's exclusion is Gayley's, because of his open, flexible and non-circular definition of what counts as literary (Gayley, 1903).

3 For some notable exceptions to the practice of conducting performance studies at the local level, see Daphne Brooks, Roach, Garelick, and Jackson (2011).

4 This was also the case for many eighteenth-century novels, which might have contributed to the novel's contested aesthetic status during that period and its improved status in the nineteenth century, when the dominant model for novel production more clearly separated translation, adaptation, and original authorship (McMurran in Cohen and Dever, 2001: p. 50).

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Part III
Disciplinary Intersections

11

What Pictures Tell Us about the Letter: Visual and Literary Practices in Latin America

Jorge Coronado

What can a scholar of literature bring to photographs? And why would a scholar of Latin American literature look at photographs in the first place? In thinking about the contact points between literature and visual culture, I have often returned to the questions that arise when a scholar trained in the literary field begins to work with visual materials. That is to say, I've been thinking about not only *how* it is that a literary scholar learns to talk about non-literary objects, but more specifically in terms of *why* this tendency has become so prominent in my corner of literary studies. Many, many departments have scholars who are doing this sort of work, and indeed it seems to represent a disciplinary reformulation in Spanish and Portuguese, not to mention in other university programs.

The question is far from being an abstract one for me. In part, what I want to relay here is how a scholar of Latin American literature makes sense of pictures, and especially to communicate the purchase of photography within Latin American literary studies. I believe the turn towards extra- and non-literary objects in Departments of Spanish and Portuguese is not simply an expression of the increasing establishment of a cultural studies approach or approaches within the discipline, but rather that it is the manifestation of a deep-seated need to engage with both the project of lettered culture in the region as well as its limitations in its current iteration. As such, photography represents one of many cultural practices where, paradoxically, the role of lettered production in both representing and engaging in modern identity, state-, and region-building projects is being probed.

My argument will be circumscribed to the context of the region's intellectual traditions and its disciplinary inheritances. This is the case out of necessity, because my knowledge is located in this area, but also importantly because I am thinking about literature and visual culture in their historical embeddedness, in this instance in one

particular if acutely complex history. These are the conditions under which I am able to discuss photography at all, or rather, that which constitutes photography as a site of cultural meaning. The critic of photography John Tagg, in *The Burden of Representation*, says it succinctly when he asserts that:

> What alone unites the diversity of sites in which photography operates is the social formation itself: the specific historical spaces for representation and practice which it constitutes. Photography as such [h]as no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations that invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents that define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have. (Tagg, 1993: p. 63)

I would only elaborate on Tagg by saying this is equally the case for photography within its coeval historical moment, that is, when the picture was taken, as it is for the scholarly discourse in which it can sooner or later become embedded. In Tagg's terms, my goal is to reveal several significant contexts that lend an identity to photographic practices in Peru.

This is the vantage point from which I understand images such as Filiberto (1899–1978) and Crisanto (1904–1990) Cabrera's "Family with Rams" from 1935 (Figure 11.1), which was taken in the old imperial city of Cuzco.[1] It is by all lights a family portrait, a genre that is quite common in the extant photographic archives. It was taken in a patio either in or near the family home. We know that the Cabreras catered to lower and middle-class patrons, and they are especially remarked for their work outside the studio. While the picture speaks volumes about its contemporaneous moment, it also allows us, as perhaps all photographs do, to consider its difference from the semiotic systems that accompany, overlap, and conflict with it in making meaning of the world. I will return to this picture and a few others at the end of this chapter, but in the meantime the reader should keep in mind that when I talk about engaging the logocentric heritage of the Latin American lettered tradition, it is in photographs as everyday as this that I locate such engagement.

In order to flesh out that heritage, there are three historical instances of lettered production that I would like to survey. The three areas are:

1. Cuzco's "local" movement of *indigenismo* in the 1930s;
2. The broader Latin American intellectual modernizing tradition of the nineteenth century, as well as;
3. Recent critical interventions in Latin Americanist subaltern studies.

In and across all three cases, what interests me is twofold: first, that the accumulation of lettered habits and strategies leads to a generalizable claim about the nature of lettered culture over almost two centuries of history; and second, that this claim, which I will call logocentrism, represents not only a problem of focus or interest, but an epistemological one concerning subaltern subjects. Logocentrism involves both a

Figure 11.1 Hermanos Cabrera, Family with rams, 1935. (Used by permission of Fototeca Andina, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas)

question of corpus, which is perhaps its most obvious feature, but it also entails, perhaps most importantly, an attitude toward writing in its position within human cultural production. For historical and disciplinary reasons, each of the three instances enact logocentrism in such ways and with particular resonances that lead me to consider each of them as they both contribute to the impulse to research Andean photographs as well as constitute obscure objects that photographic practice may, hopefully, illuminate.

By logocentrism, I mean the tendency to consider the written word and by extension lettered production and especially the lettered tradition as the most significant site for the production of subjectivity, citizens, and culture. A good example is Benedict Anderson's focus on print culture as the major source for nationalist consciousness in the nineteenth century. By anchoring studies of social and cultural history on the communicative and cohesive possibilities of writing, other semiotic systems and especially their impact and implications are elided. But what is also at stake in a logocentrist approach as I describe it here is the capacity to comprehend minority or peripheral lettered practices in the richness of their capacities to form subjects and communities away from the centers of power.

First, *indigenismo*. It is through the study of a lettered movement that I initially came to "see" Andean photographs of the period, that is, differentially. But I hope to make a greater argument for the utility of understanding *indigenismo* and coetaneous photographic practices together. *Indigenismo* is the social, cultural and political movement that sought to vindicate the indigenous peoples in Latin America and generally covers the mid-nineteenth century to the current day, although precursors for it can be found from the colonial period. Its effervescence is widely acknowledged to have taken place in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, across those regions of Latin America with the greatest concentration of indigenous peoples: Mexico, Central America, and the Andes. In the twentieth century, *indigenismo* generated powerful and compelling visions of Andean subjects. It would be near impossible to characterize the gist of *indigenista* representations through one blanket statement, as they varied tremendously in how they understood the modern Andes, but it bears repeating that they all took indigeneity, that is, the quality of being indigenous – a quality that proved only too easy to separate from indigenous peoples themselves – as a key factor in forming modern Andean societies and subjects.

As students of lettered *indigenismo* know, it tended toward a rarefied social circulation, by which I mean that its principal enunciators were often middle- and upper-class intellectuals engaged in political, social and cultural modernizing projects. These projects operated through a top-down dynamic, that is, seeking to shape societies with vast subaltern contingents, of whatever stripe, from above. Furthermore, *indigenismo*'s principal actors were by no means limited to individual authors writing from idiosyncratic and limited political views; on the contrary, there is ample evidence that documents the ways in which both the state and oppositional groups in civil society adopted an *indigenista* perspective to further particular goals.[2]

Indigenismo turns out to have been capacious with respect to such projects. So for example it was equally available to the anarcho-syndicalism of figures such as Ezequiel Urviola, a labor organizer from Puno who in the 1920s took *indigenismo* as a tool for the dissemination of a critique of international capital or, in an iteration from the opposite end of the spectrum, to the foreign-investment driven visions of a modernized indigenous work force of the congressman José Angel Escalante, a Cusco landowner who loudly clamored for indigenous rights from his position within the Peruvian government (Ramos Zambrano, 1994; Coronado, *Andes Imagined*, 2009, p. 52–74). For growing numbers of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectuals concerned with Andean reality, the *indio* was the degree zero of thinking about progress and the future, and so many iterations of modernity took anchor in some conceptualization of that figure.

In this brief sketch of *indigenismo*, the reader has likely noticed a troubling dynamic at the movement's core that scholars of the period have faced squarely in accounting for the conditions of *indigenista* production: *indigenismo* operates through an acutely unequal dynamic between its producers, often mesocratic intellectuals, and its objects of representation, indigenous peoples. This inequality produces particular features in and around *indigenista* literature: following José Carlos Mariátegui, a key theorist of

indigenismo writing in the 1920s, we note that it can be understood as a *mestizo* literature, written in Spanish, and circulated beyond the reach of those it represents. In short, early twentieth century *indigenismo* excludes *in its practice and circulation* even while it vociferously imagines the inclusion of indigenous peoples *in its representations*. I note with other scholars, in a consensus view, a constitutive contradiction between *indigenismo*'s discourse and its socio-cultural impact.

But there is a caveat: if this assessment holds up under a broad reading, there are important instances of *indigenista* interventions that attempt to escape, as it were, the isolation and instrumentalization of *indigenismo* among cultural elites. A testimonial source reports that Mariátegui, toward the end of his life in the late 1920s, attempted to instigate social change and revolution by disseminating a critical Marxist view of Andean reality among bilingual indigenous peoples, and encouraging them to translate this critique into the majority indigenous language in Peru, Quechua, and most importantly, into orality (Larico Yujra, 1990). The task he set them, essentially to transfer written intellectual culture into indigenous oral society, reflects his awareness of the limitations of the letter and also of the Republican project in postcolonial Peru. The remarkable image of Mariátegui, a cosmopolitan, urban intellectual, speaking to indigenous organizers and agitators in his house on Washington street in Lima's old colonial center, boils over with the possibilities of collaboration between subalterns and intellectuals that are sometimes lost in the study of *indigenista* texts and their circulation.

The second and third examples of lettered culture that frame my comments on photography both hold *indigenismo*'s constitutive contradiction at their core, though their relationship to it is divergent. I will not account here for their embeddedness in two starkly different contexts – the nineteenth-century nation-building projects are informed by state and global postcolonial politics in Latin America, while subaltern studies is practiced mostly in the US and is animated by the modern university's drive to create knowledge – but I note that these two bodies of lettered production have a conflicted filial relationship, insofar as subaltern studies has understood itself as a sort of response and salve for the imagined societies promulgated by figures like the Venezuelan Andrés Bello (1781–1865) and the Argentine Domingo Sarmiento (1811–1888). In a sense, subaltern studies' objectives are profoundly in line with the democratizing tendencies of the Enlightenment tradition, as it attempts to include subalterns in society and history as equal and agential members. As such, much of literary subaltern studies in its Latin Americanist variety, as we will see, seeks rightly to convey the subaltern as fundamental, shaping members of Latin American societies. It is worth keeping in mind that the question of whether literature can represent the marginalized, if it can at all, is of paramount importance in Latin American and I would add Latin Americanist letters and drives both these corpuses, in one case consciously and affirmatively and in the other self-critically. Indeed, we might characterize the nineteenth century Latin American lettered tradition and recent subalternist interventions as bookends to a particular impulse – to meet the challenge presented to the area's societies and cultures by the subaltern – in the region's culture writ large.

In considering the nineteenth century authors such as those I made reference to above, it is clear that literature's primary function lies in forming social subjects. I am considering a long nineteenth century, with figures such as the Uruguayan man of letters José Enrique Rodó (1871–1917) and the Mexican intellectual and politician José Vasconcelos (1882–1959), but in particular their respective works *Ariel* (1900) and *La raza cósmica* (1925) at its tail end. It is true that the faith in literature's socially formative possibilities wanes as the present day draws closer, with a latter generation, including figures such as Pedro Henríquez Ureña (1884–1946), Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969) and Angel Rama (1926–1983), emphasizing instead the extent of literature's representativity, as Julio Ramos would say, its enormous capacity to contain a reflection of Latin American realities, as opposed to its shaping function vis-à-vis social subjects (Ramos, 1989: p. 16). In our contemporary moment, these emphases on literature's social representativity through both form and content remain, as we will see, but those that promote literature as a tool for social engineering are all but absent from critical and theoretical interventions nowadays, and with reason: literature's ascendancy and centrality within the social fabric is no longer operable, as it has become, as indeed it always was, one cultural practice that produces meaning alongside many others.

In the nineteenth-century works, the implicit and explicit object of formation, *and* the source of inspiration, have been the region's majority populations, its large, dispossessed, and un-cultured non-elites. These are discourses that depart from the unknowingness of these populations in order to return to them with a binding knowledge that identifies as much as it restricts. The heterogeneity of this category is beyond vast. It includes but is not limited to the masses as they were generated and emerged in the nineteenth century, indigenous groups and subjects, the descendants of African slaves in all their national varieties, lower-class urban denizens, women, and other non-normative gendered subjects. An example from the prologue to the regional architect Andrés Bello's magisterial 1974 *Gramática de la lengua castellana* is instructive regarding the attitudes toward and anxieties about these groups. After a lengthy lament on the irregularities introduced into Latin American Spanish in the absence of some form of regulation, he concludes:

Pero el mayor mal de todos, y el que, si no se ataja, va a privarnos de las inapreciables ventajas de un lenguaje común, es la avenida de neologismos de construcción, que inunda y enturbia mucha parte de lo que se escribe en América, y alterando la estructura del idioma, tiende a convertirlo en una multitud de dialectos irregulares, licenciosos, bárbaros; embriones de idiomas futuros, que durante una larga elaboración reproducirían en América lo que fue la Europa en el tenebroso período de la corrupción del latín. Chile, el Perú, Buenos Aires, Méjico, hablarían cada uno su lengua, o por mayor decir, varias lenguas, como sucede en España, Italia y Francia, donde dominan ciertos idiomas provinciales, pero viven a su lado otros varios, oponiendo estorbos a la difusión de las luces, a la ejecución de las leyes, a la administración del Estado, a la unidad nacional. (Bello, 1974: p. 60)

Translation:

> But the worst evil of all, the one which if not stopped will deprive us of the invaluable advantages of a common tongue, is the rise of neologisms in construction, which overwhelms and muddies a large part of what is written in America, and in altering the language's structure tends to convert it into a multitude of irregular, dissolute, and barbaric dialects; after a long development, these embryos of future languages would recreate in America what Europe was during the dismal period of Latin's corruption. Chile, Peru, Buenos Aires, Mexico each would speak its own tongue, or better said, several tongues, as occurs in Spain, Italy and France, where certain provincial languages dominate but live alongside several others, in this way putting up obstacles to the dissemination of Enlightenment, to the rule of law, to the administration of the State, and to national unity.[3] (Bello, 1974: p. 60)

Bello's is a complex understanding of language's social role, and I note that his is an entirely Enlightenment perspective which, like others before him, has projected Latin America as that site which might correct the errors and missteps of old Europe. This constitutes one of the most striking aspects of the passage, that is, that rather than focus on the barbarity that typically would be associated with the region's indigenous peoples and other subalterns, he connects it first and foremost to the problems of achieving European nationality, encumbered as it is by a well-known linguistic diversity. The threat is less barbarity – although certainly that is also an issue to be dealt with – than it is linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. Bello projects the ideal horizon of cultural homogeneity, here understood as a ground zero of a common language, as an achieved, fully modern Latin America. The stifling of the creative capacity, that is, of the cultural contributions, of those beyond the rule of the letter is explicit. The fact that a grammar is the means to this end should not be overlooked and is my point: it implies a supreme confidence and hope in the decisiveness of a social coherence grounded in a lettered education that forms.

Third, subaltern studies. I should state first that what I understand by this term is not limited to the official and relatively short-lived group of critics known as the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group that, inspired by its South Asian counterpart and predecessor, originated in the US in 1992 and disbanded just a few years later in 2000 (Rodríguez, 2001: p. 29).[4] Rather, I am interested in the critical body of work carried out both by group members in the 1990s as well as subsequently, when subaltern studies in the Latin Americanist strain has spawned an important body of work in several literary subfields, particularly in the study of testimonial narrative, as well as in separate disciplines like Anthropology and History. At its core, we might see it as an attempt to recuperate, from the position of the university and through theoretical interventions that draw from postcolonial theory, the logics and cultures of subaltern subjects in Latin America past and present. A critique of hegemonic worldviews is implicit within it, but unlike cornerstones of postcolonial theory, such as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, subaltern studies' focus lies precisely in the attempt to recover that which hegemony suppresses rather than in how hegemony is achieved.

As such and in light of *indigenismo* and the broader Latin American intellectual tradition, subaltern studies can also be understood as an ambivalent response to the position of the lettered in Latin American history. On the one hand, subalternists have identified the dynamic whereby cultural production, whether oppositional or not, that is acceptable to the State or neocolonial entities rather quickly becomes absorbed into dominant discursive manifestations of power, thereby renewing the validity and the ascendancy of the powerful. This perspective has been extremely valuable for understanding, for example, the State's resemanticization of both subaltern and critically contestatory production. Without going too far, we could say that the official Peruvian *indigenismo* of the 1920s demonstrates this sort of appropriation, for example in Manuel Piqueras Cotolí's (1885–1937) state-supported work, the Peruvian Pavilion in the Exposición Iberoamericana, showcased in Seville in 1929. Still standing, the Pavilion was a building in the architect and designer Piqueras Cotolí's so-called *neo-peruano* or Neo-Peruvian style. The style included ample and varied references to indigenous culture, from statues of indigenous royalty, to the flora and fauna of the highlands associated with Incan culture, to the geometric designs of a variety of Andean indigenous societies. At least in the case of the Pavilion, the Neo-Peruvian style was meant to articulate an attractive, unique identity for Peru on the global stage.

On the other hand, subalternist-inflected work has attempted to salvage lettered traditions' representativity by mining them for the logics and cultures of the marginalized. In this second, equally valuable case, the current-day critic stands as a sort of archeologist who, through the deployment of a sophisticated theoretical corpus, can bring such a radical representativity to light. I would say that this approach is especially prevalent in the work of critics of the colonial period, and the recent work of Gonzalo Lamana, in *Domination with Dominance*, is a fine example. In his powerful account of the sense that both the Inca and Spanish made of their initial encounter, Lamana persuasively reads a series of colonial documents, almost entirely of European origin, in order to glean subaltern interpretations and epistemological interventions in the Conquest (Lamana, 2008: p. 9–13).

One recent work of a different stripe, Horacio Legrás' *Literature and Subjection*, also published in 2008, presents perhaps the most developed articulation of subaltern studies in literary studies today. Unlike Walter Mignolo and critics such as John Beverly, George Yúdice and Elzbieta Sklodowska who focus on testimonial narrative, Legrás has left behind the notion that literature can positively, that is through an affirmative representation, communicate the heterogeneity of Latin America, which he understands to mean the inclusion of the alterity of subaltern groups, in the relatively homogenous practice of literature. Rather, he has identified in it – he tends to focus on the novel – the capacity to act as a body upon which alterity leaves a mark, or many.

In speaking about the origins of *indigenismo*, Legrás considers the role of social and cultural heterogeneity as manifested in the great indigenous rebellion that shook the southern Andean highlands at the beginning of the twentieth century. Composed of

a series of revolts which involved both free indigenous peoples and semifeudal *colonos* or indigenes bound to large landholdings,

> The great revolt gives us an alternative genealogy for the *indigenista* question. *Indigenismo* is not just an isolated development of socially mobile sectors that, in [the Uruguayan critic] Angel Rama's words, use other groups to advance their own program. It is not exhausted by the editorial boom, the growing ranks of the middle class, or more dynamic capitalist engagement. *Indigenismo* is also a reaction – "a pressure of the referent," as [the Peruvian critic Antonio] Cornejo Polar would say. As a matter of fact, one of the most immediate consequences of the revolt was an enormous intellectual interest in indigenous matters. "Without rebellions, be they real or imaginary," Flores Galindo asks, "would awareness [of the indigenous question] ever have arisen?" (Legrás, 2008: p. 204)

As it relates to indigenous peoples, literature's essential dynamic is reactive here and operates through absence, much as some influential theories of photography, such as Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, articulate the way photography creates meaning. But unlike the absences that Lamana perceives in colonial lettered production, in Legrás they cannot be theorized through in order to produce a subaltern worldview. The particular sort of logocentrism that inheres within much subaltern studies-influenced work in literary criticism, including this one, is the main quality that interests me here. In its drive to comprehend literature as an attempt to absorb and thus dominate alterity, readings like Legrás' tend to polarize subalterns and those other subjects and institutions that hold power. What I mean to say is that the complex everyday negotiations between subalterns and the world around them, including power and its representatives, are difficult to capture through an optic that understands the subaltern as always exterior to and never in complex negotiations and engagement with hegemonic institutions and practices. Legrás' formulation of literature's failure to represent positively comes at an enormous cost: he discounts the disruptions that subalternity might introduce into literary practice and implicitly stresses its purely representational possibilities, and in so doing abandons it as a site that might communicate subaltern logics.

I suspect that Legrás gives up on literature *without* really giving up on it. I submit that his version of subaltern studies' predicament is now a sort of Beckettian one, of the "I'll go on, I can't go on" variety. Why not turn to adjacent, dispersed and non-hegemonic lettered practices, so available nowadays because of the profusion of technology, as a way of understanding lettered culture's continuing possibilities? It is this sort of movement that I'm interested in exploring in the modest and parallel case of photography.

From their inception in the 1820s and through the second half of the nineteenth century, photographic practices continued to grow in variety and range in Latin America. While the French-born Brazilian Hercules Florence (1804–1879) invented a photographic technology and coined the term "photographie" as early 1833, an absence of recognition and investment meant that the technology would always be understood as a foreign importation (Kossoy, 1987: p. 40). The historian Robert

Levine interprets early practices as mostly linked to the state and elites, with studio photography and scientific-economic activities having the highest profile. Although carried out in diverse places in the continent, in the mid- to late nineteenth century they tended to be based in the capital cities and were often carried out by foreign photographers (Levine).

Importantly, Levine marks the period of the 1920s and 30s as that moment of saturation of public fora with photographic images that also saw the rise of photography beyond the city centers, quickly becoming a popular and popularized technology. In the southern Andes, from Lima to La Paz, all social sectors had a use for it. We know that Andean peoples engaged in photography in various ways, as consumers, as artisans, as amateurs, and as entrepreneurs. Although we do not know what fraction of the extant photographic production represents the commerce in the technology going on in Cuzco at the time, it would seem to be extraordinary: estimates vary, but it is certain that between 1920 and 1950, there were between twenty to forty photographers active in the city which had a population that within those thirty years went from thirty thousand to roughly fifty thousand (Benavente García, 2000: p. 101; Centro Cultural P.U.C.P. and Espinar Origgi, 2006: p. 10). An overview of these photographs show a variety of very diverse uses, and indeed photography could become the site, as it has in studies of other areas of the world, for an inquiry into the use of visual regimes in the development of a modernization project, the consolidation of the state, the deployment of scientific knowledge, or the visualization of the real.

Elites hired photographers to capture both important and common moments in their daily lives, such as celebrations (Figure 11.2); government officials and functionaries sought out photographers to make more efficient the practices of the state, as visible in pictures that were used to identify indigenous conscripted soldiers (Figure 11.3); middle class intellectuals used pictures to illustrate and substantiate their scientific assertions about Andean culture and history, including their understandings of Incan architecture; last but not least, because different photographers catered to different economic groups, the vast swaths of otherwise hardly visible Andean peoples entered into photography's visual field as paying clients or as objects of study and at times participated in its authorship, as is the case in plentiful photographs of wedding celebrations in small towns (Figure 11.4). As we can see from just this limited variety of uses, photography did not itself speak any particular discourse but rather facilitated multiple and often contradictory propositions voiced by a range of photographers and, in turn and at times, the range of subjects they shot.

Consider for example Avelino Ochoa's photographic depiction of "The Governor" (Figure 11.5) from 1928, wherein the intricate hierarchical relations among disparate social actors are clearly visible (Coronado, *Toward Agency*, 2009). A Cuzco-based photographer, Ochoa apprenticed under Martín Chambi (1891–1973) and became a close friend of the older photographer, who had supposedly provided Ochoa with his first camera (Benavente García, 2000: p. 104–105). The letter stands out starkly as the central factor activating the different relations to power that these actors enjoy:

Figure 11.2 Juan Manuel Figueroa Aznar, Celebration in the country, c.1915. (Used by permission of Fototeca Andina, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas)

notice the governor's possession of the desk and instruments of writing, one *mestizo*'s prominent, almost ornamental placement of paper on his body, and the all but assured exclusion from writing of the *indios* that is conveyed by the averted, downcast gaze of the rightmost figure. This is a good example of a normative, elite representation, because everything in it is an attribute that buoys up the power of the central figure.

Photography's ubiquity in Cuzco guaranteed its presence in spaces and alongside social actors with which lettered *indigenismo* often did not come into contact. To my mind, this access is a key feature of Andean photography and a source of its value for the study of modern cultural and social history. Photography's technical and commercial qualities, but especially its cheapness, have allowed often marginal social actors to play a central role in the making of images, either as the photographers themselves or as demanding clients with precise notions of their own presentation. This agency, which operates partially and at best in collaboration with others' – the
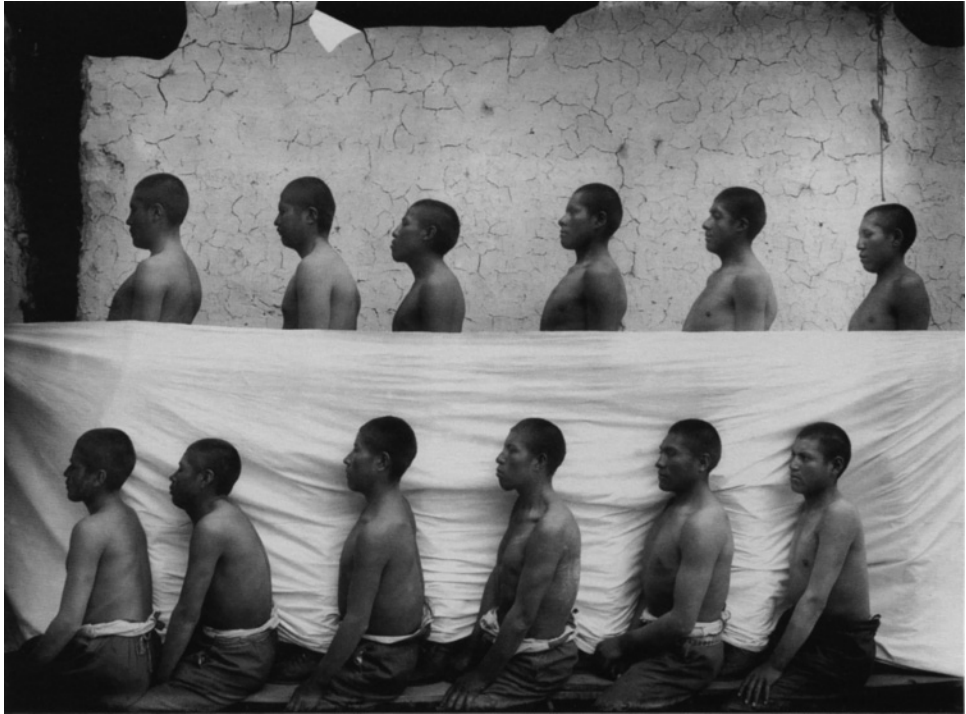
Figure 11.3 José Gabriel Gonzalez, Recruits, 1920 (Used by permission of Fototeca Andina, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas)

photographers', for instance – efforts and worldviews, stands in stark contrast to lettered traditions' historical tendency to exclude while actively representing the marginalized. Thus these photographers and their subjects created a broad array of images that visualized changing gender roles, the importance of dress and fashion in the construction of identity, explosive urbanization, the impact of technology, shifting conceptions of self and class, and the growth of foreign and local commercial interests.

My hunch is that photography could provide this access to broad segments of Andean society precisely because, unlike *indigenismo*, it occupied an intermediary position in the social imaginary and in society itself. Photography inhabited a socially porous space. Its affordability allowed the lower classes to order portraits of themselves that are telling in the attributes, such as the acquisition of technology and consumer goods, that they stress. For example, many are the images of indigenous and mixed-race people standing proudly next to a train or airplane, such as Sebastián Rodríguez's (1896–1968) 1934 "*Mestizos* with Airplane" (Figure 11.6), taken in the high sierra town of Morococha. Images such as these directly undermine the radical alterity that indigenistas found and celebrated in indigenous people. Furthermore, "*Mestizos* con

Figure 11.4 Fidel Mora, Wedding in Calca, 1945. (Used by permission of Fototeca Andina, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas)

avión" suggests that photography allowed highland peoples to understand themselves as allies of technology and thus as existing beyond the *indio*-nature equivalence cast upon them by lettered culture.

Returning to Filiberto and Crisanto Cabrera's "Family with Rams" (Figure 11.1), images such as these find their greatest symbolic purchase precisely in the fact that the conditions of their production evade a colonialist visual practice. The Cabreras began their work in the studio but the simple background and outdoor lighting visible in many of their photographs indicates that they must have become itinerant photographers who set up informal portrait studios wherever they went. Indeed, some of their most striking images feature posers in front of what seem to be bed sheets, such as the two men in "Prosthetic Arm" (Figure 11.7). The fact that the Cabreras catered to popular, non-elite groups makes of their archive a particularly rich record of Cuzco's cultural and economic diversity. Their modest economic condition, at a time when photography was booming, suggests that the Cuzco market may well have been saturated with photographic services, again reminding us of the omnipresence of this new means of visualizing the modern.

Figure 11.5 Avelino Ochoa, The governor, 1928. (Used by permission of Fototeca Andina, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas)

Like "Prosthetic Arm," "Family with Rams" is not meant and probably did not circulate in order to accentuate the unpolished conditions in which these Andean urban subjects lived, nor does it exist primarily to bolster an administrative power structure that in turn would discipline these sitters, as is the case for the indigenes in "The Governor." On the contrary, as a family portrait meant for limited circulation, the photograph exists to assert the presence, economic, cultural, familial, and social, of this grouping of people. Its subjects lay claim to everything in the photograph and seem to have gone so far as to modify it to make it more correctly reflect their interests. Between the man and woman (Figure 11.1) who stand at the center, there seems to have been a child in the photograph. His features, scratched away, are nevertheless clearly visible, as is the outline of his body. A leg and bare foot that have not been erased are visible immediately behind the central man's right leg. Such editing of photographs – through minute scratches made on the print or on the negative itself – was commonplace in Cuzco and is readily apparent in other works, including several by Martín Chambi. Was the boy merely an interloper? He seems too close to the others to have unexpectedly interrupted the portrait and, moreover, in the background

Figure 11.6 Sebastián Rodríguez *Mestizos* with airplane, 1934. (Used by permission of the heirs of Sebastián Rodríguez)

between the two men there sits a boy who does not seem to have close familial ties to the sitters in the foreground. Likely a servant, he is not scratched out but rather sits small and observant. Strangely enough, he sits at the foot of a door that also seems to have been scratched out entirely. Whatever the omitted boy's story, whether he is an illegitimate child or a recently deceased one or something else entirely, the editing-out of his presence, like that of the door's, points to a conscious effort to control how the family is identified through its representation. We can read this photograph, then, as an intervention in a particular family's notion of itself. This is a family that insists on its cohesiveness and wealth even as it shuns disruption or loss through the employment of a technology of image-making.

Sebastián Rodríguez's "Woman with Sewing Machine" (Figure 11.8) similarly demonstrates this kind of enacted agency, manifest in a willful self-presentation. In the foreground the woman proudly possesses the machine by which she may make her living while an obscure man sits darkly in the background. Her left hand splays out atop the table as if signaling ownership while also insisting on her manual dexterity. The machine is another attribute, like the ornament in her hair, the rings on her

Figure 11.7 Hermanos Cabrera, Prosthetic arm, 1935. (Used by permission of Fototeca Andina, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas)

hand, and her rich clothing, that stresses her prominence. Behind her, the man reads quietly, made small by the camera's perspective. Although he seems well dressed, we can barely see his face.

These inversions of gendered positionality both literal and figurative, and indeed of so many other relational identities contained herein, cannot be separated from the transformations occasioned by the long modern moment. Nor can they be separated from the technology that sought to fix that flux, often to the advantage of those most cast adrift in change. Even if this photograph circulated within only the smallest, most limited audience, it could not but have communicated the self-assurance of the sitter. It insists on a humble profession and the economic independence it makes possible as a defining quality in modern women and so constitutes an *other* proposal for a modern Andean subject. In photographs, as perhaps also in life, Andean women could present themselves as stubbornly resistant to a dependence dictated by patriarchy. This picture goes so far as to reject the usual spatial logic of patriarchy, thereby

Figure 11.8 Sebastián Rodríguez, Woman with sewing machine, 1934. (Used by permission of the heirs of Sebastián Rodríguez)

destabilizing the latter's hold on the figures within it. If my suspicions are correct, this destabilization emanates from the agency that marginal subjects enacted with and through photography but scarcely found in the period's elite cultural practices.

Perhaps it is unavoidable that I would return to an example of literary production in closing this chapter on the difficulties that a logocentric approach presents within subaltern studies. In his now canonical novel *Los ríos profundos* [Deep Rivers] (1958), the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas' (1911–1969) fiery and independent *chicheras*, or women who run businesses that sell *chicha* or fermented maize drink, present a parallel case to the seamstress in Rodríguez's picture. The novel and the photograph refer to roughly the same historical period, that is, the early decades of the twentieth century, and indeed they offer striking parallels in what concerns the representation of lower-class women.

Within Latin Americanist literary criticism, Arguedas' œuvre has been taken as a paradigmatic case of both literature's successful representation of the region's divided and conflicted culture heritage, as well as of the failure of literature's attempt to contain that vast heterogeneity. What interests me in his work is precisely this full range of contradictory readings, from Angel Rama's *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (1982) to Legrás' reading above and Alberto Moreiras' before him. In these cases, Arguedas' literary texts have been taken as the site for communicating the region's unique history and identity, whether this is understood as being a subversive or a hegemonic project.

Deep Rivers tells the autobiographical story of Ernesto, a boy who, after a visit to Cuzco with his father, is sent to study on his own in a boarding school in the highland town of Abancay. There, he is introduced to a wide range of Andean characters both at the school and in the town. The novel contains a sort of microcosm of Andean social subjects, from indigenous peoples to town *mestizo*s to powerful landowners and other members of the dominant castes. The *chicheras* play an important role with respect to Ernesto, for they manage the space of the restaurants wherein the protagonist comes into contact with Andean culture in the form of music. There, he observes the relative freedom that the *chicheras* enjoy through their economic independence from men. In the crucial revolt that the work portrays, *chicheras* take up a revolutionary leadership role in an attempt to rectify Andean society's deep inequalities.

This brief description of the characters of the *chicheras* is deeply resonant with Rodríguez's "Woman with Sewing Machine," insofar as in the novel as well as the photograph woman's independence and its effects are stressed. Nevertheless, these reflections on the text alongside the picture suggest that a crucial departure from the content of either picture or novel must be made in order to think through the perils of logocentrism: in both cases, and beyond the analyses I have carried out above, it is necessary to consider the circulation of such cultural objects, because it is in their insertion in the human world and the symbolic and economic flows that organize it that we find their purchase. Photographs certainly mean this way, that is, in the purposes they as objects are put to, say, in affective economies; in the case of the subaltern, it would be worth asking similar questions of literature and other lettered practices.

NOTES

1   In all cases, the titles of the photographs are those given to the documents by the archivists of the Fototeca Andina in Cuzco, Peru. The titles therefore were not originally given by the photographers, but rather were created later in an attempt to describe the images. The translations of the titles are my own.

2   Efraín Kristal offers a comprehensive view of *indigenismo*'s social and political dynamics in Peru.

3   The translation is mine.

4   Ileana Rodríguez's *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader* has been enormously helpful for understanding the trajectory and interest of the group, its offshoots, and affiliates. Also useful is Gustavo Verdesio's introduction and edited issue of *Dispositio/n* on the topic.

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If There's a Text in this Class, Where Did it Come From? Or, What Does Marilyn Monroe Have to do With *The Sorrows of Young Man Werther*?

Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller

[I]t is one of the great ironies of the project to challenge cultural paternalism and celebrate audience diversity that by undermining one bit of the ruling class, it appeared to endorse the ambitions of another. Thus did post-Marxist academia give a progressive seal of approval to letting the multicultural market rip; and if, as the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises said, the ultimate socialist institution is the post office, then postmodernism and poststructuralism have persuaded post-socialists to abandon playing post offices and take up playing shop. (David Edgar, 2000: p. 73)

[T]he San Remo of my childhood springs to mind, and I see the dustbin man with his sack on his back walking up the hairpins of the drive as far as the villa to collect the rubbish from the zinc bin: our genteel lifestyle seemed guaranteed for all eternity by the availability of cheap labor. (Italo Calvino, 1994: p. 99)

Comparative literature has expanded our body of cultural knowledge in terms of geography, demography, language, genre, and theory. But a troubling aspect of literary studies in general, which also applies to comparative literature, is that undergraduate and graduate students and professors alike generally inhabit and leave the university knowing how to analyze texts, but not knowing where they physically come from or end up. We have largely neglected the mission of the post office and ignored the work of waste disposal.

Who among us knows the number of books sold in the countries they study; how many people buy or borrow books each year, and what proportion read virtual or material versions; which companies dominate publishing and why; how many publishers there are now versus ten or twenty years ago; or why the market for works of

literary theory is shrinking? Can we explain the business structure of the industry; the experience of working in it as a forester, editor, or driver; the relationships of novelists, agents, and editors; or how books appear in the front of chain stores (or, are never in stock)? What is the role of bodies such as the International Publishers Association <internationalpublishers.org>, the Pan African Booksellers Association <panafricanbooksellersassociation.org>, the Book Industry Study Group <bisg.org>, the Publishers Database for Responsible and Ethical Paper Sourcing <prepsgroup. com>, the Federation of Indian Publishers <fipindia.org>, the Fédération des Editeurs Européens <fep-fee.be>, the Society of Publishers in Asia <sopasia.com>, and the Book Industry Environmental Council <bookcouncil.org>? Are classes being taught about the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act <lcWeb.loc.gov/copyright>, which jeopardizes fair use by turning digital works into commodity forms and criminalizing their appropriation, or how the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organizations <ifrro.org> goes about its business? Do we know how the industry manages innovation and experimentation (Healy, 2008)? And why do people say books are dying when the UK, for example, is experiencing a golden age of volume and sales <guardian.co.uk/books/audioslideshow/2010/may/24/publishing-history-20th-century> and worldwide there are now more iPhone applications for books than games (Lea, 2010)?

Changing the current *doxa* of comparative literature in order to address these and related issues could enrich students' and professors' knowledge base, increase their means of intervention in cultural production, counter charges of social and commercial irrelevance, challenge the safe houses of interdisciplinarity and disciplinarity, and make the fields of citizenship and social-movement claims about studying culture more credible. To do that, we need to destabilize the normal science of the field. Marx said that while a "commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood […] it is, in reality, a very queer thing" (Marx, 1867: p. 76). Queering that thing, in this case the book, can enrich textual history, and our place in it.

This chapter proposes some ways of doing this, drawing on certain tendencies within literary, science, media, cultural, and environmental studies. Touching off from the epigraphs that opened the essay, we'll propose a careful accounting for the life of the text that is mindful of Edgar's admiration for the public weal and aware of Calvino's waste-disposal practices. Along the way, we'll indicate the value of certain tendencies within literary studies; offer a reformist case study; and see why a truly comprehensive comparative literature must engage ecology.

A New Textual Analysis

The words "intellectual property" have a fairly predictable effect. Use them in conversation, and nine out of ten people immediately fall into a deep sleep, only to wake eight hours later demanding coffee and Weetabix. The tenth person, who is likely to have

some engagement with the creative industries, will immediately launch into a long, articulate, autobiographical complaint. (Lanchester, 2007)

Despite some strong introductory words, this chapter does not discount work already done within literary studies towards our goals. We admire, for example, the "new" literary history's tripartite approach to analyzing texts, *viz*. the reconstruction of "the diversity of older readings from their sparse and multiple traces;" a focus on "the text itself, the object that conveys it, and the act that grasps it;" and an identification of "the strategies by which authors and publishers tried to impose an orthodoxy or a prescribed reading on the text" (Chartier, 1989: p. 157, 161–163, 166). We value the way that Roger Chartier (1989) and Pierre Macherey (1977), for instance, turn away from reflectionism, which argues that a text's key meaning lies in its overt or covert capacity to capture the *Zeitgeist*, and question formalism's claim that close readings of style and theme can secure definitive meanings. They suggest instead that historical and narratalogical approaches must be supplemented to take account of linguistic translations, material publications, promotional paratexts, and the like. Books accrete and attenuate meanings on their travels as they rub up against, trope, and are troped by other fictional and factual texts, social relations, and material objects, and as they are interpreted by readers – all those moments that allow them to become "the literary thing" (Macherey, 1977). In short, we must consider the life cycle of texts.

Their approaches fruitfully connect literature to what Ian Hunter calls an "occasion […] the practical circumstances governing the composition and reception of a piece" (Hunter, 1988: p. 215) via Alec McHoul and Tom O'Regan's "discursive analysis of particular actor networks, technologies of textual exchange, circuits of communicational and textual effectivity, traditions of exegesis, [and] commentary and critical practice" (McHoul and O'Regan, 1992: p. 5–6). This links to the model of sender-message-receiver developed within mathematics and communications (Weaver and Shannon, 1963) and media and cultural studies' concern with the encoding and decoding of information (Eco, 1972).

In a similar vein, there is much to be gained from actor-network theory in tracking the career of globally circulating texts, as per the way Bruno Latour and his followers treat cars, missiles, trains, enzymes, and research articles. Latour (1993) seeks to allocate equal and overlapping significance to natural phenomena, social forces, and textual production in his analysis of contemporary life. Just as objects of scientific knowledge come to us in hybrid forms that are coevally affected by society and culture, so the latter two domains are themselves affected by the natural world. His example is crucial to the final segment of this chapter, as we look to a new, radical ecology of comparative literature.

We also find useful the way that García Canclini (2004) seeks a path through the nativism of Yanqui discourse towards what is referred to in Latin America as interculturalism, which transcends those comparative-literature perennials, multiculturalism, postcolonialism, and US ethnic politics. Canclini demonstrates that accounts of

mobile texts must engage with three key factors. First, there is a paradox: globalization also deglobalizes, in that its dynamic and impact are not only about mobility and exchange, but also disconnectedness and exclusion. Second, minorities no longer primarily exist within nations – rather, they emerge at transnational levels, due to massive migration by people who share languages and continue to communicate, work, and consume through them. Third, demographic minorities within sovereign-states may not form cultural minorities, because majoritarian élites in one nation may dispatch their culture to another where they are an ethnic minority.

This again makes sense as guidance for tracking the life of the commodity sign. Engagements with the literary qualities of texts must be supplemented, or perhaps supplanted, by an account of the conditions under which they are made, circulated, received, interpreted, criticized, and disposed of, considering all the shifts and shocks that characterize their existence as cultural commodities, their ongoing renewal as the temporary "property" of varied, productive workers and publics. A text is a passage across space and time, its life remade again and again by institutions, discourses, and practices of distribution, reception, and disposal.

Our fundamental message is this: understanding texts requires studying them up, down, and sideways, *i.e.* borrowing Laura Nader's renowned formulation calling for an ethnography of the powerful rather than the oppressed (Nader, 1972) and George Marcus' endorsement of multi-sited analysis that focuses on where products begin, live, and expire (Marcus, 1995). That means knowing which companies make books, the physical processes of production and distribution, the systems of cross-subsidy and monopoly profit-making, the complicity of educational canons with multinational corporations' business plans in the circulation of texts, and the press coverage of prizes, *inter alia*. And that takes us beyond the rather musty corridors of literary history and into the polluted corridors of material production, as per the finale to this chapter.

Comparative literature must consider the wider political economy, and not simply in terms of books as a reflective or refractive index of it – rather, text-making is *part of* that economy. Texts are the creatures, *inter alia*, of "corporations, advertising, government, subsidies, corruption, financial speculation, and oligopoly" (McChesney, 2009: p. 109). And the culture industries are not mere epiphenomena of an economic base. As Jacques Attali explains;

> lengthy historical cycles see political-economic power shift between cores. A new mercantile order forms wherever a creative class masters a key innovation from navigation to accounting or, in our own time, where services are most efficiently mass-produced, thus generating enormous wealth. (Attali, 2008: p. 32)

The services sector includes the book trade and allied media. Manuel Castells has coined the term "mass self-communication" to capture the latest developments in this field. Affective investments by social movements and individuals are being matched by financial and policing investments on the part of corporations and states (Castells, 2007: p. 239).

As we indicated earlier, there are examples of research that we can draw from to revise our analysis of texts. Paul Lichterman studied people who read self-help books aimed at straight women seeking to improve their romantic lives, which instruct them to be less emotionally demanding and not endeavor to change men too, too much. In place of the gullibility and acceptance assumed by many critics, Lichterman found few true believers. Instead, ambivalent readers neither embraced nor resisted the books, but assimilated them with numerous other inputs into their lives, "loosely, tentatively, sometimes interchangeably, without enduring conviction" (Lichterman, 1992: p. 439).

Similarly, when the film version of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* (Steven Spielberg, 1985) came out, it was derided by critics for a supposed inauthenticity in the eyes of African Americans. But Jacqueline Bobo's analysis of working-class black US women viewers disclosed that they "sifted through the incongruent parts of the film and reacted favorably to elements with which they could identify;" watching the movie and discussing it then led them to read the novel and each interpretative occasion invoked their own experience as a yardstick (Bobo, 1995: p. 3). Today, Alice Walker insists that her books are printed on post-consumer, recycled paper, a further element to understanding the life of the commodity signs that she helps generate (and studies suggest that over three-quarters of US readers would happily pay more for books on recycled paper ["Reducing the Carbon Footprint of Books"]). This is not to propose that what Terry Eagleton (1982) sardonically named "The Reader's Liberation Movement" is in the house, such that a text can be made to mean anything by readers. Rather, it is to call for a broader context to texts than stylistic assessments by apolitical formalists or armchair musings by amateur psychoanalysts.

Two monographs that bind together the production and circulation of texts with their meanings are *Bond and Beyond* (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987) and *The Avengers* (Miller, 1997). To exemplify such approaches, we briefly consider the posthumous career and retextualization of perhaps the ultimate 1950s film star and perennial glamor icon, Marilyn Monroe.

Frequently the object of both popular and scholarly fascination/fetishization, Monroe's biography is so encrusted with cultural layers that the person supposedly depicted in bounteous books, blogs, biopics, and black-and-whites can never be disinterred – at least, if any person could be, she's not it. But we *can* trace Monroe's social circulation in material ways, focusing on her legal status, her semiotic appearances across different media, and her role in medical research. The second of these methods is sometimes undertaken by conventional textual analysis, but generally within one medium. The other two approaches are rarely adopted.

Marilyn helped to create her own biographical mythology, for example when she claimed that: "Pertenezco al publico; el es mi única familia' [I belong to the public; that's my only family] and "Soy una hija del pueblo' [I'm a child of the people]. Such formulations, often troped in latter-day incarnations of her through both culture-industry simulation and academic analysis, rarely account for their conditions of existence. If Monroe is indeed "a child of the people," it's because, paradoxically, she

is an institutional figure, not because of some magic, organic relationship with the population. During her career and since, these institutions have included Hollywood studios, publicity, journalism, television, radio, publishing, and merchandising. And her ongoing stature as a populist icon relies in part on how her image is policed by the state through intellectual property. In 2007, the US Federal Court issued a Monroe Doctrine to the effect that Marilyn's family (which is to say, the family of Lee Strasberg, the method-acting teacher who was her legatee) may not control or sell her image. Since that time, the ability to license "Marilyn Monroe" as intellectual property has ceased to exist. In a sense, then, the law ensured she was the property of "our" imagination – and its materialization by artists ("Marilyn Monroe: Construcción," Perrotta).

Marilyn was of course herself a simulation, borrowing from other sexualized blond Hollywood stars, notably Mae West and Jean Harlow. For the past six decades, however, Monroe has been the referent of that image, most notably in the 1980s, when Madonna's "Material Girl" recreated the icon of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953) and *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Jean Negulesco, 1953). We see Monroe's robust sign value in the ongoing desire to represent her – in literature, *El día que murió Marilyn* (*The Day Marilyn Died*) by Terenci Moix, *Marilyn's Daughter* (John Rechy), *Queen of Desire* (Sam Toperoff), the poems of Lucinda Ebersole and Richard Peabody, the New-Masculinist Journalism of Norman Mailer, *Con M de Marilyn* (*With M de Marilyn*) by Ramírez Heredia, and the ficto-criticism of Truman Capote (Marí, 2000).

More critically, the French art collective Claire Fontaine, comprised of James Thornhill and Fulvia Carnevale, examines the tensions between Monroe, myth, and money in contemporary painting. Carnevale creates images of Marilyn that highlight the relationship between technical reproduction and the culture of personality, as per the work of Andy Warhol. She does so in combination with images of Mao Zedong – to show how capitalism discredits and undermines alternatives to it (Ricardo, 2008). Marilyn has provided inspiration to artists such as Gottfire Helnwein, Antoni de Felipe, Daniel Spoerri, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Marc Luders, Volker Hildebrandt, and José de Guimaraes. Corinna Holthusen uses marketing photos of the 1950s to play with paintings of the star that reach the point where she almost disappears. And in China, the actress Mei Ting incarnated her in an Orientalist mode ("Marilyn Monroe inspira").

Then there is the example of the dead Marilyn. In our own century, Amy Winehouse got through her incarceration in a London clinic to overcome assorted addictions by watching Marilyn's movies, as if in a perverse, reverse simulation of the drug-laden episode that appears to have ended the star's life. Monroe's legacy on this point is not entirely positive, however: in the month after her death in 1962, mimetic suicides went up 12% across the US. Monroe provides a classic case study for teaching the epidemiology of how media coverage of the death of stars can affect the public, alongside the history of Goethe's (1774) *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* [*The Sorrows of Young Man Werther*]. When the novel was released, its suiciding hero was deemed to have

caused numerous copycat suicides among readers. The book was subsequently banned in many cities (Stack, 2003). That end-of-life story is further encouragement for us to propose a life-cycle assessment of literature, as per the maxims of environmental studies.

The Environment of Comparative Literature: A Life-Cycle Assessment

> For a long time, the publishing industry considered itself to be relatively innocuous environmentally. The "lightening rod" mining, energy and food sectors kept the eyes of the public diverted. (Collins, 2010)

When you think of literature and the environment, your mind may turn to how texts have depicted nature and pollution, as discussed by numerous distinguished ecocritics (among the best, see Nixon, 2000; Ross, 1995). But in keeping with our advocacy of a materialist comparative literature, we consider not merely how literature *represents* the environment, but how it *changes* that environment through an extended alternative history of the rise of the book and associated texts. This is something beyond a case study of Marilyn Monroe's commodity/human signage, our attempt to show what a mildly reformist comparative literature might look like. This final segment of our chapter offers a much more radical vision. It does so from the perspective of environmental studies, not public-sphere mythology, great/radical book canonicity, religion, nationalism, capitalism, post colonialism, feminism, subaltern studies, queer theory, or other valuable methods. As Bruno Latour notes;

> Every type of politics has been defined by its relation to nature, whose every feature, property, and function depends on the polemical will to limit, reform, establish, short-circuit, or enlighten public life. (Latour, 2004: p. 1, 33)

From plutocracy to patriarchy, appeals to channel or protect nature, to govern it, are crucial to the exercise of political hegemony. We must therefore see the culture industries, including literature, as *environmental participants*, not merely signifying agents of information or pleasure. Texts are not just things to be read; they are not just coefficients of political and economic power; and they are not just industrial objects. Rather, they are all these things. They are hybrid monsters, coevally subject to rhetoric, status, and technology – to meaning, power, and science – all at once, but in contingent ways (Latour, 1993).

To return to where we began: how do texts come to exist? Originally, the rag trade provided raw material for paper, from recycled wool, linen cloth, old rope, and other materials collected by socially marginal workers named ragpickers. These itinerant "rag-and-bone men" were key suppliers of raw materials, which they gathered from rubbish collected from streets in pre-industrial European towns (Braudel, 1973:

p. 296). They joined the ranks of urban untouchables: "sewermen, gut dressers, knackers, drain cleaners, workers in refuse dumps, and dredging gangs" (Corbin, 1986: p. 53, 114–15, 145–6), that depended on "escape from and rejection of a primitive agricultural system now in a state of crisis" (Calvino, 1994: p. 113). In typically blunt yet metaphoric prose, Marx (2003: p. 63) described these workers as an "undefined, dissolute, kicked-about mass."

Vellum and parchment (sheep or goat skin) were also used to make high-quality surfaces for writing and printing, but at a cost too dear to support profitable printing businesses. Meanwhile, papermaking technology was traveling from China to Europe via Islam. Paper mills operated in *al-Andalus* (the Iberian Peninsula) by the twelfth century, and a papermaking industry emerged in Italy in the fourteenth century, with mechanical energy supplied by water wheels. Since that time, papermaking has needed "enormous quantities of clear water" as a power source and an ingredient. Deforestation began in the mid-1800s, when industrial printing enlarged demand for raw material (Braudel, 1973: p. 295–6).

Demand for the rapid and accurate reproduction of printed media grew as the number of readers began to outpace the supply of handmade documents produced by scribes, presaging the demise of manual lettering (Braudel, 1973: p. 296). A veritable "cluster of innovations" emerged: movable metal type, oil-based ink, and wooden hand presses provided reliable mechanical printing (Eisenstein, 1983: p. 13). Movable type in various forms had been used in China, Japan, Central Asia, and Europe before Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg invented his eponymous method in the mid-fifteenth century. It was allied to developments in chemistry, mechanics, and metallurgy that had been learnt by goldsmiths such as Gutenberg who worked for wealthy bishoprics in Mainz and Strasbourg. Printing consequently expanded the use of copper, lead, antimony, and tin (Mehring, 1979: p. 188–94; Braudel, 1973: p. 296–8; Pines, 1931: p. 299).

From the early 1800s, coal-burning, steam-powered presses multiplied the potential volume of printed pages three to four times, adding new synthetic elements to the environment as a result (Wallwork, 1968: p. 147). Paper demand spiraled by mid-century, when the rotary press made it possible to print millions of copies in a single day. Cloth for papermaking was perennially in short supply, and although wood pulp was (and remains) a poor source of fiber compared to cloth and natural sources like hemp, it became the primary material for modern industrial printing once mechanical and chemical processes were refined that could reduce wood pulp into usable fiber. These techniques emerged in North America and Western Europe, where abundant forests seemed to offer an endless supply of cheap raw materials to commercial papermakers (Kinsella, 1990). The Southern states of the US comprised the world's biggest paper-producing region by the end of the last century (Wear and Greis, 2001). The US and Canada remain the world's largest producers of paper, due to their large reserves of softwood. Mexico, by contrast, is a net importer of paper, and so has been much more innovative in recycling newsprint, for example. Canadian attempts to shift wheat-straw pulp are frustrated by the fact that excess wheat isn't pulped

there, so they import pulped wheat and rice from China to make paper, adding massively to carbon use through transportation. Other countries that have forests endangered by the industry include Indonesia, Chile, Russia, and Brazil, though mining, agriculture, and settlement are also major contributors to the devastation (Medina, 2007: p. 140–1; Boychuk, 2008; Borealis Centre for Environment and Trade Research, 2008; Carli, 2010).

The Gutenberg press, and others like it, changed media technology's ecological context, as synthetic alloys and other toxic metals were incorporated into the routine of printing. Their impact grew as print technology industrialized over the next two centuries. Rising energy demands increased use of fossil fuels, while chemical processes introduced large quantities of sulfite salts, sulfur dioxide, caustic soda, sodium sulfide (the Kraft process), and bleaching chemicals into the ecosystem. Changes in production techniques generated new efficiencies and hazards, from "hot metal" typesetter technology (1886), analog photo typesetting (1949), and digital photo-typesetting (1965), to laser image-setting (1976). In the personal-computer era, of course, printing became an everyday part of household and office work. The implications for pollution through plastics and flame-retardants are serious: each year, five hundred seventy-five million printer cartridges are thrown away in North America alone. Modern chemical processes involved in printing have produced new synthetic byproducts, including dioxin. A carcinogen, it settles in the ground, waterways, and the human food supply, making it bioaccumulative (Tripsas, 1997: p. 124, 142; Smith, 1980; Pelta-Heller, 2007). By 2001, the pulp and paper industry was the "second largest consumer of energy" in the world's largest overall consumer of energy – the US (Independent Press Association *et al.* 2001: p. 6). In fact, pulp and paper became the single largest consumer of water used in industrial activities in the wealth democracies of the [Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development] OECD and the third largest greenhouse gas emitter, after the chemical and steel industries. (OECD, 2001: p. 218)

In 2006, US papermaking used seventy-five billion kilowatt hours of energy, lagging behind just one industry: petroleum (Carli, 2010). The country's book and newspaper sector was responsible for felling one hundred twenty-five million trees in 2008, quite apart from the industry's carbon impact and water use. Each book produced in the US averages four kilograms of carbon dioxide emissions – eight times the average weight of a book. Distributing and retailing account for five hundred grams of this total (Sibley, 2009; Edwards, *et al.*, 2009).

The sector's annual carbon impact is estimated by the industry itself at 12.4 million metric tons, equivalent to emissions from between two and seven million cars, depending on which account you trust. *Per capita* carbon emissions from books are: 20.4 metric tons in the US, 20.0 in Canada, 3.84 in China, 1.2 in India, 1.8 in Brazil, and 3.7 in Argentina. The Japanese book industry is notably less wasteful than the US, in keeping with its economy's commitment to green supply chains (Edwards *et al.*, 2009; The Book Industry, 2008; Borealis Centre for Environment and Trade Research,

2008; bookcouncil.org; Butler, 2009; Reducing the Carbon Footprint of Books, 2008).

The impact of future carbon taxes, new technologies, and deforestation may diminish the printing industry's size (Szabó, *et al.*, 2009); alternatively, massive developments in nanotechnology (a neat paradox) could dematerialize the production of paper. Along with new water management techniques, and subtractive rather than additive electronic methods, such innovations might make printing sustainable (Puurunen and Vasara, 2007; Abou-Elela, *et al.*, 2008; Kunnari, *et al.*, 2009). And there are new consumer technologies, of course. Much is made of the fact that 25 December 2009 was the first-ever day Amazon sent more books to Kindles than letterboxes. Revenue from downloaded books in the US rose one hundred fifty percent that year, three million e-readers were sold, and e-books had perhaps three percent of the US market. In addition to the already-renowned Kindle and iPad and the less well-known Sony and Barnes and Noble versions, new apparatuses are being developed by Taiwanese, Korean, Japanese, and British firms at the time of writing.

Common sense might suggest that electronic books diminish the carbon footprint of the industry, because they require one-off transportation (obtaining the device) and no pulping, paper bleaching, or printing, while sixty-five percent of publishing's carbon footprint comes from paper. Amongst British media buyers, for example, a recent study found that eighty percent believed electronic communications were less environmentally destructive than paper ones. The Kindle is supposed to offset the carbon footprint of its production within a year, and over a lifetime, it purportedly saves the carbon needed to make over twenty books (Weinstein, 2010; bookcouncil. org; Tonkin, 2010; Nors, *et al.*, 2009: p. 55; Butler, 2009).

But there is no accepted measurement system for readers, publishers, scholars, policymakers, librarians, and salespeople to calculate the renewable virtues of paper versus the electricity vices of electronics, while there are dozens of competing environmental-certification systems. This also raises the thorny question of how to measure the environmental impact of ink, which comes in a multitude of forms and depends on many varied chemical combinations. The use of digital devices in the US generally relies on coal-powered electricity at some point in the supply chain, much of it responsible for removing the Appalachian mountaintops. Ordering books online involves individual packaging and delivery, and numerous mid-points of distribution by contrast with bookstore purchases; plus US consumers are rare among wealthy nations in using cars to shop for books. Given that most researchers seek out portable document formats of the papers they download, it seems likely that researchers now download and print more articles than they once read in library hard copies (which were also shared with countless others). Paper use in the Global North increased throughout the personal-computer era until 2001, and continues to expand in the Global South with the spread of literacy, newsprint, and governmentality, while high-end office printing still proliferates in wealthy countries as people look for high color and resolution (Carli, 2020; ilovemountains.org/myconnection; Christensen and

Siever, 2009; Matthews, *et al.*, 2002; Reducing the Carbon Footprint of Books, 2008; Collins, 2010; Milmo, 2010).

   None of the above can deny the excitement generated by the revolutionary industrial and post-industrial ages of the eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries. Newly urbanized dwellers confronted unprecedented social relations and technologies that did much more than pollute. By the early twentieth century, a sense of awe and wonderment at such transformations informed the work of many emergent European artists, who imagined homologies and analogies between their art and the revolutionary urban environment of people and things. We can see modernity's love of mastery and perfection, the application of reason to better the world, in Surrealism, Dadaism, Futurism, and projects such as Le Corbusier's (Papastergiadis). Today, cybertarians' cathectic reactions to digital technology and the autotelic freedom it offers to creativity generate similar signs of adoration and utopianism.

   But there *was* always another side to the narrative of progress so beloved of urban mythologists; and artists responded to that side as well. As we noted earlier, recycling raw material was a prominent feature of papermaking until the industrial printing business began using wood pulp. Ragpickers were assigned "to sort and order domestic rubbish from houses; to collect organic remains, the bones and corpses of small animals, and so complete the work of cesspool clearers," and by the mid-nineteenth century, the volume of waste removal from city centers to city peripheries had grown because the urban rich condemned the "odor of crowded bodies" and the "rising tide of excrement and rubbish" (Corbin, 1986: p. 114–15).

   Removing waste didn't eliminate it: as a living, malodorous reminder of urban filth, the lowly ragpicker foiled the bourgeois fantasy of cleanliness. And along with fan letters to the modern, urban dross was also stimulating artists to express ambivalence and ambiguity to the new phenomenon of garbage and its ancillary occupations. Garbage was a sign of both progress and abjection. It had not existed in rural subsistence – the capitalist city put an end to automatic, unreflexive recycling, thanks to *bourgeois* manners, technological innovation, unequal living conditions, and the division of labor. You can read about reactions to the subsequent stench in Charles Dickens, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Émile Zola, for instance. Ragpickers continue to labor and to fascinate writers of fiction from China (Ah Cheng), Italy (Italo Calvino and Paolo Teobaldi), Austria (Christoph Ransmayr), the US (Paul Auster and Donald Barthelme), Canada (Daniel Brodeur and Margaret Atwood), France (Michel Tournier), the Czech Republic (Buhomil Hrabal and Ivan Klima), and Costa Rica (Fernando Contrera Castro), *inter alia* (Moser, 2007 surveys much of this work).

   Baudelaire famously portrayed the recycling ragpicker as a defender of the poor and an enemy of the rich in his poem *Le Vin des Chiffoniers* [The Rag-Picker's Wine] (Baudelaire, 1972: p. 141–2). And the ragpicker is a figure of *pathos* in the British situation comedy of the 1960s, *Steptoe and Son*. The Steptoes and their horse and cart looked for gems amongst the throwaways of "Swinging London," throwbacks to a time that had not really passed for working people. Steptoe Junior spent

his evenings dreaming of transcending their life together, as he devoured the works of Marx and George Bernard Shaw. But he could never leave his ragpicker status behind. The series was remade as the 1970s US sitcom *Sanford and Son* and the Nigerian *Basi and Company* (1985–1990), which subsidized Ken Saro-Wiwa's literary career.

Calvino's elaborate *aperçus* about his life include a lengthy meditation on "taking out the rubbish," which stood alone amongst "housework" as a task that he undertook with both "competence and satisfaction." This is for him a key moment not in "the passage from private to public," as it is for most people, but rather a domestic ceremony. At the same time, the *poubelle agréée*, the model Parisian rubbish bin, "proclaims the role that the public sphere, civic duty and the constitution of the polis play in all our lives." Without that object, and the institutions and work associated with it, Calvino "would die buried under my own rubbish in the snail shell of my individual existence." The daily task of sloughing off the abject permitted the middle class to "begin the new day without having to touch what the evening before we cast off from ourselves forever," consigned to an alien status that was clearly apart from their authentic selves (Calvino, 1994; p. 93, 96, 98, 102–3).

Ragpickers survive to this day – Baudelaire's poem is even translated on the World Bank's Poverty Net in order to "develop a greater sensitivity to the tragedy, the challenges, and the urgency of poverty!" (World Bank Povery Net). Indian ragpickers sell to *kabaadiwalaas* (petty recyclers), with each group straining at the limits of order and safety (Gidwani, 2006: p. 11–12). Such marginal workers remain embarrassing embodiments of post-industrial progress and more and more chaotic urban growth, as per Delhi or Mexico City's sprawling deterioration and regeneration. They constitute an "informal working class" that is generally disarticulated from political activity and non-government organizations and lacks monetary and cultural capital and administrative heft (Harriss, 2006; Guillermoprieto, 1990). And Brazilian, Indian, and Chinese scholars have painted a disturbing epidemiological story of ragpicker maladies, caused, *inter alia*, by their role in recycling First World electronic waste from televisions and computers (da Silva *et al.*, 2006; Ray, *et al.*, 2004; Mukherjee, *et al.*, 1990; Wong, *et al.*, 2007).

Conclusion

450 000 Unsold Earth Day Issues of *Time* Trucked to Landfill – Headline in *The Onion*'s "Obligatory Green Issue," an "All-Paper Salute to the Environment." (1 July 2008)

We believe that comparative literature must erase "the tenacious division that for so long separated sciences of description and sciences of interpretation, morphological studies and hermeneutical analysis," recognizing that the "'world of text' […] [is] a world of objects and performances;" texts must be traced through "their different and successive materialities" (Chartier, 2005a: p. 38–40), accounting for both open,

malleable, polyphonic qualities and closed, fixed, monaural ones (Chartier, 2005b). Core resources for undertaking the type of analysis we propose include:

- Policy documents from public bureaucracies (international, national, regional, state, and municipal governments) and private bureaucracies (corporations, lobby groups, research firms, non-government organizations, religions, and unions) on literary subvention, prizes, paper and print industries, and recycling.
- Debates (Congressional/parliamentary, press, lobby-group, activist, and academic) pertaining to cultural and environmental policy.
- Budgets (where do papermakers, printers, and publishers draw their money from?).
- Laws (is there relevant legislation and case law about labor, copyright, environmental impact, importation, and censorship?).
- Histories (what came before and what is new?).
- Places (can analysts in dominant nations contextualize their experiences as partial, not universal, by examining other examples?).
- People (who is included and who is excluded, who is highlighted and who is hidden, when texts are made?).
- Pollution (what are the environmental costs of textuality?).
- Genres (what is being made and sold?); and
- Reception (how are people making sense of what they read, and how does this vary across technologies?).

The implications of doing this kind of scholarly work are uncomfortable – as ironic as the massive proliferation of "green" branding skewered by *The Onion*; as paradoxical as the way environmental scientists use energy to undertake and disseminate research that shows the need to use less energy (Collins, 2010). Beyond even that, many of us grew up driven – or orchestrated – by the tenet that the moment when you "add writing" to evolution is "when history proper begins" (Goody and Watt, 1963: p. 304).

And can a single *complittérrateur* do this work alone? Collaborative scholarship is mostly frowned upon – or at least not understood – in the humanities. A commitment to the single-authored monograph's aesthetic-monastic model of knowledge entrenches such backwardness. We must get beyond that and create teams of scholars and activists from right across the human and other sciences, especially given the paucity of cradle-to-grave work on publishing (Nors *et al*., 2009). We have examples like Chartier's fascination with archives and libraries and Latour's focus on factories and laboratories. Moving agilely between systems of subsidy, forms of policing, plans for commodification, methods of governmentality, and practices of waste disposal, will help us intervene in the eco-system of texts – and comprehend the connection between dead Marilyn and dead Werther.

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13

Comparative Literature in the Age of Digital Humanities: On Possible Futures for a Discipline

Todd Presner

After five hundred years of print and the massive transformations in society and culture that it unleashed, we are in the midst of another watershed moment in human history that is on par with the invention of the printing press or perhaps the discovery of the New World. With the invention of the printing press, communication, literacy, and the state of knowledge completely changed, providing the conditions of possibility for the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the age of Humanism, and the rise of mass media. Innovations in print technology became the very instrument for producing, sharing, and transforming humanistic and scientific knowledge. Analogously, with the opening up of the New World, not only were the profound limitations of conventional knowledge and epistemologies exposed, but the "discovery" reconfigured – for better and for worse – the entire surface of the earth, enabled the ascendancy of rationality (and its deep link to barbarism), gave rise to new economies, provided the seedbed for colonialism, and was the prerequisite of the modern nation-state.[1]

   Both the impact of print and the "discovery" of the New World were predicated on networking technologies, which not only enabled the dissemination of knowledge into new cultural and social spheres, but also brought together people, nations, cultures, and languages that were previously separated. Of course, we should take a long view in historicizing these technologies, one which spans the history of seafaring and voyages of discovery, the building and spread of railways, the development of the worldwide postal system, the invention of the electric telegraph, the systematization of world standard time, the heyday of colonization, the massive exploitation of the natural world, the electrification of cities, the development of highways and car culture, the rise of transnational finance and technology aggregates, the development of the "new" media of radio, film, and television, the construction of the infrastructure of the Internet, the posting of the first web pages, and the explosion of real-time social

networking on hand-held devices. Despite the profound differences between these technologies, what they all have in common is a contraction of time and space realized through the control and regulation of knowledge, information, and bodies.

In this regard, every technology has a dialectical underbelly, facilitating a potential democratization of information and exchange, on the one hand, and the ability to exercise exclusionary control and violence on the other. This, I would suggest, is the persistent dialectic of any technology, ranging from communications technologies (print, radio, the telephone, television, the web) to technologies of mobility and exchange (ships, railways, highways, and the Internet). These technologies of networking and connection do not necessarily bring about the ever-greater liberation of humankind, as Nicholas Negroponte once asserted in his wildly optimistic book *Being Digital* (Negroponte,1995), for they always have an underbelly: mobile phones, social networking technologies, and perhaps even the hundred-dollar computer, will not only be used to enhance education, spread democracy, and enable global communication but will likely be used to perpetrate violence and even orchestrate genocide in much the same way that the radio and the railway did in the last century (despite the belief that both would somehow liberate humanity and join us all together in a happy, interconnected world that never existed before) (Presner, 2007). Or as Paul Gilroy analyzed in his study of "the fatal junction of the concept of nationality with the concept of culture" along the "Black Atlantic," voyages of discovery, enlightenment, and progress also meant, at every moment, voyages of conquest, enslavement, and destruction. Indeed, this is why any discussion of technology cannot be separated from a discussion about formations of power and instrumentalized authority (Gilroy, 1993: p. 2).

Today, the changes brought about by new communication technologies – including, but hardly limited to, web-based media forms, locative technologies, digital archives, cloud computing, social networking, and mixed realities – are so proximate and so sweeping in scope and significance that they may appropriately be compared to the encounter with the New World and the dissemination of printing.[2] But our contemporary changes are happening on a very rapid timescale, taking place over months and years rather than decades and centuries. Because of the rapidity of these developments, the intellectual tools, methodologies, and disciplinary practices have just started to emerge for responding to, engaging with, and interpreting the massive social, cultural, economic, and educational transformations happening all around us. Moreover, we have barely started to appreciate the profound disciplinary, methodological, and institutional shifts that are occurring as print culture is enhanced and also displaced by the emergence of a natively digital culture.

Like the literary scholar N. Katherine Hayles, I find myself wondering – as we ponder various possible futures for Comparative Literature in the second decade of the twenty-first century – how to rouse ourselves from the "somnolence [of] five hundred years of print" (Hayles, 2002: p. 29). Of course, there is nothing neutral, objective, or necessary about the medium of print; rather it is a medium that has a long and complex history connected to the formation of academic disciplines, institutions,

epistemologies, and ideologies, not to mention conceptions of authorship and scholarly research.[3] While the materiality of the vast majority of artifacts that we study as professors of Comparative Literature has been (and, to a large extent, still is) print, the burgeoning field of electronic literature has necessitated a reconceptualization of "materiality as the interplay between a text's physical characteristics and its signifying practices," something that, as Hayles argues, allows us to consider texts as "embodied entities" and still foreground interpretative practices (Hayles, 2004: p. 72).[4] In this regard, the medium of literary artifacts as well as the medium of literary scholarship – by which I mean, every conceivable form of creative output, criticism, analysis, and argumentation – can no longer be assumed simply to be print, as if this medium is somehow a transparent or neutral conveyer of meaning. As Walter Benjamin did in *The Arcades Project* (1928–40; 1999), it is necessary, I believe, to interrogate both the media and methodologies for the study of literature, culture, and society. Just as Benjamin sought to employ the montage form to transform historical scholarship by refocusing attention on what it means to "write" history, digital media enable us to refocus on the media, methodologies, and affordances of print culture in the practice of Comparative Literature. At the same time, we must ask ourselves: What happens when print is no longer the normative or exclusive medium for producing literature and undertaking literary studies?[5]

While electronic literature offers a significant and multivalent possibility for exploring the future of Comparative Literature, I want to examine the field a bit more broadly by situating the transformation of the literary vis-à-vis a set of issues that have emerged over the past decade in the "Digital Humanities." These issues – authorship, access, collaboration, dissemination, media, platform, scholarly legitimacy – are not restricted to Comparative Literature since they raise questions that have formed the methodological, disciplinary, and institutional foundation of a wide-range of academic fields in the Humanities, including history and art history, literary and cultural studies, and the humanistic social sciences, such as anthropology, archaeology, and information studies. In fact, these issues, brought to the foreground in the digital world, necessitate a fundamental rethinking of *how* knowledge gets created, *what* knowledge looks (or sounds, or feels, or tastes) like, *who* gets to create knowledge, *when* it is "done" or published, *how* it gets authorized and disseminated, and *how* it involves and is made accessible to a significantly broader (and potentially global) audience. The Humanities of the twenty-first century, I argue here, has the potential to generate, legitimate, and disseminate knowledge in radically new ways, on a scale never before realized, involving technologies and communities that rarely (if ever) were engaged in a global knowledge-creation enterprise. The purpose of this chapter is to provide some preliminary signposts for figuring out what this means for the Humanities generally and for Comparative Literature more specifically.

Let me begin by offering a definition of "Digital Humanities," a term which still needs the qualifier "digital" in order to highlight the proliferation of media and the move away from strictly print artifacts.[6] Digital Humanities is an umbrella term for a wide array of interdisciplinary practices for creating, applying, interpreting,

interrogating, and hacking both new and old information technologies. These practices – whether conservative, subversive, or somewhere in between – are not limited to conventional Humanities departments and disciplines, but affect every humanistic field at the university and transform the ways in which humanistic knowledge reaches and engages with communities outside the university. Digital Humanities projects are almost always collaborative, engaging humanists, technologists, librarians, social scientists, artists, architects, information scientists, and computer scientists in conceptualizing problems, designing interfaces, analyzing data, sharing knowledge, and engaging with a significantly broader public than traditional academic research in the Humanities. At the same time, Digital Humanities is an outgrowth and expansion of the traditional scope of the Humanities, not a replacement or rejection of humanistic inquiry. I firmly believe that the role of the humanist is more critical at this historic moment than perhaps ever before, as our cultural legacy as a species migrates to digital formats and our relation to knowledge, cultural material, technology, and society at large is radically re-conceptualized. After all, it is to humanists that we should turn to help us to understand, critique, compare, historicize, and evaluate the explosion of "born digital" publications, the various platforms that support them, and the cultural, social, and economic shifts that they enable (or variously prevent).

As Jeffrey Schnapp and I articulated in various instantiations of the "Digital Humanities Manifesto," it is essential that humanists assert and insert themselves into the twenty-first century cultural wars, which are largely being defined, fought, and won by corporate interests. Why, for example, were humanists, foundations, and universities conspicuously – even scandalously – silent when Google won its book search lawsuit and, effectively, won the right to transfer copyright of orphaned books to itself? Why were they silent when the likes of Sony and Disney essentially engineered the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, radically restricting intellectual property, copyright, and sharing? The Manifesto is a call to Humanists for a much deeper engagement with digital culture production, publishing, access, and ownership. If new technologies are dominated and controlled by corporate and entertainment interests, how will our cultural legacy be rendered in new media formats? By whom and for whom? These are questions that Humanists must urgently ask and answer.

Like all Manifestos, especially those that came out of the European avant-garde in the early twentieth century, the Digital Humanities Manifesto is bold in its claims, fiery in its language, and utopian in its vision. It is not a unified treatise or a systematic analysis of the state of the Humanities; rather, it is a call to action and a provocation that sought to perform the kind of debate and transformation that it advocates. As a participatory document circulated throughout the blogosphere, the three major iterations of the Digital Humanities Manifesto are available in many forums online: Versions 1.0 and 2.0 exist primarily as Commentpress blogs, and Version 3.0 is an illustrated, print-ready PDF file, which has, as of this writing, been translated into four languages and widely cited, cribbed, remixed, and republished on numerous blogs. The rationale for using Commentpress was to make some of the more incendiary ideas in the Manifesto available for immediate public scrutiny and debate, some-

thing that is facilitated by the blogging engine's paragraph-by-paragraph commenting feature, resulting in a richly interlinked authoring/commenting environment. In a Talmudic vein, the comments and critiques quickly overtook the original "text," creating a web of commentary and a multiplication of voices and authors. By Versions 2.0 and 3.0, the authorship of the Manifesto had extended in multiple directions, with substantial portions authored by scholars in the field, students, and the general public. Moreover, since the Manifesto was widely distributed in the blogosphere and on various Digital Humanities list-serves, it instantiated one of the key things that it called for, namely participatory humanities scholarship in the expanded public sphere.

Reflecting on the Manifesto one year later, I believe it is foremost a call for Humanists to be deeply engaged with every facet of this information revolution, which, Robert Darnton (2008), points out, represents the beginnings of the *fourth* information age, not the first. It is also a plea for Humanists to guide the reshaping of the university – curricula, departmental and disciplinary structures, library and laboratory spaces, the relationship between the university and the greater community – in creative ways that facilitate the responsible production, curation, and dissemination of knowledge in the global cultural and social landscapes of the twenty-first century.[7] Far from providing the right answers, the Manifesto was an attempt to examine the explanatory power, relevance, and cogency of established organizations of knowledge, largely inherited from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and to imagine creative possibilities and futures that are built on long-standing humanistic traditions. It was not to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, but rather to interrogate disciplinary and institutional structures, the media of knowledge production and modes of meaning making, and to take seriously the challenges and possibilities set forth by the advent of the fourth information age. The Manifesto argued that the work of the Humanities is absolutely critical and, in fact, more necessary than ever for developing thoughtful responses, purposeful interpretations, trenchant critiques, and creative alternatives – but that this could not be done while locked into restrictive disciplinary and institutional structures, singular media forms, and conventional expectations about the purview, function, and work of the Humanities.

Taking Darnton's assessment seriously that we are now in the fifth decade of the fourth information age in the history of humankind, it seems to me that we ought to try to understand not only the contours of the discipline of Comparative Literature – and for that matter, the Humanities as a whole – from the perspective of an information- and media-specific analysis, but that we also ought to come to terms with the epistemic disjunction between our digital age and everything that came before it. Although the Internet (meaning the technological infrastructure for transferring data over a distributed network of computers) is barely forty years old and the World Wide Web (meaning the hyperlinked, hypertextual documents viewable in browsers) is barely two decades old, it is striking to ponder the sheer volume of "data" already produced. According to the most recent statistics on the size of the web, there are more than twenty-one billion indexed web pages as of May 2010, but the number of

URLs indexed by Google is over one trillion; Google has scanned, catalogued, and made searchable more than ten million books; Technorati has indexed more than a hundred thirty million blogs since 2002, according to its annual report on the "state of the blogosphere;" JSTOR has over six million articles from more than six thousand publishers; the social networking site Facebook currently has a repository of more than twenty-five billion pieces of content posted by users (ranging from photographs and videos to news stories and blog posts); the photo sharing application Flickr contains more than three billion photographs; Twitter users produce, on average, fifty-five million tweets per day, which will now be archived and catalogued by the Library of Congress. These statistics do not even take into consideration the scope of other content produced and shared on the web, such as email and videos, not to mention content produced through participation in on-line community forums, chat groups, Instant Messaging, multiplayer gaming, and mixed reality environments such as Second Life. I think it is evident that we are producing, sharing, consuming, and archiving exponentially more cultural material, particularly textual and visual data, than ever before in the history of our species.

While much of this data is not "literature" (in either a high or low culture sense) and may not be studied under the conventional academic rubric of "Comparative Literature," it brings into stark relief the constitution of the tiny canon of print artifacts – literary and critical-theoretical – with which the field currently engages. To be sure, the field has "opened up" over the past few decades to embrace a wide-range of methodological and transcultural perspectives through the multivalent fields of transnational studies (Spivak, 1999; Appadurai, 1996; Thomas, 2007), mobility and translation studies (Greenblatt, 2010; Apter, 2006; Gilroy, 1993), and postcolonial and diaspora studies (Said, 1983; Behdad, 1994). Although still a contested term, Comparative Literature has, for many practitioners, become synonymous with "global literature" or "world literature," something that underscores the truly global circulations of secular culture, cosmopolitanisms, and, we must now add, digital culture and media (Damrosch, 2003; Moretti, 2000, 2005) And numerous other studies have displaced the high culture bent of the discipline by examining popular or vernacular literature, newspapers and other media, and changing notions of literacy, publishing, and knowledge systems generated by print (Davidson, 1986; Kittler, 1990). I in no way wish to impugn any of these efforts, which have, in fact, been central for my own critical contributions (Presner, 2007a, 2007b). My point, following on Franco Moretti's provocation, is to consider Comparative Literature as a "problem" (not a canon of objects, a theoretical position, or a particular medium) that "asks for a new critical method" (Moretti, 2000: p. 55) to analyze both the print world in the digital age and the digital world in the post-print age. The "problem" of Comparative Literature is to figure out how to take seriously the range of new authoring, annotation, and sharing platforms that have transformed global cultural production.

Indeed, what we are seeing today in the massive proliferation of cultural data throughout the ever-expanding info-sphere highlights the global nature of cultural exchange, profound interconnection, and transnational mobility, while simultane-

ously exposing the deep fissures, inequalities, and erasures that accompany every transformative technology. While the differences in scale and scope are dramatic, even mind-blowing when one considers the sheer volume of information now produced and exchanged on a daily basis, the central issue is the fact that the artifacts constituted by the world of print are comparatively different – in terms of material composition, authorship, meaning-making, circulation, reading practices, viewing habits, navigation features, embodiment, interactivity, and expressivity – from those artifacts constituted by digital technologies and which "live" in various digital environments. This is not to say that digital media is somehow more "evolved" than print media or that books are obsolete; rather it is to insist on the multiplicity of media and the varied processes of mediation and remediation in the formation of cultural knowledge and the idea of the literary. I strongly believe that we – as literary scholars – need to apply the same kind of rigorous, media-specific, social, cultural, and economic analyses that we have honed to study print culture to understand the specificity and affordances of digital culture, to interrogate the status of knowledge, the concept of culture, and the redefinition of the social in our global information age. And beyond just "studying" the technologies and their impact, I believe that we must actively engage with, design, create, critique, and finally hack the environments and technologies that facilitate this research, render this world as a world (and make it variously porous), and produce knowledge about who we are, where we live, and what that means.

Needless to say, we will have to design and employ new tools to thoughtfully sift through, analyze, map, and evaluate the unfathomably large deluge of data and cultural material that the digital age has already unleashed, something that will require Humanists to contend with text-mining tools, machine reading, and various kinds of algorithmic analyses. Indeed, Moretti has already indicated one possible way of doing this in his articulation of "distant reading," a specific form of analysis that focuses on larger units and fewer elements in order to reveal "their overall interconnection [through] shapes, relations, structures. Forms. Models." (Moretti, 2005: p. 1). It is a term that is specifically arrayed against the deep hermeneutics of extracting meaning from a text through ever closer, microscopic readings. But beyond "distant reading," we might entertain the possibility of machine reading, in which trends, correlations, and relationships would be extracted through computational methods. After all, as Hayles points out in her recent study on the transforming power of digital humanities, even if we were to read a book a day for our entire adult life, the upper end of the number of books that can be read is about twenty-five thousand, and this does not even take into consideration the reading and composition of digital forms of data and cultural material (Hayles, 2009). There is simply no way we can process and make sense of the volume of data, in its multiplicity of media – including traditional print formats – without the help of a computer.

Because we are still in the first decades of this massive transformation, it may be somewhat premature to articulate new disciplinary, methodological, and institutional fault lines. Nonetheless, I think it can be said with some certainty that the concept

of the "literary" or the equally vexing notions of what constitutes "literature" and "culture" are terms that owe much of their meaning – as objects of knowledge, study, and pleasure in the humanistic tradition – to the history of writing and inscription practices, what Friedrich Kittler calls "*Aufschreibesysteme*" (systems of writing down). These systems are not, of course, limited to print, but include the vastly differentiated material history of knowledge systems, from stone carving, leather folios, and parchment scrolls to illuminated manuscripts, codices, printed books, CD ROMS, and now various forms of electronic literature, web-based media, and digital authoring environments. The question that we need to confront in the fourth information age concerns the specificity of the digital medium vis-à-vis other media formats, the various kinds of cultural knowledge produced, the ways of analyzing it, the various platforms that support it, and, finally, the modes of authorship and reception that facilitate new architectures of participation and new architectures of power. As a way of addressing such questions, I will briefly discuss three futures for "Comparative Literature" in the Digital Age. I do not consider them to exist in parallel or isolation but rather as additive and synergistic.

Comparative Media Studies

While there is little doubt that the scholarship of Comparative Literature has been positively inflected by the so-called "visual turn" of the twentieth century, opening the horizon of comparative literary and textual studies to the fields of art history, photography, film, and, perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent, television, digital media offer a more fundamental challenge since they not only transform the media assumptions built into the works we traditionally study but also the scholarly environments that we inhabit, the analytic and technical tools that we employ to perform our research, and the platforms we use to create and disseminate our work. More than just another medium, digital media are always already hypermedia and hypertextual. Both of the foregoing terms were originally coined in 1965 by the visionary media theorist, Theodor Nelson, in his early articulations of the conceptual infrastructure for the World Wide Web. For Nelson, a hypertext is a:

> Body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper […] Such a system could grow indefinitely, gradually including more and more of the world's written knowledge. (Nelson, 2004: pp. 134–145)

But more than the fact that they cannot be reduced to a single medium or unit, hypertextual or hypermedia documents deploy a multiplicity of media forms in aggregate systems that allow for annotation, indefinite growth, mutability, and non-linear navigation. Anticipating the World Wide Web by nearly twenty years, Nelson called his invention the "Evolutionary List File," an interconnected, interlinked, hypermedia

information system that could grow and proliferate as authors and readers added new material in an open-ended authoring, curatorial, and annotation environment.

How, then, might Comparative Literature be practiced when literature and scholarly work are created, exchanged, and critiqued in a multimodal environment such as the Web? And, at the same time, how do we as scholars develop methodologies that appreciate and evaluate the media-specificity of every literary or cultural artifact, including print? Comparative Literature as Comparative Media Studies foregrounds the formal material qualities of the surface structures upon which inscriptions are made, the technical processes of reproduction and circulation, the institutional mechanisms of dissemination and authorization, the reading and navigation practices enabled by the media form, and the broad cultural and social implications for literacy and knowledge production. It investigates all media as information and knowledge systems that are bound up with histories of power, institutions, and governing and regulatory bodies which legitimate and authorize certain utterances, while screening out and dismissing others.

Comparative Media Studies also implies that the output or scholarly "work" is not uni-medial and, for that matter, might not even be textual. It draws attention to the design and interrelationship of every unit of the argument, whether a page, a folio, a database field, XML metadata, a map, a film still, or something else. It does so in order to interrogate the spatio-temporal elements of the layout, its look and feel, its visual organization, the curatorial pathways, the user or reader's interface, the indexing and access system, and the processes of enabling legibility through selection and assembly. Delivery platforms, interface designs, layout and navigation systems, authoring processes, and even mechanisms of reproduction, dissemination, and preservation all make arguments and assumptions, instantiate knowledge in particular ways, and betray certain world views. Prompted by digital media, Comparative Media Studies thus enables us to return to some of the most fundamental questions of our field with new urgency: Who is an author? What is a work? What constitutes a text, particularly in an environment in which any text is readerly and writerly by potentially anyone? (Barthes, 1986)

Comparative Data Studies

Google has already digitized and indexed more than ten million books, allowing scholars to perform ever-more complex searches, discover patterns, and potentially export large datasets derived from the digital book repository into other applications (such as Geographic Information Systems) in order to pursue quantitative questions such as statistical correlations, publishing histories, and semantic analyses as well as qualitative, hermeneutical questions. Spurred by the work of Lev Manovich and Noah Wardrip-Fruin, the field of "cultural analytics" has emerged over the past five years to bring the tools of high-end computational analysis and data visualization to dissect large-scale cultural datasets.[8] Such datasets might include historical data that have

been digitized, such as every shot in the films of Vertov or Eisenstein, the covers and content of every magazine published in the United States in the twentieth century, or the collected works of Milton, not to mention contemporary, real-time data flows such as tweets, SMS messaging, or search trends. Because meaning, argumentation, and interpretative work are not limited to the "insides" of texts or necessarily even require "close" readings, Comparative Data Studies allows us to use the computational tools of cultural analytics to enhance literary scholarship precisely by creating models, visualizations, maps, and semantic webs of data that are simply too large to read or comprehend using unaided human faculties. My point here is not to pitch "close" hermeneutical readings against "distant" data mappings, but rather to appreciate the synergistic possibilities between a hyper-localized, deep analysis and a macrocosmic view.[9]

In addition to performing "close" and "distant" analyses of data, Comparative Data Studies also radically broadens the canon of objects and cultural material under consideration: On the one hand, cultural objects originally constituted as singular objects in one medium are now digitized, marked-up, accessible, and shareable in multiple formats and on a variety of platforms. And on the other hand, "born digital" objects – whether blogs, videos, web pages, music, maps, photographs, or hypermedia artifacts that combine many different media types – provide data for analysis and instantiate new forms of knowledge creation and curation. As Jerome McGann argues with regard to the first in his elegant analysis of "radiant textuality," the differences between the codex and the electronic versions of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, illustrate that the electronic *OED* is "a metabook [that has] consumed everything that the codex *OED* provides and reorganized it at a higher level" (McGann, 2001: p. 55), adding value through new indexing and search mechanisms, hyperlinks, editing and annotation tools, and even reading strategies. Such digital books exist in what he calls "N-Dimensional Space" since the archive of digital objects and exchanges "can be radically expanded in both spatial and temporal terms," involving scholars, institutions, interpretations, and datasets from potentially anyone anywhere (McGann, 2001: p. 169). The "data" of Comparative Data Studies is constantly expanding in terms of volume, data type, production and reception platform, and analytic strategy.

Comparative Authorship and Platform Studies

While the radically "democratizing" claims of the web and information technologies should certainly be critically interrogated, I think that it is incontestable that the barriers for voicing participation, creating and sharing content, and even developing software have been significantly lowered when compared to the world of print. And more than that, collaborative authorship, peer-to-peer sharing of content, and crowdsourced evaluation of data are the hallmarks of the participatory web known as the world of Web 2.0. We no longer just "browse" and passively consume predigested

content but are actively engaged in the production, annotation, and evaluation of digital media and software thanks to the open-source movement. This is an economy based on abundance, creative commons, open access, and the proliferation of copies, not one based on scarcity, property, trade secrets, and the sanctity of originals, although, as James Boyle points out, there are many corporate entities eager to regulate the public domain and control the "commons of the mind."[10] For Boyle, the real danger is not unauthorized file sharing but "failed sharing" due to enclosures and strictures placed upon the world of the creative commons (Boyle, 2008: p. 182). In fact, this was one of the central arguments of the Digital Humanities Manifesto, which sought to perform collaborative authorship by utilizing the blogging engine, Commentpress.

While Comparative Literature scholarship has not generally concerned itself with design, interactivity, navigation strategies, and collaboration, these issues are a decisive part of the domain of Comparative Authorship and Platform Studies. The knowledge platforms cannot be simply "handed off" to the technicians, publishers, and librarians, as if the curation of knowledge – the physical and virtual arrangement of information as an argument through multimedial constellations – is somehow not the domain of literary scholars. In the print model, scholars typically "handed off" the content of their manuscripts to publishers who did the layout, design, editing, printing, and dissemination of the work; however, now this work has moved to the forefront of Digital Humanities precisely because choices of interface, interactivity, database design, navigation, access, and dissemination are all part of how arguments are staged in the digital world. Indeed, this is nowhere more apparent than in the various issues of *Vectors*, a multimodal, multimedia humanities journal in which each "article" is a project that explores the complex interrelation between form and content, underscoring the "immersive and experiential dimensions of emerging scholarly vernaculars across media platforms." Scholars work closely with designers, technologists, and the *Vectors* editorial staff to develop appropriate interfaces, database schemas, navigation features, and content types that, altogether, instantiate an argument. While preserving the authority of peer review, the publication platform foregrounds collaborative authorship and public feedback through threaded discussion forums and annotation features.

Other academic platforms, such as Grand Text Auto, USC's experimental authoring and collaboration platform "Scalar," Rice University Press' Connexions, and the Institute for the Future of the Book have variously explored knowledge production and legitimacy in the post-print era by re-examining authorship, design, peer review, and the participatory dimensions of scholarship. Scholars such as McKenzie Wark and Kathleen Fitzpatrick have even "published" early versions of their entire books on Commentpress, something that allowed them to receive immediate feedback by hundreds of self-selecting peer reviewers – before the book was sent, by a university press, to a couple of scholarly authorities in their fields. In fact, crowd-sourced evaluations of scholarly arguments (not to mention crowd-sourced production models for generating and editing scholarly content) have already transformed authorship and

conventional knowledge platforms. My own work on "HyperCities" – a collaborative, digital mapping platform for exploring and authoring the complex layers of city spaces – has generated numerous multimedia publications that bring traditional academic narratives together with open and collaboratively produced space-time visualizations in two- and three-dimensional mapping environments.

This emphasis on openness and collaboration is, of course, nowhere more apparent than with Wikipedia, a revolutionary knowledge production and editing platform. While it is easy to dismiss Wikipedia as amateurish and unreliable or to scoff at its lack of scholarly rigor, I want to conclude by suggesting that it is actually a model for rethinking collaborative research and the dissemination of knowledge in the Humanities and at institutions of higher learning, which are all-too-often fixated on individual training, discrete disciplines, and isolated achievement and accomplishment (Davidson and Goldberg, 2009: p. 14). Far from a web-based encyclopedia for "intellectual sluggards" engaged in a "flight from expertise," to quote Michael Gorman, former President of the American Library Association (qtd. in Stothart),

> Wikipedia, I believe, represents a truly innovative, global, multilingual, collaborative knowledge-generating community and platform for authoring, editing, distributing, and versioning knowledge.

To date, it has more than three million content pages, more than three hundred million edits, over ten million registered users, and articles in forty-seven languages (Wikipedia Statistics). This is a massive achievement for eight years of work. Wikipedia represents a dynamic, flexible, and open-ended network for knowledge creation and distribution that underscores process, collaboration, access, interactivity, and creativity, with an editing model and versioning system that documents every contingent decision made by every contributing author. At this moment in its short life, Wikipedia is already the most comprehensive, representative, and pervasive participatory platform for knowledge production ever created by humankind. In my opinion, that is worth some pause and reflection, perhaps even by scholars in a future disciplinary incarnation of Comparative Literature.

Notes

1 Following Horkheimer and Adorno's famous pronouncement that "the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant," I believe we must examine the complex nexus of knowledge and power, rationality and violence at the heart of any technological "advance" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1993: p. 3).

2 Web-based media forms refer to any media produced and broadcast on the web such as blogs, YouTube videos, and Wikipedia. Many of these media are also viewable on mobile devices and, increasingly, search technologies are keyed to physical location. With a GPS-enabled mobile phone, for example, geographically relevant content can be uploaded and downloaded. Digital archives are steadily moving from being "digital silos" to becoming interoperable repositories, allowing for materials to be aggregated and integrated across collections. With the innovations of

Google and Amazon, to name two, cloud computing allows data to no longer be stored on single machines or a limited number of servers but in the (virtually) infinite "cloud," rendering data accessible anywhere, at anytime. Finally, social networking sites allow for real-time interaction with friends, creating online communities composed of personal networks. Mixed reality applications such as Second Life integrate real-world social networking with embodied experiences of navigation, gaming, and moving through virtual spaces.

3 For the classic discussion of the history of print vis-à-vis nationality and ideology, see Anderson. For an argument on the relationship between discursive power, systems of knowledge, and specific institutional and media practices (including the book-system, publishing, libraries, the tenure and promotion system, and even the act of writing itself), see Foucault, 1972.

4 Even when the objects were not originally constituted through the medium of print (i.e., epic poetry on papyrus, songs and orations, illuminated manuscripts, and so forth), the "content" is almost always delivered through print and such delivery allows us to ignore (at least most of the time) the materiality of the medium. It would be quite striking if all poetry, regardless of when it was composed, was delivered, for example, on papyrus fragments, as if this was a normalized, neutral medium.

5 Analogously, I've discussed the displacement of print as the normative medium of historical and cultural studies in two articles: "Remapping German/Jewish Studies" and "Cultural History in the Age of New Media, or 'Is There a Text in this Class?'"

6 I suspect all Humanities will soon be "Digital Humanities," rendering "digital" unnecessary and even tautological. But for now, I use the term as a kind of "strategic essentialism," in order to draw attention to a transformation that is still underway and thereby try to hasten its realization.

7 Darnton argues that the first information age was the invention of writing in circa 4000 B.C.E.; the second information age was the turn from the scroll to the codex in the third century C.E.; the third information age was unleashed by the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century; and the fourth information age is defined by the invention of the Internet.

8 It is important to note that computational tools in the Humanities are hardly new and actually go back decades to include the computational modeling and semantic analyses performed by linguists in the 1980s as well as the emergence of the field of Humanities Computing in the 1990s. As a group of practitioners put it in 1993: "Humanities computing is a practice of representation, a form of modeling or […] mimicry. It is […] a way of reasoning and a set of ontological commitments, and its representational practice is shaped by the need for efficient computation on the one hand, and for human communication on the other" (quoted in Unsworth, 2002, [unpaginated]).

9 For more on the ways these two methods can and should exist in tandem, rather than at loggerheads, see N. Katherine Hayles' discussion of the work of Matthew Kirshenbaum and Stephen Ramsay (Hayles, 2009).

10 For two of the best discussions of the possibilities and pitfalls of this new economy see Benkler 2006; Boyle, 2008.

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Comparing Pain: Theoretical Explorations of Suffering and Working Towards the Particular

Zoë Norridge

C'est une douleur inexplicable, qui ne ressemble à aucune autre. {…} Je n'ai rien connu d'aussi violent au cours de mon existence. J'ai accouché, souffert de coliques néphrétiques – chaque douleur est différente. (Khady, 2005: p. 21–2)

Translation:
[It is a kind of pain that cannot be explained, that is like no other. […] The experience of suffering remains unmatched in my adult life. I have given birth, suffered from renal colic – each pain is different]. (Khady, 2005: p. 21–2)

Victims are interested in the representation of their own sufferings. But they want the suffering to be seen as unique. […] It is intolerable to have one's own sufferings twinned with anybody else's. (Sontag, 2003: p. 100–101)

Can we compare pain? Khady, in her account of female genital excision in Senegal, asserts that each pain is different, that her childhood experiences of suffering remain unmatched by those of her adult life. Susan Sontag, writing about press photography and the war in Bosnia, argues that Sarajevans wish their suffering to be understood in its singularity rather than compared with the victimization of anyone else. Yet both writers, with the very gesture of asserting particularity, juxtapose one pain with another, draw attention to the fact that pain does reside within a meaningful conceptual category. Sontag entitles her final critical work, written whilst she herself was dying of terminal cancer, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, while Khady dedicates her memoir to all those who suffer in body and mind.

Why then assert that pain is always unique? Many emotions, from love to envy, happiness to nostalgia, are recognized as fundamentally subjective. What is at stake

in the representation of pain that carries such an urgent call to be seen on its own terms? The immediately apparent answer is that pain is often either a result or a cause of the denial of another person's voice. The child has no say in their own excision ceremony, the civilian casualties of war are literally silenced by violence in death or denied the opportunity to speak their pain. Primo Levi writes of the elementary need to tell stories of Auschwitz before and after liberation precisely because the concentration camp was designed to suppress the human and conscious existence of the individual (Levi, 1987: p. 15). The Kigali Memorial center takes extreme care to give voice to the experiences of survivors of the Rwandan genocide in order to emphasize the particularity that was denied to Tutsis during the decades of dehumanizing propaganda running up to 1994. Writers who have lived through oppression, childhood trauma and loss stress their right to an individual voice precisely because their right to self-expression, intrinsically bound up with self-determination, was denied at the time.

In light of these dynamics of silencing, the British Pain Society offers a radical response to the question of how to define pain – "Pain is what the person feeling it says it is." Such a statement foregrounds both the alterity and subjectivity of the person who suffers and asserts his or her right to self-representation. It also runs fundamentally counter to more traditional diagnostic criteria, whose common aim is to pin down overarching features of a condition, in returning the taxonomic power to the person in pain. In the British Pain Society's literature this extraordinary definition is qualified with another more conventional classification from the International Association for the Study of Pain: "[Pain is] an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage or described in terms of such damage." This declaration both roots pain in the body (sensation, tissue damage) and identifies it with an emotional process. It privileges description within the very terms of the definition and ties the representation of pain to a *perceived* sense of danger.

If description is fundamental even to the definition of pain and representation has a pivotal role to play both in pain's infliction and its cessation then it is not hard to see why literature, particularly literature from places and periods of time associated with conflations of violence, environmental hardship or political oppression, resounds with depictions of suffering. These depictions range across time and space: from Aristotle's explorations of tragedy to narratives of misfortune in Igbo oral literature; from Dante's *Inferno* to contemporary British "misery memoirs" or poetry about starvation and privation during the Bougainville/Papua New Guinea secession conflict. To discuss all such literatures in one chapter would be impossible. To attempt to cover all theoretical approaches equally so.

My aim therefore in this chapter is to examine how a selection of contemporary theorists have approached the subject of suffering, in particular the activity of comparing different literary representations of pain, looking at key texts which have been published over the last thirty years and culminating in my own plea for alternative avenues of research. My argument will reveal an inevitable bias towards my own field of African literature and will not address the specific debates in other geographically

determined fields of literary enquiry, such as the growing body of criticism addressing pain narratives from Latin America. It is worth acknowledging from the offset that so far, the vast majority of theoretical writing about this topic has been published in the United States and Europe, a historical product, above all, of the American Academy. As such, this area of enquiry echoes the larger field of comparative literature, to which I would argue many of the works I discuss belong.

What Can Be Said About Pain? Trauma Theory and Scarry

In the twentieth century the overriding focus of academics working with literatures of suffering has been on the specter of the Holocaust. First in the aftermath of the Second World War with cultural commentators such as Adorno, Steiner and Lyotard considering the ethical consequences of such extreme, brutal and methodically inflicted suffering. Later, with the advent of trauma theory, which emerged in the early 1990s. Although trauma theory is by necessity fundamentally concerned with pain, it is framed around the impossibility of accessing the suffering of the past from the present. As Cathy Caruth puts it: "traumatic experience suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it" (Caruth, 1996: p. 91–2). This concept of the unrepresentable lacuna of testimony is based in three lines of thought: deconstruction with its emphasis on the impossibility of ever fully representing what is sought to be represented in language; psychoanalysis with its focus on the repression of traumatic memory; and survivor writings which explore the notion that the extremes of experience are inaccessible because those who suffered the most are no longer with us.

Many of the literary critics working with concepts of trauma, including Hartman, Caruth and Felman, were based in New Haven where the "Yale School" of deconstruction, active from the mid-1970s onwards, was centered around Paul de Man and his friendship with Derrida (Luckhurst, 2008: p. 6). Given deconstruction's preoccupation with the gap between the referent and representation, it is perhaps unsurprising that trauma theory, as it emerged at that place and moment in time, is concerned with the vicissitudes of literary depiction, with the chasm between what happened and the aesthetic processes of remembering. In the work of academics who are also therapists, such as Dori Laub, this distancing is intrinsically linked to psychoanalytic theory, and in particular to Freud's writings about trauma in the aftermath of the First World War (Felman and Laub, 1992). Freud drew on the traumatic war dreams of soldiers suffering from shell shock after that earlier war to explore ideas of repressed memory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This repression once again foregrounds the inaccessibility of extreme pain to the conscious mind and manifests itself in writing as interruptions, inconsistencies, literary specters and gaps in narration.

The testimonies of survivors assert yet another form of absence – that of the ultimate witness. Levi and Wiesel for example write about those men, women and children who were executed during transportation, were sent to the gas chambers on

arrival in the camps, or who worked in appalling conditions until their minds and bodies gave up and they were either sent to be killed or died of their own accord (Levi, 1987: p. 96, Wiesel, 1975: p. 314). Of these experiences Agamben comments:

> At a certain point, it became clear that testimony contained at its core an essential lacuna; in other words, the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to. (Agamben, 1999: p. 13)

This is not to say survivor writings do not negotiate pain – they certainly do. Indeed Levi even goes so far as to comment that the theoretical turn to "incommunicability" is both "frivolous and irritating" (Levi, 1989: p. 68). But for trauma theorists versed in psychoanalysis and deconstruction, including Agamben who has written extensively about the aporia of survivor testimonies, the trope of lacuna is pervasive.

Pain then, in the body of works associated with trauma theory, is enduringly described through its absence. Remarkably it doesn't even appear in the index of two of the most recent publications in the field: Luckhurst's (2008) *The Trauma Question* and Rothberg's (2009) *Multidirectional Memory*. These impressive comparative works, ranging over languages and geographies, are concerned with analyzing the problematic process of accessing suffering, rather than the dynamics of pain as a sensation in itself. In contrast, one critic who does engage with the nuances of pain as phenomenological experience is Elaine Scarry, whose seminal text *The Body in Pain* (1987), has remained the point of reference for academics working on suffering across the disciplines for the last twenty-five years.

Writing out of a similar intellectual climate to the early proponents of trauma theory, Scarry shares many of these theorists' concerns. Two of her key theoretical assertions are that extreme pain destroys language and that the interpersonal dynamics of pain are ultimately characterized by doubt (Scarry, 1987: p. 4). Her source materials though are rather different. In the first chapter of *The Body in Pain*, from which most of the theoretical assertions about pain attributed to Scarry are drawn, she focuses her attentions on torture. Delving through the archives of Amnesty International in London, she looks at descriptions of the torture chamber from Greece, the Philippines, Vietnam, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Algeria, for the most part testimonies detailing interrogation techniques developed and used from the 1970s onwards. These accounts she reads alongside texts by the great novelists and philosophers of European culture: Shakespeare, Emily Brontë, Balzac, Zola, Beckett, Thomas Mann, Nietzsche, Sartre, Solzhenitsyn. The result is one of the most astonishing works of comparative literature ever written.

Scarry's work emerged at a moment when post-structuralism was beginning to dominate the American Academy but her project is in many ways more old fashioned and ambitious in scope. In *The Body in Pain* she seeks to describe what happens when a person is pushed to the extremes of pain and her argument is based upon the premise that at such a point cultural and linguistic differences fade into the background

because the physicality of pain is so world-destroying that the sufferer is reduced to a pre-linguistic state. This is an assertion she wishes to hold true for all human beings. Further, as she describes the route along this pain journey she identifies other features of pain that she argues are universal in scope: that pain is resistant to language (Scarry, 1987: p. 4–5); that physical pain "obliterates psychological content" (Scarry, 1987: p. 34); and that political authorities convert visions of suffering into a spectacle of power (Scary: 1987: p. 56, 62). In its scope and breadth, this resembles a structuralist project, rather than the cautious and self-problematizing conjectures of trauma theory.

Although Scarry refers to Zborowski's 1952 and 1959 studies on ethnic differences and the role of culture in articulating suffering (Scarry, 1987: p. 109) and also acknowledges the contributions of anthropologists to cultural understandings of constructions of pain (Scarry 1987: p. 5), ultimately she argues that variation only serves to confirm her overarching thesis:

> Even if one were to enumerate many additional examples, such cultural differences, taken collectively, would themselves constitute only a very narrow margin of variation and would thus in the end work to expose and confirm the universal sameness of the central problem, a problem that originates much less in the inflexibility of any one language or in the shyness of any one culture than in the utter rigidity of pain itself: its resistance to language is not simply one of its incidental or accidental attributes but is essential to what it is. (Scarry, 1987: p. 5)

For Scarry pain can be compared, across geographies and literatures because comparison serves to reveal universally held truths. Such an assertion is appealing because it means the theoretical framework for understanding pain outlined in *The Body in Pain* can be applied across disciplines to any cultural product, as indeed it has been in practice. However, more cautious regional specialists might question whether Scarry's methodology gives sufficient weighting to cultural difference, given that she consults her (written) accounts of torture through an international NGO based in London and then compares these not to literature from the countries where the torture accounts were written, but rather to European literary texts. To what extent does Scarry take into account Asian, African or Pacific languages in her assertions about linguistic universality? And if her arguments were to hold true for the extremes of pain in torture, can these insights also be applied to other pain experiences, as they have been by a raft of cultural critics, or do theorists need to look again at the shades of grey that Scarry's book never claims to investigate?

Common Experiences of Suffering or Culturally Specific Pains?

The Body in Pain might not have been so influential or widely read if Scarry had focused on the gradations of different intensities of pain, cultural specificity or geo-

graphical location – that was never her intention. Such nuances are however the focus of a group of medical anthropologists including Arthur Kleinman, Mary-Jo Delvecchio Good, Paul Brodwin and Byron Good who have studied pain, and in particular chronic pain, in a range of specific ethnographic contexts. These researchers often cite aspects of Scarry's work as an inspirational starting point and then move on to examine particular assertions in varied contexts. For example, Byron Good alludes to Scarry's argument that acute pain destroys language and subsequently reflects on both his personal experience of subjects searching for language in clinical interviews and Godfrey Lienhardt's account of the Dinka, a Nilotic people of Southern Sudan (Good, 1994: p. 30). Do these anthropologists study pain in order to reveal universal truths about pain experiences, couched in different expressions, phrased with different terminologies, yet fundamentally the same? Or is there a greater sense of cultural relativism in their comparative approach to pain?

A clue to the answer may be found in Kleinman's 1977 article about the "new cross-cultural psychiatry." Criticizing the "old transcultural psychiatry" and its reliance on "universal" principles which he argues are in fact West-specific categories, Kleinman calls for a specific and careful approach to mental health in its cultural complexity. In doing so he makes a powerful distinction between illness and disease: "Disease can be thought of as malfunctioning or maladaptation of biological or psychological processes. Illness is the personal, interpersonal and cultural reaction to disease" (Kleinman, 1977: p. 9). A similar distinction is picked up on fifteen years later in the co-authored introduction to the volume *Pain as Human Experience.* Here the researchers acknowledge that "pain is a universal feature of the human condition" but qualify this with the assertion that "the cultural elaboration of pain involves categories, idioms, and modes of experience that are greatly diverse" (Kleinman *et al.*, 1994: p. 1). Pain here is explored both as an essential part of being a human being and as a culturally specific experience which is inherently subjective. Whilst Scarry is interested in variation only to reveal the underlying essence of pain, the focus of medical anthropologists has been almost entirely on pain's plurality of expression. What does this imply for the comparison of pain?

One of the most pertinent contributions of medical anthropologists to the study of descriptions of pain in literature is the analysis of how pain and other illness narratives are structured. These structural observations sidestep the search for a universal experience of suffering by instead looking at overarching questions and frameworks within which people in pain express and explore their experience. Byron Good for example, describing epilepsy narratives in Turkey, draws on both narratology and reader response theory to identify three analytic concepts: the "emplotting" of illness – how stories are ordered and authored; the "subjunctivizing" qualities of stories – how narrative remains open to multiple readings and outcomes; and the "positioning of suffering" – relating stories to their setting (Good, 1994: p. 144). Such an approach takes illness narratives as an evolving text to be analyzed ontologically and contextually in a manner not at all dissimilar to that of the literary theorist. Similarly Arthur Frank, who has also written extensively about his own experiences of pain and illness

in North America, argues that illness narratives can be categorized as three overarching types of voices: the "restitution story" focused on the restoral of health; the "chaotic story" which explores the senseless nature of suffering; and the "quest narrative" reflecting the temporal and spatial nature of the illness journey. These questions, concepts and voices are broad enough to encompass cultural difference yet specific enough to provide some framework for comparison.

Surprisingly, these comparative anthropological approaches to pain, with their insights into narrative and the therapeutic construction of meaning, were not enthusiastically taken up by literary critics at the time. The key literary theoretical work addressing pain published in the 1990s was David Morris' *The Culture of Pain*. Three years after this book first appeared in 1991, Morris did indeed attend a conference organized by the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Culture, Health and Human Development at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center. This conference gave rise to a collection co-edited by Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock, which includes an essay by Morris entitled "About Suffering: Voice, Genre and Moral Community." This essay revisits some of the terrain covered by *The Culture of Pain* and does refer in notes to the work of his anthropological co-presenters but consistently avoids applying narrative insights from anthropology to works of literature. This is an intriguing disciplinary preference since in his book Morris adopts a methodological approach to his subject with multiple similarities to that of Kleinman and his colleagues, spending time in pain clinics interviewing patients and analyzing their narrative response. However, he then, like Scarry, puts these accounts in dialogue with literature and art. Morris appears to adhere to some form of relativism, claiming that pain is "always reshaped by a particular time, place, culture and individual psyche" and insisting therefore that "pain is always personal and always cultural" (Morris, 1993: p. 6, 25). However, whilst he draws on Zobrowski's aforementioned research on pain response and ethnicity, in keeping with *The Body in Pain*, Morris does so in order to contrast its "colorful ethnic diversity" with "the pain we experience today" – chronic pain – which he describes as a "gray tide of affliction now sweeping across the land" (Morris, 1993: p. 56).

Whereas Kleinman forged his career on research carried out in China, Brodwin on his work in Senegal and Haiti and the Goods on their studies in Iran and Turkey, when Morris talks of the cultural nuances of pain he is describing an exclusively American and European conception of suffering. He does refer to "the painful deaths of thousands of hungry children from Africa" but, ironically, does not reflect on the cultural diversity of Africa or the individuality of pain as experienced by such a child (from which country, social class or religion?). As he himself writes: "Our culture – the modern, Western, industrial, technocratic world – has succeeded in persuading us that pain is simply and entirely a medical problem" (Morris, 1993: p. 1–2). Although this is an initial starting point, a position against which Morris proposes a cultural reading of pain, he remains complicit with some of its assumptions. "African" children's pain experiences are described solely in terms of malnutrition (Morris, 1993: p. 145). Morris refers to the pain of marginalized groups – "blacks, Indians, women,

madmen, children" – to stress how cultural beliefs have maintained that their pain "either does not exist or (much the same thing) does not matter" (Morris, 1993: p. 40). However, he doesn't choose to study voices writing against such a denial of subjectivity, voices articulate and readily accessible in US libraries through literary texts and testimonial accounts. Instead, he concludes:

> We really have no choice: if we fail to rethink our pain we must automatically accept the worn-out cultural thinking that is already in place and only aggravating our torment. (Morris, 1993: p. 290)

I see this "we" as associated predominantly not with a diverse and multicultural international audience but with an extension of his own individual identity.

Susan Sontag, with her customary incisiveness, asserts that "No 'we' should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain" (Sontag, 2003: p. 6). Read in the light of Sontag's work, Morris' repeated assertions of collective identity, of a communal experience of pain and shared set of Western cultural referents, seems to deny both the plurality of pain experiences at home in the US and the ongoing existence of horrific suffering in many parts of the world. Sontag's comments, as the title *Regarding the Pain of Others* might suggest, are mostly concerned with the specularity of suffering. But her theoretical insights are portable and eminently applicable to the study of pain in literature. Sontag's work serves to render the academic reader uncomfortable. Alongside arguing that critics should not engage in reductive and comforting assumptions about the identity of audiences for images of suffering she asserts that the idea that if we can see another's suffering we will work for its cessation is a historically grounded myth (Sontag, 2003: p. 6, 12). On this key point, Sontag is writing *against* Scarry. Indeed, she argues that the consumption of images of suffering may be complicit in the enduring infliction of pain. This is particularly the case with photographs of suffering in developing countries viewed from the West because such images: create a sense that pain is something that happens elsewhere (Sontag, 2003: p. 55, 63); encourage sympathy in the privileged viewer which confirms their good intentions but hides any sense of responsibility (Sontag, 2003: p. 91); and confirm that suffering is inevitable, just another feature of troubled lives in that far away place (Sontag, 2003: p. 64).

A tension seems to be emerging here between the representation of pain and place. Scarry's work draws on "functional" pain narratives of torture in predominantly developing countries alongside cultural explorations of pain in European literature. North American medical anthropologists on the other hand have tended to ground their research in ethnographic studies from diverse locations, later using these to develop and frame questions they deem to be relevant cross-culturally. Morris refers to the horrors of pain that happens "elsewhere" but does so from the cultural comfort of a resolutely US-based academic perspective, a form of approach that is criticized by more politically motivated writers such as Sontag, working to bring to the surface the ways in which representation reinforces inequalities of suffering. This is perhaps

an age-old disparity between the dominant discourse on the international stage (as mentioned earlier, the vast majority of academic writing about pain is published in Europe and the US) and the absent voices of those most affected by the issues under debate. What is intriguing in relation to comparative literature is that there emerges from this intellectual context a key journal article by Françoise Lionnet followed, over ten years later, by a profusion of publications concerned with representations of pain in a range of non-Western texts.

World Literature and the Mapping of Social Suffering

Lionnet's (1997) groundbreaking essay "Geographies of pain: captive bodies and violent acts in the fictions of Gayl Jones, Bessie Head and Myriam Warner-Vieyra," was first published in 1993. Analyzing African American, Southern African and transatlantic Caribbean/West African writing, Lionnet argues that female novelists create literature both to reveal enduring gendered injustice and to depict potential alternative realities. She explains:

> … women writers are often especially aware of their task as producers of images that both participate in the dominant representations of their culture and simultaneously undermine and subvert those images by offering a re-vision of familiar scripts. (Lionnet, 1997: p. 205)

Such a position also resonates with writers negotiating racial othering, the slave trade and colonialism, equally applicable to all these texts but, Lionnet argues, a secondary concern to the gendering of oppression (Lionnet, 1997: p. 207). Rather than questioning the universal, as I suggested Kleinman and his colleagues have tended to do in contrast to Morris' confident collective pronoun, Lionnet suggests that by adding alternative voices to the literary field it is broadened:

> Now that the definition of literature is finally expanding to include the contributions of women and colonized peoples, it is becoming increasingly clear that this inclusion will inflect the accepted meaning of universality. (Lionnet, 1997: p. 210)

What becomes apparent simply from her article's introductory comments is that Lionnet is discussing the ways in which the wider social, political and cultural systems affect the lives of individuals. Literature is seen as both reflecting and potentially changing such systems. Whilst the author points out that all these writers pay detailed attention to the nuances of pain, her emphasis here is on the structures which deny women autonomy and how this is explored through literature. She doesn't dwell on the messiness of sensation, on the physical experience of violence or the visceral aching of being alone. Instead, she sets out to analyze the rich textual allusions, nuances of plot and narrative symbolism which are used to elucidate what I would frame as *social suffering*.

Lionnet argues that "as a privileged symbolic space, the 'body in pain' translates cultural conflicts into a visible representational frame" (Lionnet, 1997: p. 224). The cultural conflicts she refers to here are the denial of women's autonomy, their "use" as objects of exchange and the limited possibilities for the fulfillment of female desires and creativity. This article thus valorizes the "translation" of pain into representational frameworks because:

> If women's pain cannot be articulated, verbalized, interpreted, and communicated in a language that makes it visible to "universal" patriarchy, then the women protagonists of these stories are in a position of radical dissymmetry as regards the rest of us, writers and critics, who are in command of the interpretative means that can give larger significance to their lives. (Lionnet, 1997: p. 224)

Pain here is a manifestation of a social ill and a symptom of inequalities of power. Lionnet's motivations for comparing pain across literary texts then are radically different to those of medical anthropologists studying personal pain meanings and narratives of suffering across cultures. Instead her work is much closer to that of social anthropologists such as Nancy Scheper-Hughes, interested not only in the specific nuances of experience but also in rendering visible violence systemically inflicted on people configured as "other" by Western eyes.

Around a decade after Lionnet's essay first appeared in print, an intriguing profusion of texts overtly concerned with literary approaches to pain were published. These texts offer thematic studies of suffering within various national and historical literary traditions. They range from the discussion of pain in nineteenth century France (Ramazani, 2007) to an edited collection addressing alienation as suffering in Australasian literature (Collingwood-Whittick, 2007), from explorations of pain in Chinese literature and culture (Berry, 2008: Hayot, 2009) to a cross-cultural literary study of the pain of immigration (Hron, 2009). All these publications specifically refer to "pain" rather than "suffering" in their titles yet I will argue that many form a continuation of Lionnet's research into what I refer to as *social suffering*. The majority of these authors studied for their PhDs in the US and they constitute a new generation of scholars who have inherited the traditions of both trauma theory and Scarry's *The Body in Pain*. These writers are also, like Lionnet, united by an acute awareness of what they perceive to be the potentially transformative role of literature in the societies they study.

Given his historical perspective, Ramazani's emphasis on the *relevance* of his research is perhaps the most remarkable. *Writing in Pain* suggests that there is a certain resonance between moments of social crisis across time. Much as the Holocaust is the founding memory of trauma theory and the Rwandan genocide entails a sea change in the study of African literature (Nganang, 2007), Ramazani draws parallels between "the authoritarian politics of Napoleon III and those of our American 'empire' today," arguing that 9/11 fundamentally changed the ways in which pain and trauma are studied in the US (Ramazani, 2007: p. 1–2). He further suggests that:

> What is […] difficult to *feel*, and not simply to acknowledge in the abstract, is the
> vulnerability of the relatively privileged to the suffering of the socially marginal or the
> culturally alien. Indeed, one hard lesson of 9/11, it seems to me, is precisely the complex
> interdependence between "us" and "them" and, correlatively, between the "invisible,"
> routinized violence of a dominant (in this case, globally hegemonic) culture and the
> spectacular violence that that same culture can generate. (Ramazani, 2007: p. 6)

Even in a literary discussion of the nineteenth century (or as Ramazani would argue
particularly in the literary discussion of the nineteenth century), concepts of alienation,
dominant cultures and silenced voices are paramount. The way in which the critic
wishes to counteract these silenced stories of suffering is by drawing attention to the
violence depicted in the texts he discusses, above all the violence of war as negotiated
through the image of the wounded body. Ramazani echoes Lionnet's comments about
the "privileged symbolic space" of the body, a point which is picked up on both by
Berry discussing images of pain from China and Hron in her exploration of immigrant
Algerian women's suffering. One of Ramazani's key theoretical insights is that the
wounded body operates as an ideological pivot, linking the "severe pain of the urban
disenfranchised" to "the more moderate pains of the socially privileged" – and he
draws implicit and explicit parallels here with US and Iraqi citizens – ultimately
opening up the potential for empathy and social change (Ramazani, 2007: p. 14).
Comparative literature, across histories and geographies, is read as a profoundly ethical
project.

Madeleine Hron is equally interested in the social implications of her research,
grounding her study of immigrant suffering in personal experiences working with
refugees, and continually returning to the question of how hearing voices which might
otherwise be kept at the margins of society has the potential to change public opinion
and challenge exclusionary structures (Hron, 2009: p. xiii). Hron's monograph is an
ambitious work of comparative literature in that it examines literary narratives from
Algeria, Haiti, and Czechoslovakia, and seeks "to discern both the universal and com-
monly shared aspects of immigrant suffering, as well as to examine its socioculturally
inflected dimensions" (Hron, 2009: p. xv). Communication, or rather translation, is
the theoretical nexus through which she reads these diverging cultural experiences.
Translating Pain questions critical theory's assertions about the unrepresentability of
pain and argues that writers can, and do, explore suffering in literature (Hron, 2009:
p. xvi). She describes the process of cultural translation involved in moving between
countries as fundamentally painful but suggests that it does serve an important
purpose, that "an effective rhetoric of pain may grant the immigrant minority subject
voice, agency, and mobility in the public forum" (Hron, 2009: p. xix).

Hron distinguishes between narrative strategies of pain, suffering and silence,
relating each to her chosen immigrant groups from three diverse countries. Algerian
immigrant narratives are referred to as using an "explicit rhetoric of pain (the body)"
because they focus on physicality: accidents, disability, somatic illnesses and damaged
bodies. Haitian texts on the other hand are seen to mobilize a "more implicit rhetorics

of suffering" through explorations of *vodou*, as a cultural belief system which is fundamentally misrepresented and misunderstood by the West. Finally, Czech literature is read as embodying "a more elusive form of rhetoric – that of silence" because, Hron argues, suffering is implicitly present yet unspoken (Hron, 2009: p. 188). Such overarching arguments are compelling and make sense of a wide range of material in one coherently argued work although their national groupings do leave Hron open to potential criticisms of cultural essentialism similar to those levied against Zborowski over the past sixty years. In making such a cogent theoretical proposition Hron, in keeping with Lionnet and Ramazani is also primarily focused on social suffering, even when she appears to be writing about the phenomenology of pain, a preoccupation which is made explicit in her comments about the politics of emotion.

Drawing on Wendy Brown's (1995), *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Hron engages with the observation that suffering has become a prerequisite for authenticity and authority amongst minority groups. Individuals who have personally experienced great pain are awarded the right to speak for the group, their words and leadership are valorized through narratives of suffering. The potential danger here is that pain becomes fetishized and "hyper-valorized as a means of gaining power" (Hron, 2009: p. 58). This leads Hron to ask:

> … to what extent do immigrant texts define immigrant subjectivity as a self-perpetuating, pervasive victimhood? To what extent do they remain imbedded in a locus of woundedness – or claim, maintain, and perform pain to gain an identity? (Hron, 2009: p. 59)

The body as privileged symbolic space (Lionnet, 1997; Ramazani, 2007) is here re-read in light of the politics of pain as both an exclusive defining identity and a facet of immigrant experience that is culturally commodified into a potentially problematic social currency. This is a phenomenon which Sara Ahmed, also drawing on Wendy Brown, refers to as "the fetishisation of the wound in subaltern politics" and relates to the contemporary "culture of compensation" and "transformation of injury into an entitlement that secures forms of privilege" (Ahmed, 2004: p. 32). Hron carefully avoids arguing that this is the case with all the narratives she is examining but she does raise a concern that pain should not become a marker of identity, a concern that is in some tension with her own overarching project, to examine immigrant narratives precisely in the context of suffering.

Ahmed (2004) problematizes the fetishization of the wound in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* because she claims it obscures how the wound was given in the first place. As both Ahmed and Sontag have pointed out, this is particularly true of images of suffering that come from faraway places: when an audience is encouraged to emote with images of starving children their sense of empathy may obscure their complicity in such suffering's infliction. In my research on cultural responses to the Rwandan genocide I have argued that a fascination with the wounded body both hides the complex politics of the Great Lakes region and tends to deny the humanity of the

individual person (Norridge, 2008: p. 137). Whilst social scientists are able to draw out the former, I argue that the extraordinary contribution of the arts is to foreground the latter.

Further Avenues of Thought and a Plea for the Particular

Throughout this chapter I have observed that literary theorists can and do compare pain. At times this is supported by the claim that pain is universal and theoretical insights can therefore be applied across cultures, a position I have suggested is often adopted from a particularly Euro-American perspective (Scarry, 1987; Morris, 1993). Others, such as Lionnet and a new generation of scholars working on representations of pain in non-Western literatures bring issues of cultural specificity into their work and do so in order to examine the real world implications of their interventions, arguing that literature is a unique space in which to reveal the social structures that create conditions of suffering and propose alternative realities. These approaches have proved extremely fertile and have produced influential works of manifestly comparative literary criticism. But they have also been much criticized by scholars such as Derek Attridge and Nicholas Harrison who stress the need to recognize the limits of literary interventions, write against world-changing claims characteristic of some branches of postcolonial theory, and suggest that to remain authoritative and credible critics should focus instead on the aesthetic and inherently textual qualities of the works under discussion. I would like to argue that these are the very qualities which in fact return the representation of pain to an ethical project.

Pain, as it is represented in literature, has so far been studied as exemplary, as providing evidence to help researchers understand how a range of pains are experienced. This involves a search for the defining features of pain narratives, for the points of similarity across literary texts, points which gain their "validity" by being applicable to a range of other pains. However, literature is not a scientific procedure; novels do not classify forms of suffering along the lines of a clinical pain questionnaire. Instead of relying on overarching analytical frameworks, one of the joys of aesthetic narratives is that they place different forms of pain in relation to each other through a process of tangential linking. For example, in Yvonne Vera's (2003), *The Stone Virgins*, a novel about the violence in Matabeleland after Zimbabwean Independence, the suffering of different men and women is placed into dialogue by the order in which each protagonist is introduced, the interactions between different characters, and poetic linkages between descriptions. The pain experiences described overlap in varying ways, but each person remains separate, considered in their individuality rather than reframed as a category (Norridge, 2008).

How can such a relational approach to suffering be adopted by the critic when her or his objective is comparing pain? One answer would perhaps be to focus more on what is exceptional rather than on what is exemplary. Texts may be placed in dialogue through tangential attributes such as their geographical location (Chinese literature),

a certain relatedness of theme (accounts of female genital excision), intertextuality (references to works of Holocaust literature) or purpose (making visible women's oppression) but such links can perhaps be most productively drawn through careful readings of individual texts which both take into account the nuances of similarity and also privilege what each novel, poem or play reveals in its individuality. The study of literature is extraordinary because it emphasizes an ethics of particularity which is not often possible with other disciplines such as sociology or social psychology, more concerned as they are with substantial and substantiated patterns. In practice this fascination with the particular, exceptional and individual is suited to study through close reading, detailed textual analysis which seeks not to reduce literary texts to a manifestation of the same but instead to clarify the nuances of difference even whilst it acknowledges linking facets of similarity. In the context of suffering this practice also gives space to the personal meanings of pain, a feature of hurt and healing adeptly explored by literature but often absent from its criticism.

A question I repeatedly ask myself as I study narratives of pain is whether there is anything to be gained by examining such suffering through literature and if not, why not pursue other disciplines such as public health which work towards concrete interventions to improve wellbeing, or join campaigns to change social policy. Is it enough to argue that literature renders the social structures of suffering visible or could this also be achieved more concisely and practically through non-fiction – policy reports and investigative journalism? My own answer to this question is threefold. Firstly, I would argue that literature explores the relational nuances of individual experience rarely captured in purely analytical work (as outlined above). Secondly, I would argue that literary texts are uniquely placed to represent pain because they excel in the creation of new systems of meaning – vocabularies, grammars and image libraries of emotion – which render intelligible multifaceted and deeply personal beliefs and sensations. To return to Vera as an example, her varied sentence length and structure, her unusual use of language to generate striking pain metaphors, her focus on the placing of bodies in relation to each other, on the economies of gesture, all serve to evoke a multi-faceted textured landscape, a coherent yet elusive space within the imagination. And finally, as a consequence, literature opens up such systems to reader involvement and interpretation, to both a cognitive search for meaning and the potential for emotional identification.

Contemporary African writers such as Vera, Dambudzo Marechera, Bessie Head and Chris Abani write about pain in a highly aestheticized manner which doesn't always convey a clear narrative sense, instead posing a challenge for the reader who seeks to understand the work's events and find meaning in the protagonists' experiences. This quest for meaning, the search for a narrative thread in the face of free-floating words and images, inconsistencies and gaps in chronology, reflects the real pain patient's quest to make sense of their own story's confusions. Such a process of interpretation is fruitful because it is inherently discursive. The author's acts of imagination invite the reader to join him or her in the living reconstruction of a past that is no longer accessible, a reconstruction which in African literature is only under

extreme circumstances formulated along the lines of trauma theory as an absence and is more often excavated and explored. These writers' texts cannot be read "as reality," as straightforward and accessible social evidence. Instead, yet again, I would argue they invite close reading, a careful, you could almost say traditional, study of their narrative features including structure, imagery, characterization and plot. It is through this detailed analysis that their aesthetic strategies for exploring the complex somatic and emotional nuances of pain can be perceived, that the transformative powers of fiction, and arguably literary testimony, become apparent.

This aestheticization of pain is both emotional and sensual. Santanu Das, writing about the phenomenology of war in his study *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*, observes that "the writings of the First World War are obsessed with tactile experiences" (Das, 2005: p. 5). By contrast, critical inquiries have tended to focus on either gender or modernism – representative in the first case of the wider social context for the writing, and in the latter of overarching aesthetic movements (Das, 2005: p. 29). I have argued that a similar obfuscation of feeling is apparent in the critical literature addressing suffering in postcolonial literatures. This is all the stranger for the proliferation of detailed physical and emotional descriptions of pain the texts themselves contain. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, commenting on the process of writing *Half of a Yellow Sun,* her fictional exploration of the Biafran war, explains:

> I was [...] determined to make my novel about what I like to think of as the *grittiness* of being human – a book about relationships, about people who have sex and eat food and laugh, about people who are fierce consumers of life. (Adichie, 2008: p. 50)

It is in its juxtaposition with small and ordinary pleasurable sensations that pain is at its most poignant. Adichie's novel is so moving because she creates an aesthetic world of meanings, rich in the resonances of what it was like to be alive at that time in that place as a complex human being, and then uses this vivid mesh of humanity to explore the impact of the Nigerian civil war on a carefully drawn community of characters.

With a comment that is startlingly illustrative of the role of aesthetics I have been expounding in relation to the exploration of pain, Indian Sociologist Veena Das writes:

> In repeatedly trying to write the meaning(s) of violence against women in Indian society, I find that the languages of pain through which social sciences could gaze at, touch or become textual bodies on which this pain is written often elude me. [...] Some realities need to be fictionalized before they can be apprehended. (Das, 2005: p. 67, 69)

It strikes me that many of the comparative approaches to examining pain in literature engage in the reverse approach. Scarry, Morris, Lionnet, Ramazani, Hron and so on all read narratives of pain in search of evidence of a social reality. Such projects are shaped by questions about the universality of pain, the cultural specificity of national fictions, and literary theory's relevance to suffering in the real world. Addressing these

questions insistently leads theorists to adopt comparative approaches to literature, approaches which compare texts across languages, cultures and geographies, through different disciplinary eyes.

Veena Das, on the other hand, stresses the communicative importance of *fictionalizing* pain. My argument in the later sections of this chapter has been that in our concern with the overarching structures of social suffering we have failed to examine what Adichie refers to as the *grittiness* of human experience. Pain – as it is experienced by complex individuals, whose idiosyncrasies, peculiar perspectives and distinctive situations are ably explored by fiction – is uniquely suited to literary depiction because it is so personal and particular. In my view one of the key implications of these observations for our discipline of comparative literature is that we should be comfortable in paying greater attention to the exceptional rather than always seeking to establish the exemplary, with its concomitant assumption that literature is to be used as evidence of social patterns within the world. The individual and the particular are not dirty words, exposing the irrelevance of literary texts to wider society. Instead they form the very purpose of our work, this endless searching to intuit something of the radically other through stories being the most compelling way in which we come to understand beyond ourselves.

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15

Comparativism, Transfers, Entangled History: Sociological Perspectives on Literature

Gisèle Sapiro

The sociology of literature considers literary phenomena as social phenomena. This requires the study of the mediations between text and context. Though at first glance straightforward, this proposal raises numerous questions. What do we define as a reference text: is it a text in the form the author published it in? If this is the case, how should we consider Kafka's works, published by his close friend Max Brod after the actual death of the author? What about the various versions the author published? And what should we make of the different variations found in an author's manuscripts? Should we examine the genesis of a work, thereby positing it within Sartre's "creative project" *(projet créateur)* framework? Or its possible interpretations based on differing readerships and time periods? A single work is defined by its relation to other works from standpoints of theme, genre, composition, and writing processes. It conveys representations of the social world which can be shared, more or less, by the author's contemporaries (according to social group: class, nation, genre) and which can also be found in non-literary texts. The question here, then, is: what is the relevant context? Is it the individual biography of the author, which Sartre stresses in his study of Flaubert? The author's native social group (his class), which Marxist theorists highlight? Or the social nature of the author's readership (Hauser, 1999)? Is it national literature, in which literary history is rooted, or World Literature (Goethe's *Weltliteratur*)? Should we examine the social conditions of production and circulation, as suggested by the founders of Cultural Studies (Raymond Williams in particular)? Or, following a neo-Kantian tradition ranging from Cassirer to Panofsky, do we study the categories of perception that are particular to the culture in which the work is produced?

The first part of this chapter discusses theories that have attempted to answer these questions as well as theories that have attempted to move beyond them, like Itamar

Even-Zohar's polysystem theory or Bourdieu's field theory (1993). The second part of the chapter evokes the prerequisites to a rigorous comparativist approach from the perspective of historical sociology. The third part lays out the limits of comparativism, specifically in relation to the problem of "methodological nationalism" as defined by Ulrich Beck, and the necessity of considering cultural transfers. The notion of "entangled history" emerges as an attempt to overcome the dilemma between either comparativism or transfers. Here, we examine the conditions under which "entangled history" can be transposed to the historical sociology of literature.

Mediations Between Text and Context

The study of the relations between the text and the context, which is central to the sociology of literature, arouses, at the methodological level, a tension between internal versus external analyses. While internal analyses focus on the structure of a given work, external analyses insist on studying the work's social function. Past attempts to overcome this division have emphasized the question of the mediations between the work and its conditions of production. In large part, the issue finds its root in Marxist thought. In contrast to the presupposed social indeterminacy of artwork, inscribed in romantic ideology as well as in formalist or purely textual approaches to literature, the Marxist approach underscores literature as a social activity in connection with a value system and a worldview. Like religion, literature is part of a superstructure reflecting relations of production. Though cursorily deemed reductive, the reflection theory sparked rich discussions on the autonomy of works with regards to the social conditions, and on the question of social mediations (see for instance Williams, 1977).

Unlike the biographical approach which was prevalent in the learned tradition and which found its highest expression in Sartre's, masterwork on Flaubert (a study that melded Marxist and psychoanalytic thought), the Marxist approach shifted the analytical framework from the individual to the collective sphere. Object- and method-wise, the Marxist sociology of literature followed two separate paths. The first path centered around text analysis and was inspired by Hungarian critic György Lukács' emphasis on relations between literary forms and the social conditions of these forms' coming into being, relations which are mediatized by the collective consciousness. The other path, visible upon publication of Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (dated 1926–1934) and embodied in Arnold Hauser's (1999), *Social History of Art*, dealt with social conditions of cultural production and reception, and was developed by the founders of Cultural Studies.

Drawing support from Lukács, French critic Lucien Goldmann shaped the genetic structuralist approach. In Goldmann's view, the subject of the work is not the individual author, rather, it is the author's social group, and it is this group's worldview that allows for mediation between the work and the (actual) socio-economic infrastructure. There is structural homology between Racine's tragedies or Pascal's *Pensées* and the Jansenist worldview, which expresses the Nobles of the Robe's collective

unconscious (Goldmann, 1964). The Frankfurt School theorists (such as T. W. Adorno and his influential *Notes to Literature* [1991]), have also discussed the issue of reflection. They demonstrated how the most hermetic art could express a reaction against language that had been "degraded by industry."

Three major contributions from the founders of the nascent Cultural Studies field appeared at the same time in England: Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (1957) and Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961). Confronting the notion of mass culture, the first work lays the grounds for a sociology of text reception based on working-class reading patterns. Critiquing the assumption, shared by traditionalists and Marxists, wherein working classes are simple, passive receptacles for cultural industries, Hoggart develops the notion of "oblique" attention, which describes the detached, disconnected mode of working-class readers. Having studied the Industrial Revolution's effects on literature, Williams inaugurated a sociology of literary institutions, which included journals, academies, circles, and so on (Williams, 1981). Whereas for Goldmann, it was the worldview that constituted the mediation between the work and the social/economic infrastructure, for Williams the mediation consisted in the social conditions surrounding text production.

As Fredric Jameson, among others, was renewing the Marxist approach by emphasizing the specifically political dimension of narrative forms (Jameson, 1981), critics from the 1960s rethought literary-social mediations according to various trends, all in an attempt to overcome the dilemma between either internal or external analyses. We will consider here two theories which are relevant to the sociology of literature: polysystem theory, developed at Tel Aviv University by Russian Formalist-inspired critic Itamar Even-Zohar (1990), and field theory, conceived by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

In contrast to deterministic and mechanistic approaches which reduce works to their external conditions, the concepts of *field* and *(poly)system* deal with the specific aspects of literary activity. Literary production is considered within a relatively autonomous system of relations structured around its own hierarchies and stratification principles. For both theories, the system of relations extends beyond the text and points to a *space of possibilities* (or a *repertoire* of available models within polysystem theory). For both theories, the system of relations is dynamic, not static: one has to study the shifting hierarchies (like, for example, the legitimization of the detective novel, similar to the situation of jazz in music), and the mechanisms by which works are consecrated and canonized. However, the functionalist notion of system risks assuming that the system is stable, whereas the notion of field examines relations between existing forces. The two theories also differ in method: linked to comparative literature, the polysystem method mainly focuses on texts on the basis of which the *repertoires* of generic models are reconstructed. Field theory, on the other hand, rooted in sociology, deals not only with the *space of possibilities* but also with the agents of the literary world – individuals and institutions.

According to field theory, the literary world can in effect be studied as a relatively autonomous universe. However, to methodologically autonomize this world requires

an examination of the socio-historical conditions which allowed for ITS autonomization from political, economic, and religious constraints (Bourdieu, 1993: p. 112–41). Moreover, the autonomy is always relative: socio-economic constraints still weigh on literary activity, but indirectly. In relation to field theory, constraints are mediatized and refracted (or re-translated) according to the literary world's specific stakes, rules, and structural principles (Bourdieu, 1996). The mediations between works and social conditions can be located at three levels: first, the material conditions of text production and circulation; second, the social conditions and modalities of the creative process; and third, conditions of text reception (Sapiro, forthcoming). In terms of text production conditions, mediations include field structure (for example, struggles amongst established writers and newcomers for either conservation or transformation of the legitimate definition of literature), literary institutions (literary societies, academies, awards), conceptions of the author's social role (for example, the opposition between "art for art's sake" and "committed literature") and professional ideology. In terms of the creation of works, mediations include the *space of possibilities* (available models and options) and construction of the work (style, composition, narrative devices), the latter resulting from the way the author has incorporated this *space of possibilities* according to his or her own social trajectory. Finally, the very existence of a critical aesthetic judgment relatively free from any moral, social, or political judgment of a work illustrates the field's mediating effect on the reception of the work. An aesthetic judgment focuses on formal aspects of the work, in contrast with the heteronymous judgments that evaluate literature on the basis of the ideological or economic (sales) functions it fulfills.

Besides the tensions between internal and external analyses it helps resolve, the *relational* (or systemic) approach (i.e. defining elements in relation to one another), which characterizes both the polysystem and field theories, provides a methodological advantage from a comparativist perspective, for with it we are able to define comparable elements, and to adopt a rigorous, systematic approach.

Comparing that Which is Comparable

Comparison is sociology's tool *par excellence*, as Emile Durkheim, one of sociology's founding fathers, argued. Comparisons underscore significant differences. Until we compare a work to others of the same time period, we are unable to understand its singularity or its innovative character for that period. The originality of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, for example, is due to the distanced narrative voice (the narrator does not judge Emma) and to free indirect discourse; and these innovations account for much of the cause of the scandal surrounding the work (La Capra, 1982). Yet a systematic comparison of the narrative forms of the novel in general at this time still waits to be undertaken.

A rigorous comparative method is also necessary when speaking of context. Such a comparison can operate between time periods or between cultures. Nevertheless, a

minimum amount of comparable data is required, in particular a relatively autonomous social activity designated by the term "literature." Before the end of the eighteenth century, however, this was not the case: in France, the notion of *littérature* encompassed philosophy and scientific vulgarization, and although we do locate an antecedent in the notion of *belles-lettres*, it does not overlap with "literature" in the modern sense. The same is true for comparisons between cultures, for it is really with the rise in usage of European languages, as a result of colonialism, that the question of African literature emerges in the twentieth century (Thomas, 2002). The comparative approach thus leads us to relativize the notion of "literature" and to examine its social status at various time periods and in various cultures. It is only with the advent of national literatures that comparison becomes relevant.

The advantage of the systemic approach is that it leads, for all contexts, to an empirical examination of the elements interrelating in the literary space without normative *a priori* specifications about what falls under "literature" and what does not. Polysystem theory is thus not only interested in the "canon" of recognized works, but also in "non-canonical" works, what was at one point called "paraliterature" (referring to minor or popular genres and subgenres, like the detective or romance novel), or children's literature. This opposition between "canonical" and "non-canonical" organizes all literary systems around a legitimacy-based hierarchy, allowing for "canonic" elements to be compared with "non-canonic" ones. At the same time, systems can be compared with regards to the *repertoires* of available or accessible models: the rhyme, for example, was an absolute poetic constraint until the end of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century it was abandoned, and in the second half of the century it became impossible to use the rhyme if one wanted to gain recognition in poetry.

Systematic comparisons can be made of developments in genres and subgenres at different time periods and in different cultures. Quantitative methods are irreplaceable tools for practicing "distant reading," which Franco Moretti (2005) contrasts with "close reading." Using trend curves, Moretti demonstrates that a very similar boom of the novel occurred in Great Britain between 1720 and 1740, then in Japan between 1745 and 1765, then in Italy between 1820 and 1840, in Spain from 1845 to the beginning of the 1860s, and finally in Nigeria between 1965 and 1980 (Moretti, 2005). He also shows the succession of literary fashions in Great Britain: the epistolary novel triumphs between 1760 and 1790, but is replaced around 1800 by the Gothic novel and, from the 1820s on, by the historical novel.

These quantitative methods can apply also to other categories of texts, translations for example, or print runs, or sales. A systematic comparison of the share of translations in a country's total editorial production reveals for instance that the percentage increases as we move from central cultures to peripheral ones: between 1989 and 1991, that figure is at three percent in the United States and Great Britain, at fifteen to twenty percent in France and Germany, at twenty-five percent in Italy and Spain, and at sixty-five percent in Sweden. Comparison itself thus operates within a system of asymmetrical relations between cultures (see below).

Beyond the study of hierarchization principles and the study of the *space of possibilities*, which echo polysystem theory, field theory provides opportunities for making comparisons on various levels. First, observing the interactions of the literary field with the state provides indicators regarding the field's autonomy (prior or *a posteriori* censorship, means for orienting production, or instrumentalization of literature for propagandistic purposes). Authoritarian regimes like the Vichy regime in France (1940–1944) entail regressions from already-gained autonomy. Without separation of church and state, ideological control is generally exercised by the intermediary of the state's religious authorities of the state religion. Under communist regimes, ideological control was guaranteed via the centralization of production and diffusion (publishing houses were state-controlled) and of professional organizations such as the Writer's Union. Deconcentration of political, religious, and economic powers favors the autonomization of the literary field, which can play one power against another. The liberalization of the book market thus fostered the autonomization of the literary field with regards to the state. But, the market also imposes its own constraints – chiefly speaking, the law of profitability – which can in turn be counterbalanced by a state policy supporting literary creation, based, as in France, on recognition of the autonomy of the literary field (Sapiro, 2003).

On a second level, comparisons can be made regarding the principles organizing the structure of the field in various historical states or national contexts. According to the relational approach, positions in the field are defined in relation to one another (Bourdieu, 1993: pp. 29–73). Thus, newcomers in the field must define themselves in relation to the dominating, consecrated authors. Ever since Romanticism's law of originality, avant-garde artists (the Surrealists, for example) have asserted themselves by denouncing the orthodoxy of current dominant literary conceptions. In turn, they are stigmatized by their elders for their heterodoxy. This opposition between dominant and dominated positions can be found in various fields, or different states of the same field: it establishes the basis for a structural homology which makes comparisons possible.

The literary field is generally structured according to a second principle of opposition: autonomy versus heteronymy. Since autonomy is always relative, writers may differentiate themselves according to their autonomy from external demands, whether the demand be ideological or expectation-driven (for example, in the nineteenth century certain authors of serialized novels modified the story in order to meet readers' demands). Autonomy may take different, even contradictory forms according to the socio-political context, between "art for art's sake" – the principle behind which Flaubert and Baudelaire took refuge from the moral judgments made on their work, which led to their trials – and "commitment." Under German occupation during the Second World War, French writers and poets armed themselves with literature against the oppressor; Sartre's theory of "committed literature" (*engagement*) originates in this particular experience (Sartre's conception rests upon autonomy, and in this way contrasts with submission to the discipline of a political party) (Sapiro, 2003).

Another sociological question that arises from field theory is how to link a *space of possibilities* with an author's *social trajectory* (there is no *a priori* answer to this question, it needs to be studied empirically in each case). Writers' individual or collective trajectories can be compared on this basis. Such comparisons raise more extensive questioning about the links between education and the space of literary possibilities (for example, the homogenizing effects of the classical education required for all general secondary-school students in nineteenth-century France, from which group the majority of writers were recruited, or, inversely, the effects of early twentieth-century policies diversifying courses of study). They can also shed light on the relations between literature and identity. One of the structural divisions in the *space of possibilities* is, indeed, the tension between universalism and particularism. Whether imposed or demanded, identity has been a mode of affirmation for dominated writers in the social space: local identity (the regional literature movement in early twentieth-century France or the recent Caribbean literature movement), religious identity (for example, the "Catholic literary Renaissance" in early twentieth-century France), social identity (proletarian writers in the interwar period), gender (writings by women during the 1960s and 1970s), or ethnic or "racial" identity (the *Négritude* movement).

Of all the principles of identity, national identity is the most universally imposed: we speak of American, French, German or Italian writers, and of American, French, German, or Italian literature. This is the fruit of the historical process of nationalizing literature; and, moreover, of literary history itself. It prevails not only in commonplace representations, but also in scholarly conceptions. And yet, if the link between literature and nation corresponds to social reality as a result of its links with language, and of literature's role in constructing national identities (Anderson, 1994; Thiesse, 1999), national literary canons have nonetheless formed while simultaneously marginalizing and even excluding writers coming from dominated social groups, such as women, immigrants, ethnic minorities, the colonized or formerly colonized people, as Postcolonial Studies or Subaltern Studies have emphasized (see Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). Furthermore, "methodological nationalism" tends to obscure other phenomena, which we will examine at present.

Cultural Transfers and Literary Exchange

Specialists in cultural transfer studies, along with promoters of the notion of "entangled history," have pointed out the limits of comparativism. Comparativism rests upon a "methodological nationalism" that considers neither the common cultural heritage nor cultural transfers on the basis of which national cultures are founded. However, for the literary domain, these phenomena have been well studied. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the common cultural basis of the European Republic of letters was classical education. Latin was its *lingua franca*. This common literary heritage began disintegrating in the nineteenth century along with the nationalization of

culture, but in reality, as a result of the significance of classical studies in secondary education, it continued to nourish literary culture until the middle of the twentieth century. Beyond the common reference that classic writings provided, national-language literatures were initially formed by translating works in order to construct a literary (and editorial) body of texts in the national language which was being codified, and also, as polysystem theory research has shown, by importing stylistic models. Acknowledging the original hybrid nature of national literatures should lead us to relativize the idea that cultural *métissage* is uniquely a result of globalization. Furthermore, the body of translated works proved often to be the same from language to language: these works written in the oldest literary languages (notably French, English, German, and Russian) became in this way universal masterpieces. A transnational canon was thus formed from the very arrival of national literatures; and the canon continued to expand, largely as a result of opportunities for international recognition such as the Nobel Prize (which, despite being an international prize, is based on a national conception of literature). The national framework also prevails in approaches towards works, for one often inscribes works in a national tradition. This results from the fact that literary history, like history itself, was tightly linked to the creation of national identities: studies of national literatures (American, French, German, or Italian literature) constitute individual disciplines, separate from the study of other literary traditions, which were taught in either language or comparative literature departments. While comparative literature promoted a more universalist (though often dehistoricized) conception of literature, reflection on cultural transfers appeared either in language departments or in small countries like Israel or Belgium, whose own literature had not acquired full legitimacy as a result of the relative youth of the nation or because of its peripheral position in a particular linguistic area (in the latter case, the Francophone area).

It is therefore necessary to denationalize literary history. But how? The best method is to historicize categories of learned understanding. Following this current, Pascale Casanova has studied the opposition between nationalism and universalism as socio-historical rather than simply hypostasizing it, using the opposition as a prism through which to examine writers' strategies. The opposition thus appears as constitutive of national literary fields: after writers make an initial investment in the construction of a national literature, polarity emerges between those who remain confined in the national culture and those who turn abroad. The "World Republic of Letters" is therefore formed when literature frees itself from national cultures, thus marking a major step in the autonomization of literature. However, certain forms of literary nationalism have also served as instruments for emancipation or reconquest of independence in colonial or foreign occupation contexts (France during the Second World War, for example), or for linguistic minorities (in Quebec or Galicia). Thus we cannot devise a conclusive, intrinsic link between nationalism and heteronymy, or between universalism and autonomy. This opposition must be placed in its proper context, and such a task leads us back to the study of the conditions of cultural production. The second contribution of Pascale Casanova's socio-historical approach is that it re-

situates national literatures in a system of unequal exchange. The inequality is a function of the literary capital of national languages, capital which is measured according to the number of works in the universal heritage written in one national language. The oldest literatures (French, English, German, Russian) have an advantage over others.

The flows of translation provide a way to measure language exchange inequality: they circulate mainly from the centre toward the periphery (Heilbron, 1999). According to U.N.E.S.C.O.'s Index Translationum database, close to one half of translated books during the 1980s originated in English, giving that language a hyper-central position. Three central languages, Russian, French, and German represented ten to twelve percent of the translation market. Eight languages occupied a semi-peripheral position (between one to three percent) and the share of all others stood below one percent. After 1989, Russian fell to two and a half percent, while English reinforced its position (fifty-nine percent of translated books worldwide). It becomes clear from the last observation that though globalization may have intensified (the number of translations increased by more than fifty percent between 1980 and 2000), it did not lead to a diversification of exchanges.

Until recently confined to the Translation Studies field (Venuti, 2000), studies on translation offer a direction for the renewal of comparative literature (Apter, 2006). The sociology of translation, which examines the cultural, political, and economic factors governing international cultural exchanges along with the actors involved in those exchanges, has also developed. The translation market is embedded within a book market structured both by linguistic and national boundaries. Such boundaries delineate spaces of ideological control policies (censorship), financial aid (support for creation, publication, or translation), and economic protection (copyright, customs) (Sapiro, 2010). Since the middle of the nineteenth century, translation has become the principal means for intercultural text circulation. Dominating approximately half of the worldwide translation market, literature (including children's literature) is the most highly translated category. This is a result not only of literature's historical link to the building of national identity, but also of literature's capacity for crossing boundaries, that is to say, literature's universality. Literature is also the sector where the rate of translation into the national language is highest: in France, for example, translations make up between thirty-five and forty percent of new novel releases. This percentage is twice as high as the total percentage of translations for France's national book production.

The share of translations in national book production is variable. Often taken as an indication of cultural openness, translation actually reflects the unequal power relation discussed above: the more dominant a culture, the more it exports and the less it imports. As such, translated books represent only three percent of books published in the United States; the rate is even lower for literature. This is not, however, an automatic reflection of the size of the market. Literary importation depends on the investment of cultural intermediaries, editors, literary agents, authors, translators, and state representatives, and each of these might well be studied from a

sociological perspective. It was for instance in reaction to what they denounced as a voluntary fencing-in of American culture that, during the 1980s, a number of independent not-for-profit editors allied with the PEN Club to launch a near-militant combat in favor of translation as a means of preserving cultural diversity in the face of English-language domination (Sapiro, 2010).

What are the literary works that circulate? A number of recent studies have built databases to examine works translated from one language to another. The studies open up several research directions for examining literary exchanges on the basis of translation (see Sapiro, 2008). Translated works can be classifed by author, publication date (classical versus contemporary works), by genre, original publisher, publisher of the translation, or by translator. This data can be processed using geometrical analyses (multiple correspondence analysis) or by network analysis (putting in relation, for example, original publishers and translation publishers in order to show elective affinities between particular publishers from two countries).

Finally, the question of text circulation in time and space leads to the question of reception. The issue of reception, already well-established in literary studies, has for the last decade generated great interest in the social sciences, and this interest has led to a renewal of the field. Above and beyond the linguistic transposition involved in translation, which raises the question of norms of translation (Toury, 1995), reception of a translated text is mediatized by publication and diffusion modalities: paratext (preface, postface), material form (press, articles in specialized reviews, brochures, books), environment and placement in the given media (location on the page of the journal or series for a book). The reception is then mediated by the work's various interpretations or appropriations from agents (individual and institutional), both professionals (critics, pairs) and amateurs, whether they belong to the literary field (reviews, juries, academies) or not (press, courts, political parties). The latter may consist of organizations (censors, associations, morality leagues) or they may be private initiatives. The transfer of a work from one country to another may also come up against ideological or moral obstacles (for example, the English translations of Zola in Great Britain, or the first United States publication, in the *Little Review*, of Joyce's *Ulysses*). Works from the past or from another culture are often appropriated and used by newcomers in order to subvert the literary field's dominant norms. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Goethe's novels were both significant in the genesis of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

The study of cultural transfers and literary exchanges thus helps us to denationalize literary history. Nevertheless, studying these transfers requires that we scrupulously reconstitute the relevant spaces. Indeed, without such an operation we risk missing that which is essential; that is to say, the forms of re-appropriation and re-interpretation of circulating works and models according to the specific issues at stake within the reception space in a given socio-historical configuration. However, it also requires a structural analysis of the general system of relations between cultures within which these transfers take place.

Conclusion: Towards an Entangled Historical Sociology of Literature

It is only with an "entangled" approach to historical sociology which accounts for the system of relations between the fields under study that we can overcome the comparativism-or-transfers dilemma. According to this approach, it is not possible to know *a priori* whether comparable phenomena – for example, the rise of the novel in various countries several decades apart – are products of the same structures or of the circulation of cultural models. The question is answerable only *a posteriori*, and on the basis of an in-depth study of the particular case in question. Oscillating between universalism and particularism, literature is a felicitous object of study for approaching these problems, problems that transcend literature and pose a challenge for historical sociology.

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Part IV

Linguistic Trajectories

16
Orphaned Language: Traumatic Crossings in Literature and History

Cathy Caruth

> Thus I had lost at once my mother and her language, the only inalienable treasures –
> and yet alienated, the only inalienable and yet alienated treasures. Kateb Yacine (Khatibi,
> 2002: p. 159)

In a well-known passage in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates speaks to the younger Phaedrus of the dangers and sufferings of written words, which, unlike spoken ones, come easily unmoored:

> [O]nce a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it doesn't know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong. And as it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself. (Plato, 1961: p. 521)

Writing, detached from its parent, the speaking subject, wanders off; and wandering away from its source, it is open to the abuse of those who cannot understand it, to being set adrift, unsupported, out of its own context, to being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Writing is not, Socrates says, like its "brother" speech, of "unquestioned legitimacy," because its capacity to wander away from its context also allows it to lose or hide its original source – the intention of the speaker, its true meaning, to which it is no longer attached. The illegitimacy of speech's sibling, writing, is also a potential loss of family resemblance, a distress which, in the interpretation of this passage by the 20th century philosopher and theorist, Jacques Derrida, is identified as:

"the distress of the orphan … who needs not only an attending presence but also a presence that will attend to its needs." (Derrida, 1981: p. 77)

Writing loses the security of the paternal authority of authentic speech, and thus exposes language to the uncertainty of an endless wandering among false interpretations, interested manipulations, and, potentially, a final loss of the very capacity for communication for which speech originally came into the world.

The pathos of language, as writing, Plato suggests, is this loss of presence and parentage. But it is also the danger of the orphan, "which, being nobody's son at the instant it reaches inscription, scarcely remains a son at all and no longer *recognizes* its origins" (Derrida, 1981: p. 77). Writing, here, is *orphaned language*, communicating the distress and potentially dangerous loss of legitimacy, not only of writing itself, but also of all language affected by the possibility of rootlessness introduced into the linguistic family tree.

Plato tells a family story about language, in *Phaedrus,* in order to distinguish authentic speech from its illegitimate brother. But we may also hear a literary story in this philosophical speech, in which writing emerges *as a figure*, the figure of the orphan, a figure that transmits a rift, or an orphaning, a rupture within language, signified by writing, that may be far less knowable than the categories and distinctions the philosopher describes. The rootlessness of the orphan, after all, is a threat and a possibility that not only writing but all language may be hiding, and it is this inner rift, this wound at the heart of language, to which the figure of writing, the orphan, would seem to bear witness. The story of language *turning into figure*, as it attempts to articulate what "writing" is, is also the story of an uprooting, for which not only "writing" but its figure, and perhaps, more generally, figuration itself, inadvertently may testify.

If, as the Moroccan critic, philosopher and novelist Abdelkebir Khatibi suggests, the difference between speech and writing marks the "internal bilinguilism of every language" (Khatibi, 2008: p. 157), then the figure of the orphan is also the figure of a language always foreign to itself, doubled on itself and always drifting – or torn away – from the mother tongue. It is a figure, in other words, that evokes the foreignness of a language to itself, in its capacity to wander from its home, from the unifying basis of its meaning or reference, which is also the capacity for all of its elements to drift apart, segmented, misread or transformed as it drifts across boundaries and times. The orphan, I would suggest, is thus the figure of "comparative" literature at the heart of any literature, the possibility for a single language to become the site of its own "comparison." Is the figure of the orphan, we might ask, ever written in a single language? What would it mean to read the "bilinguilism" of language within the literature of a single "mother tongue"? And to what does this figure of the orphaning of language – or the history of the orphaning at the heart of any language – ultimately bear witness? What is the relation between the inner orphaning that may leave its marks upon all language, on the one hand, and, on the other, what we ordinarily refer to, in the histories of ourselves and of nations, as the loss of the mother tongue?

Part One. Men of Letters

There is no better place to ask these questions, I would suggest, than at the heart of English letters, in the work of an undoubted master of the English language – and of the orphan story – Charles Dickens. One of Dickens's most well-known works, *David Copperfield*, is the story of an orphan who grows up to write his autobiography, a narrative in which the protagonist claims to trace the roots of his orphaned past. In Dickens's text, the orphan story is also the story of a literary writer reflecting upon his own roots and of a literary language that tells the story of its own origination.

Indeed, at the center of this novel, which Dickens names as "his favorite child," is a story of abandonment and survival that many critics interpret as the fictional retelling of Charles Dickens' own childhood and his emergence as a literary writer (see for example Tick, 1969). Orphaned by the death of his father before his birth and the death of his mother at the age of 10, David Copperfield is sent to a blacking factory (as was Dickens), eventually finds his way back into a family (though not his own, like Dickens, but that of his Aunt Betsey), and learning to be a copyist in the courts (like Dickens) eventually becomes a successful novelist. Turning from an orphan into the writer of *David Copperfield*, Dickens's favorite child, David Copperfield – whose initials mirror and reverse those of Charles Dickens – could be said to figure the shift from illegitimacy to legitimacy, from the child separated from his mother to a master of the mother tongue. Likewise, the novel itself turns, as a figure, from the language of the orphan to the language of the "favorite child." The orphan here thus *figures* the relation between figure (David Copperfield) and referent (Charles Dickens), and moreover appears to bear witness to what some refer to as the "trauma" of Dickens' life – his abandonment in the blacking factory at the age of 12 – as it is precisely turned into the source of the master of English letters. From the referent Charles Dickens (the one who suffers early trauma) to the letters DC, or from the letters of an orphan (DC) to the man of letters (CD), the text appears to situate and contain – to adopt – the figure of the orphan at the heart of the literary through the figural transformation of a traumatic referent into the pleasurable wandering of its protagonist. The orphan, here, appears to be the figure of the literary writer par excellence, and of a literature that would *adopt the figure* and thus recognize itself in its own, uniquely English, linguistic play.

Yet *David Copperfield also* introduces another orphan, who is, himself, the double of David, and thus, within the narrative, stages or figures David Copperfield's own presumed mirroring of Charles Dickens. This is the eccentric and affable Mr. Dick, presumed mad by all who meet him,[1] living under the protection of Aunt Betsey, to whom David Copperfield has finally escaped from his cruel stepfather and the blacking factory, and who has also taken in this "distant relative" and saved him from an abusive environment just as she has done with David Copperfield. Mr. Dick's "madness" is itself linked, by Aunt Betsey, to a trauma – his neglect and temporary confinement

in an insane asylum after the death of his father and guardianship by his cruel brother – and it is this that presumably prevents him from completing his "Memorial." But Mr. Dick's understanding of the interruption of his memorial in his own mind is named only with the words "Charles the First," which keep unexpectedly entering his text – a king whose "trouble" he believes has been put into his own head at the time that the king was decapitated. Charles the First, a 17th century English King, had indeed lost his head because of the discontent of those who felt his belief in the divine right of kings and favoritism for Roman Catholics was interfering in the power of the parliament and undermining the fair governing of his subjects. The reappearance of his severed name in Mr. Dick's Memorial serves, itself, to cut off the possibility of Mr. Dick's capacity to govern the narrative of his life. Mr. Dick is thus a second orphan, represented not as the writer in progress, but as the one who cannot seem to write; not as the letters that reflect an autobiographical identity, but as the name of an impossible autobiography that undermines the continuity of the self.

If Mr. Dick appears as a double of David, then, he seems to move in the opposite direction in his own journey: rather than progressing forward, liked David, from orphaned youth to successful autobiographer and writer, Mr. Dick is an autobiographer who cannot complete his task and whose very attempt to do so seems to cause him to regress to the past. At the moment David resumes the path to adulthood and success, he encounters a man who seems to be moving in the opposite direction: who remains in a regressed and child-like state, and whose repetitive breaking off of his narrative, as Aunt Betsey will suggest, is an apparent repetition of an abusive past. Where David's autobiographical narrative emerges as the final conquest of his orphaned past, Mr. Dick's memorial appears to be the site of an endless return to a past he has not simply survived. Whereas David enacts a form of survival through his story, Mr. Dick introduces a *Memorial that cannot be written* at the heart of the autobiographical text.

Part Two. Uprooted Words

What Mr. Dick is creating with his letters, as we discover, is not only one but two texts, his unfinish(able) Memorial, and a kite, introduced at the first extended conversation between David and Mr. Dick:

> "Well," said Mr. Dick, in answer, "my compliments to her, and I – I believe I have made a start. I think I have made a start," said Mr. Dick, passing his hand among his grey hair, and casting anything but a confident look at his manuscript. You have been to school?"
>
> "Yes, sir," I answered; "for a short time."
>
> "Do you recollect the date," said Mr. Dick, looking earnestly at me, and taking up his pen to note it down, "when King Charles the First had his head cut off?"
>
> I said I believed it happened in the year sixteen hundred and fortynine.
>
> "Well," returned Mr. Dick, scratching his ear with his pen, and looking dubiously at me. "So the books say; but I don't see how that can be. Because, if it was so long ago,

how could the people about him have made that mistake of putting some of the trouble out of his head, after it was taken off, into *mine?*"

I was very much surprised by the inquiry; but could give no information on this point.

"It's very strange," said Mr. Dick, with a despondent look upon his papers, and with his hand among his hair again, "that I never can get that quite right. I never can make that perfectly clear. But no matter, no matter!" he said cheerfully, and rousing himself, "there's time enough! My compliments to Miss Trotwood, I am getting on very well indeed."

I was going away, when he directed my attention to the kite.

"What do you think of that for a kite?" he said.

I answered that it was a beautiful one. I should think it must have been as much as seven feet high.

"I made it. We'll go and fly it, you and I," said Mr. Dick. "Do you see this?"

He showed me that it was covered with manuscript, very closely and laboriously written; but so plainly, that as I looked along the lines I thought I saw some allusion to King Charles the First's head again, in one or two places." (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 177)

The writing of Mr. Dick's proper "Memorial" is interrupted by the appearance of Charles the First's head, which, detached from its body, makes its way into the Memorial and then onto the kite.

The Memorial, then, is the site of an interruption, the interruption of a trauma, which, rather than being transformed into the figuration of a great autobiography, displaces this work into a series of unread, unfinished writings. But these writings, in their very unfinished state, are pasted onto the kite, itself, flying high, a figure of the uprooted word.

Part Three. Autobiography as Be-Heading

What kind of document is this kite? Aunt Betsey has a theory, which binds the figuration of the kite to the trauma of the Memorial that it displaces. She passes on her thoughts to David after he has returned from his conversation with Mr. Dick. His brother, it seems, "sent him away to some asylum-place," after the death of his father, and his other remaining relative was pre-occupied in another manner:

"He had a favorite sister," said my aunt, "a good creature, and very kind to him. But she did what they all do – took a husband. And *he* did what they all do – made her wretched. It had such an effect upon the mind of Mr. Dick (*that's* not madness I hope!) that, combined with his fear of his brother, and his sense of his unkindness, it threw him into a fever … [T]he recollection of it is oppressive to him even now. Did he say anything to you about King Charles the First, child?"

"Yes, aunt."

"Ah!" said my aunt … "That's his allegorical way of expressing it. He connects his illness with great disturbance and agitation, naturally, and that's the figure, or the simile,

or whatever it's called, when he chooses to use. And why shouldn't he, if he thinks proper!" (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 179)

For Aunt Betsey, the traumatic return of the head is an "allegory" for the abusive past of Mr. Dick – indeed for his orphaning at the hands of his brother. But the allegory may also, she says, be a "simile," and indeed the cutting off of the head is precisely a simile *of* the cutting off from the family that Mr. Dick has undergone, as well as, we might add, the figure for the cutting off of the *name* of Charles the First that interrupts the authoritative rendering of the story of "Mr. Dick." It may also be a cutting-off of the memory, since in Dickens's *Child's History of England* he places in the mouth of the about-to-be-beheaded King the final word "Remember!", cut off by the decapitating sword.

   The decapitation of Charles the First is, indeed, not only a political and historical event – the first decapitation of a European king – but also a linguistic event, to the extent that it disrupts the continuity of divine authority that Charles the First had attributed to his name, and position, through the notion of the king's divine right.[2] As Charles is cut off from a position of divine and political power, his name, deprived of its original authority, floats off into English history, arriving uninvited at the site of Mr. Dick's Memorial, cutting it off as the name was itself removed, in a bodily interruption of sorts, from the authority of the King. The trauma is thus not simply a referential reality but a reality that takes away the frame of reference in which language is rooted, allowing the collective history to confuse and interrupt the private history of the man deemed as mad.[3]

   The kite receives this unwanted signifier of Charles the First (or his head) – the signifier cut off from reference yet imposing a traumatic rupture over and over again – metoynmically, as it is moved across the room from the desk to the seven-foot high composition of pasted sheets, "the old leaves of abortive Memorials" (Dickens, 1990(1850): p. 189). At the end of their conversation Mr. Dick, indeed, turns David from his unfinished tome:

> I was going away, when he directed my attention to the kite.
>   "What do you think of that for a kite?" he said.
>   I answered that it was a beautiful one. I should think it must have been as much as seven feet high.
>   "I made it. We'll go and fly it, you and I," said Mr. Dick. "Do you see this?"
>   He showed me that it was covered with manuscript, very closely and laboriously written; but so plainly, that as I looked along the lines, I thought I saw some allusion to King Charles the First's head again, in one or two places.
>   "There's plenty of string," said Mr. Dick, "and when it flies high, it takes the facts a long way. That's my manner of diffusing 'em. I don't know where they may come down. It's according to circumstances, and the wind, and so forth; but I take my chance of that." (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 177)

In its reception of the pages with Charles the First's name, the kite serves as another double in the text, a kind of double of the Memorial. For the kite, too, like the head

of Charles the First and like the Memorial that his name interrupts, appears as a place not simply of meaning but of action – "Well go and fly it, you and I," says Mr. Dick – and an action that also, in its own way, reenacts the uprootedness of the history, and the name, it carries upon it.

Part Four. Floating Signifiers

Yet the reappearance of Charles the First's name on the kite is also a transformation, a refiguring of the language of trauma itself, or of the silencing of language reenacted in the Memorial by the name (and performative "simile") of Charles the First. It is no longer simply the return of the event, a cutting-off that imposes its violence, and its silence, again and again upon the author, but rather the floating of a signifier that both repeats, and displaces, the violence of the original event:

> "There's plenty of string," said Mr. Dick, "and when it flies high, it takes the facts a long way. That's my manner of diffusing 'em. I don't know where they may come down. It's according to circumstances, and the wind, and so forth; but I take my chance of that." (Dickens, 1990[1850])

In the movement from inside the room to outside in the air, the signifying kite also floats the facts that return incessantly as the cut-off name of the King. Moving from facts that return to facts that float up and land by chance, the kite becomes a different kind of memorial, a *literary testimony* that, in figuring the very uprooting of the trauma, also frees the figure from the return of the past. The kite, in its very doubling of the Memorial, does not *confuse*, but *diffuses*, and thus replaces the certainty of the violent repetition of uprooting with the uncertainty of the rootless freedom of chance.

The kite thus serves as a new kind of figure, though it is not a form of language Mr. Dick can entirely possess. For at the moment that the kite flies, in the text, Mr. Dick, himself, rises up with the pasted sheets, in the eyes of the watching boy, who imagines the older man's mind up in the sky as well:

> It was quite an affecting sight, I used to think, to see him with the kite when it was up a great height in the air. What he had told me, in his room, about his belief in its disseminating the statements pasted on it, which were nothing but old leaves of abortive Memorials, might have been a fancy with him sometimes; but not when he was out, looking up at the kite in the sky, and feeling it pull and tug at his hand. He never looked so serene as he did then. I used to fancy, as I sat by him of an evening, on a green slope, and saw him watch the kite high in the quiet air, that it lifted his mind out of its confusion, and bore it (such was my boyish thought) into the skies. As he wound the string in, and it came lower and lower down out of the beautiful light, until it fluttered to the ground, and lay there like a dead thing, he seemed to wake gradually out of a dream; and I remember to have seen him take it up, and look about him in a

lost way, as if they had both come down together, so that I pitied him with all my heart. (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 189)

Taking Mr. Dick's mind up into the skies, the kite becomes, in this scene, in the boyish "fancy" of the witnessing David, a site upon which the author of the Memorial is himself borne up. The kite here is another double, a supplementary figure of the uprooted language that no longer offers itself as simple referent or sign, that floats off with Mr. Dick's mind while also tugging, by its string, at Mr. Dick's hand. Mr. Dick, on the kite, indeed carries with him both David and Dickens, who no longer create the language that represents their orphaning, but become vehicles, or figures, *of* the orphaned language that also, in these texts, tells its own story of vulnerability and survival.[4] Escaping the incarceration of the room, the kite floats out of the frame of the novel as it carries with it, in its strange figuration, an unwritten story of the fragility, and survival, of the literary, of literature *as* the (unwritable) story of its own impossible survival.

Part Five. Looking for Roots

How do we understand the story of this literary survival, which seems to end, in the text, whenever the kite comes down? For David pities Mr. Dick, whenever he "… wound the string in, and it came lower and lower down out of the beautiful light, until it fluttered to the ground, and lay there like a dead thing" (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 189). When it hits the ground, the kite, now like a dead thing, appears to lose the beauty and freedom of the literary that it also represents as it comes up against the hard facts of an unpleasant reality. Yet the language of the literary, it appears, carries on a posthumous life, through the activities of Mr. Dick's close friend, the scholar, Dr. Strong, who is the head of David's school. Where Mr. Dick likes to look up, and send off the uprooted kite, Dr. Strong likes to look down, in what appears to be a very different kind of activity:

> I learnt. … how the Doct'rs cogitating manner was attributable to his being always engaged in looking out for Greek roots; which, in my innocence and ignorance, I supposed to be a botanical furor on the Doctor's part, especially as he always looked at the ground when he walked about – until I understood that they were roots of words, with a view to a new Dictionary, which he had in contemplation. (Dickens, 2009[1850]: pp. 205–6)

The floating kite lands on the ground of the "root," not the solid ground of fact but rather the place of another history, the history of language itself as it departs from its own foreign roots and arrives in the language that constitutes the Memorial, the kite and the novel itself. The story of David and Mr. Dick, of Charles Dickens and of the literary writer, is inscribed in *the posthumous life of language* as it takes up the literary historicity of the figure that has fluttered to the ground.

The Dictionary, indeed, serves as yet another double, a different kind of double of the autobiographical task:

> Adams, our head-boy, who had a turn for mathematics, had made a calculation, I was informed, of the time this Dictionary would take in completing, on the Doctor's plan, and at the Doctor's rate of going. He considered that it might be done in one thousand six hundred and forty-nine years, counting from the Doctor's last, or sixty-second, birthday. (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 206)

The Dictionary, like the Memorial, is impossible to complete, at least within the Doctor's lifetime. But the number of years that indicates this impossible task – 1649 – also links the Dictionary to the cutting off of Charles the First's head, making the impossibility of the Memorial, and the impossibility of the Dictionary, bound together by the strange temporality that marked the beheading. The historicity of language is tied, through this date, to the posthumous history of the loss of the head, of the origin and of the ground of authority, transferring the history to which language refers – the history of the King, of Mr. Dick and of Dickens – to the historicity of the English language as it passes on the untold story of its own uprooted past. Containing within it yet another (shortened) namesake of Mr. Dick, the Dic-tionary is also an unfinished (or unfinishable) *Memorial to language* that cannot seem simply to tell the story of its roots.[5]

Yet the Dictionary is also a double of the kite, because Dr. Strong's search for Greek roots puts Mr. Dick once again in flight, and in particular, in flight on the "wings" of the Greek root. For Mr. Dick is thus often found walking alongside the Doctor in the garden, hat in hand:

> This veneration Mr. Dick extended to the Doctor, whom he thought the most subtle and accomplished philosopher of any age. It was long before Mr. Dick ever spoke to him otherwise than bare-headed; and even when he and the Doctor had struck up quite a friendship, and would walk together by the hour … Mr. Dick would pull off his hat at intervals … How it ever came about, that the Doctor began to read out scraps of the famous Dictionary, in these walks, I never knew … However, … Mr. Dick, listening with a face shining with pride and pleasure, in his heart of hearts believed the Dictionary to be the most delightful book in the world.
>
>   As I think of them going up and down before those school-room windows—the Doctor reading with his complacent smile, an occasional flourish of the manuscript, or grave motion of his head; and Mr. Dick listening, enchained by interest, with his poor wits calmly wandering God knows where, upon the wings of hard words—I think of it as one of the pleasantest things … that I have ever seen. (Dickens, 1990[1850]: pp. 218–19)

Mr. Dick's pleasure in the Dictionary doubles and echoes his pleasure in the kite. And specifically, it seems, when the Dictionary leaves English and goes to the roots – which is where, at the roots, Mr. Dick begins once again to soar: "and Mr. Dick

listening, enchained by interest, with his poor wits calmly wandering … upon the wings of hard words." Flying on wings, Mr. Dick is flying not simply in English, but in Greek—and specifically Homeric Greek, since "winged words" is a translation of ἔπεα πτερόεντα (*epea pteroenta*) – one of the most common Homeric formulaic epithets.[6] The figure here, by introducing the semantic meaning of the Homeric metrical phrase (and dead metaphor) "winged words" as a figure for Mr. Dick's listening (Mr. Dick's wits soar, as he listens, on the "wings of hard words"), suggests that it is the foreign word that lifts him, and precisely turns him into the head of the kite, into the signifier let loose from a single meaning – or language. He becomes a figure himself, operating in the text as a site of the foreign within language that is also the heterogeneity of its own linguistic history. Untrained, himself, in foreign languages, we must assume that Mr. Dick listens, and flies along, with the sound of the roots, with the sound of the letters, a foreignness of the letter and of the alien within English, an alien nature of a language that, in its wandering, interrupts his own writing and marks him as mad, and yet also lets him fly along, carelessly, with the kite.[7]

It is, however, not only Mr. Dick but also the passage in the novel *David Copperfield* that gives a kind of posthumous life to the dead metaphor of "winged words," a metrical but meaningless formula in Homeric Greek that comes alive belatedly in Dickens's text. The phrase "winged words" is, in this text, itself uprooted and orphaned, though it lives on posthumously in Dickens's novel. The roots of the words turn out to be a dead metaphor with a past already lost to literary history, to a philology that can only search for, but never simply arrive, at the roots to which it also gives belated life. Mr. Dick and Dr. Strong, in their friendship, which is also a shared *philo-logia*, love of words, create not so much a scientific archive of the origin of words than the Homeric epic of war and wandering that constitutes the rootlessness and upheavals, the deaths and lives of literary languages. The word "orphan" itself comes from Greek roots and remains, in English, a transliteration of Greek letters, thus inscribing in the very story of the orphan, which is the story of Dick and David, Dickens and the Dictionary, another *posthumous Memorial of the literary* as it survives in its own unfinished autobiography.

The Dictionary too, then, along with the kite – as both linguistic archive and literary testimony – pass out of the containment of the novel and inscribe its language upon them. As signifiers that are no longer contained by the referent of a single life or the sign of a single figure, these rootless letters retain some of the foreignness in their own signification. The men of letters, too, searching to discover their roots, doubling and redoubling each other, find themselves inscribed on the kite they can never pin down, telling a story of vulnerability and survival. Mr. Dick indeed finds a place on the kite for another name as well, that of Dr. Strong:

> I have sent his name up, on a scrap of paper, to the kite, along the string, when it has been in the sky, among the larks. The kite has been glad to receive it, sir, and the day has been brighter with it. (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 550)

The novel itself, like the characters in it, becomes the figure on the kite that takes it forward in a history in which it, too, will achieve significance at the moment of its own uprooting.

Part Six. Midnight's Children

I was a posthumous child. (Charles Dickens, 1850)

This moment, we might argue, this unknowable history in which *David Copperfield* is inscribed, pervades the entire novel, starting from David's "recording" of his own birth, at a truly unlocatable moment, a time in between times: "I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock, at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously" (Dickens, 1990[1850]: p. 9). For this beginning, this birth of the orphan and beginning of the orphan story, begins again, posthumously, in another text, with the birth of another orphan in another country, who is born, like David, between past and future:

I was born in the city of Bombay … once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more … On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clockhands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. (Rushdie, 2006[1981]: p. 3)

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, begins his own fictional autobiographical narrative as an orphan born at midnight, like David Copperfield, and thus names himself as another double of the character who already exists in the form of his many literary doubles. If the origin – the roots – of David Copperfield's autobiography are doubled, here, they are doubled by a time (and a character) that are themselves irrevocably split, since the night of Friday, at midnight, on August 15th, 1947, has a historical significance that is also the splitting of India from England:

Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. (Rushdie, 2006[1981]: p. 3)

The moment of midnight, the mark of the time, does not occur, any longer, *in* a place in which a narrative can begin, but is the origin *of* two places, the independent India and the England no longer defined by its subcontinental colonization. It is also, of course, the time of another splitting, the Partition into India and Pakistan that takes place nearly simultaneously with Independence. The beginning of one orphan narrative is thus repeated as a double splitting: the story of a new literary and

historical story that precisely defines itself over against the narrative of colonial rule that also framed the background of Dickens's text.

This is also, we might thus suggest, the story of a linguistic split within the literary language of English itself, as it loses the authority of the paternal colonizer's tongue (see Ashcroft, 2000) to become a language with the same letters, but uprooted and passing into a new, and different, political context, the context of a new "spelling": "Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence." The story of the orphan from within the English canon thus repeats itself, or survives, precisely at the moment of the split within the language and the history that also uproots the narrative of Saleem from the tradition that lives on posthumously within it.

English is thus "spelled" anew. And Rushdie's novel may indeed, as Neil Ten Kortenaar argues, "implicitly [make] the claim that English is now an Indian language" (Kortenaar, 2004: p. 167). But this claim occurs not only through a historical act that can be located within a narrative that the novel recounts, but by the way in which the literary text becomes the new site of an orphaning of English that was already at work in Dickens's text. The autobiographical child at the center of *Midnight's Children* is indeed also an orphan, and an orphan who, like his countr(ies), is split in two: Saleem Sinai, a baby who is born to a Hindu mother but who is secretly switched at birth with the baby of a Muslim mother, growing up in the houshould of a family, and with a father, that is not his. As the child of the colonial Methwold who leaves the country at independence, and a mother with whom he is not raised, Saleem's orphaning also embodies the violence of colonial history and the trauma of the Partition that coincided with India's liberation, the traumatic exchange of Hindus and Muslims across the new Partition line. At the heart of the figure of the "children of midnight" is thus an orphan who signifies in an English no longer given as a "mother tongue": who enacts a linguistic split, within English, that is also the mark of a historical trauma that cannot be named in any single language. Midnight's children, in other words, are the orphan figures that cannot settle in the mother tongue or the fatherland.

Part Seven. Orphans of the Impossible

Rushdie's text, like Dickens's, is also said to be autobiographical, not only in its fictional format but also in relation to the author whose traces may be found throughout the novel. Yet the posthumous child at the heart of this text, which both carries with it, and unmoors, the history that it tells, is not to be limited to characters or authors but must also be understood as the literary language itself, orphaned in a world in which languages and histories bear the marks of the traumas they both participate in and record. The orphan-figure – which is also the figure of literature – ultimately bears witness to the internal and external split between languages, the fact that we speak "only one" and "never only one" language (Derrida, 1998: p. 7).

The death, and life, of literary language, as it passes through history, may thus be an underlying figure in the final words of *Midnight's Children*, which also prophecies the protagonist's own death and the future of his posthumous children, potentially bound to a similar fate:

> Yes, they will trample me underfoot … reducing me to specks of voiceless dust, just as, in all good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, and his who will not be his … (Rushdie, 2006[1981]: p. 533)

The dispossession of the paternal line, here, is named simultaneously as destruction and inheritance.[8] In this literary ending, we are told of the possibility of a language that may survive precisely because it is inherently parted from itself, and because it carries within it the historical marks of an impossible history that is also the history of its own rootless past and future. The orphan figure, I would suggest, split between languages, allows the protagonist to speak at the very moment he names his own future silencing. The orphan bears witness, as such, to a history that may only be named in orphaned words. Tied with the string of Mr. Dick's kite – the string that binds and a umbilical cord that is always cut – these languages "burst forth," as Abdelkebir Khatibi writes, "in the historical churning between peoples" (Khatibi, 2002: p. 158). We may see in the many languages that lie at the heart of all language a possibility of literature that also lives on precisely in its orphaning, that carries on a posthumous life as the literatures that are also, in Khatibi's words, "orphans of the impossible" (Khatibi, 2008: p. 120).

Notes

1   Although Mr. Dick, when he is considered by critics at all (which is rare), is often referred to as "mad," or an "idot" (see for example Marchbanks, 2006), Aunt Betsey insists that he is not and attributes his behavior to his abuse at the hands of his brother and his response to his sister's abuse. He had been incarcerated in Bedlam, it appears, and his association with madness from that perspective could be read, in the context of this article, with the incarceration of his speech and the madness of the language of what he himself describes as a "mad mad world." Robert Polhemus suggests in a fascinating piece that Mr. Dick is an allusion to Richard Dadd, an acquaintance of Charles Dickens who was imprisoned in Bedlam and who produced a masterful painting of *David Copperfied* (see Polhemus). Dickens was known to have an affinity for the mad as well as a concern for their plight (see France, 2002). Richard Dadd had killed his father, and in a very circuitous way we might argue for the "parricidal" elements of the orphan figure via this association (and through Mr. Dick's elimination of his surname). An outstanding essay on Mr. Dick links him to Charles Dickens through the latter's experience of the blacking factory, of which he said, in his own broken-off autobiography, that neither he nor his parents had ever spoken of these events until the day of the autobiography (which, like Mr. Dick, he does not write, substituting for it, in Tick's argument, the novel – thus bringing the novel very close to the kite from that perspective as well) (see Tick, 1969). See also Anatole France on

Dickens and the mad. Regarding the question of Mr. Dick's incarceration, one might also consider the relation between the figure of incarceration in *David Copperfield* as discussed brilliantly by David Miller (see Miller, 1989), and extend this figure to the incarceration of language. On the more general association of literature and madness see Felman, 2003.

2   The execution of King Charles the First was a radical event in the history of England, not only ending but in other ways beginning years of strife. After his beheading, Charles was turned into a martyr by the church, with the help of his own memorial written right before his execution (see Randall, 1947). Charles was himself, in this sense, a cut-off autobiographer. See also Dickens, *A Child's History of England*, on the execution of Charles the First and his association with the word "Remember!", which Dickens puts in his mouth as he is about to be beheaded (see also Tick, 1969; Dickens' *The Haunted Man*).

3   The confusion of personal and collective history is a passing "joke" here (as Mr. Dick is often seen as a bit of comic relief). However, it opens to a larger question of trauma as a relation to histories that are not possessed.

4   The relation between Charles Dickens and David Copperfield is, as was noted above, a mirroring and inversion of letters, which takes the form of a chiasmus, a traditional figure of closure and totalization. Mr. Dick intervenes in this symmetrical figure with a new authorial namesake made of up two first names. He can be understood in terms of the asymmetricalization of the chiastic, specular figure of autobiography and with the supplement that he is and seems to keep producing. See also Tick on Dick Dick in *The Seven Poor Travellers* with reference to another man with two names who is associated with a traumatic past. It should also be noted that Mr. Dick is essentially a belated first name (he replaces the paternal name, Babley, with his first name, Richard), thus telling in a different way the story of the trauma.

5   The Oxford English Dictionary had been started some years before the writing of *David Copperfield*, though Dr. Strong's Dictionary may also involve an allusion to Dr. Johnson. It is interesting (coincidentally) that the Oxford English Dictionary was completed, famously, with the help of a man incarcerated in an insane asylum (see Winchester, 2005).

6   Milman Parry famously argued in the 20th century that these epithets in Homer had purely metrical, rather than semantic significance (see Parry, 1971).

7   Later in the text, Mr. Dick decides to help Aunt Betsey get over her debt, into which she has fallen through the evil workings of Uriah Heep, by becoming a copyist to a law clerk. This too echoes Dickens's own career. While several critics have argued that Mr. Dick's copying of letters is a sign that he has been "disciplined" into a capitalist form of labor and taken away from his more imaginative or transcendent activities (see, for example, Cordery, 1998), it is clear that Mr. Dick thinks of the money in other terms, arranging the first coins he earns on a plate in the form of a heart to give to Aunt Betsey. Mr. Dick also continues to move between the copying and the Memorial, in a remarkable scene in which the letters he copies are not simply replacements for the memorial but sit alongside the Memorial and associate Mr. Dick with the written letter, a tradition in literature associated with copyists of all sorts.

8   While I have focused on the father-son-whatever-Mr.-Dick-is in this line of inheritance in both novels, I would like to note that the inheritance moves sidewise as well to a series of women in both texts. Most interestingly, the confusion of histories in Mr. Dick's life occurs not only between him and Charles the First, but also between him and Aunt Betsey, who has also been abused in her past life by a previous husband. When Mr. Dick notices that she is being followed by someone who scares her, he identifies the appearance of this man with the time that his own "trouble" started in his head. The story of abuse and trauma in the novel could also be passed through the line of the sisters, and may be linked to Aunt Betsey's wish that David had been born a girl. She too, notably, changes her name back to her maiden name, removing the husband's name, and she refers to David as "Trotwood."

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Contested Grammars: Comparative Literature, Translation, and the Challenge of Locality

Simon Gikandi

In postcoloniality, every metropolitan definition is dislodged. The general mode for the postcolonial is citation, reinscription, rerouting the historical. (Spivak, 1993: p. 217)

The crisis of comparative literature as it is theorized, taught, and practiced in North America and perhaps other parts of the world in which European languages have taken root, is essentially how to sustain the idea of Europe as the organizing principle of comparison in a post-European age. Contrary to popular opinion, this crisis was already apparent in the foundational moments of comparative literature as a discipline in the period after World War II. Indeed, one of the great ironies of comparative literature is that it took root in the United States at precisely that moment in the history of the modern world when European political and economic power had diminished, exhausted by the war against Fascism. Beneath what appeared to be the triumphant institutionalization of comparative literature as the transportation of European high civilization to North America, was an unremarked tenuousness about its authority and efficacy. Facing the power and appeal of what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno termed the cultural industry, comparative literature struggled with a simple but primary question: How could it sustain the authority of European high culture and its literature in the absence of political and cultural power (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1998: pp. 120–67)? How could comparative literature rehearse Europeaness as the condition of possibility of its content and method in a period when Europe was no longer the unquestioned center of modern culture?

Comparative literature became a disciplinary formation in reaction to the tenuousness of European identity at the end of World War II. We can detect this tenuousness in the endings of two classic texts from the post-war period. The first one is Erich Auerbach's famous epilogue to *Mimesis* where the conclusion to one of the most authoritative interpretations of the problem of representation in Western literature signals its isolation from the very idea of Europe that enabled its objects of analysis (Auerbach, 2003[1946]: pp. 554–74). Written in exile in Istanbul, Turkey, far from the European library whose texts it sought to recuperate through interpretation, Auerbach's book is enabled by lack and loss – the lack of a library, the loss of a philological home. After presenting a seamless analysis of the problem of representation from antiquity to high modernism, Auerbach ends *Mimesis* with a confessional: The book was written without "technical literature and periodicals" and hence has to dispense with the documentary method that is essential to philology; but "it is quite possible that the book owes its existence to just this lack of a rich and specialized library" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 557). As numerous scholars have noted, it is the reality of exile, and hence a keen awareness of the diminishing idea of Europe, that enabled one of the most important critical texts in the Western tradition (see Apter, 1994; Mufti, 1998; Said, 2003).

Then there is the problem of the book's distance from its implied readers: the mode of textual interpretation that Auerbach promotes presupposes a reader versed in the European textual tradition; indeed it assumes a conjunction between the text, the interpreter, and the reader. The identity of the book and the modes of interpretation that it presupposes cannot be isolated from the idea of a shared European identity. The urgent tone of the book arises from Auerbach's confrontation of the empty space once occupied by the ideal European reader and subject, now destroyed or dispersed by the barbarism of fascism. It is the awareness of the gap between the interpreter and his readers that will generate the melancholic ending of his otherwise ecumenical text: All that remains at the end is for the author to find or imagine those readers, "friends of former years, if they are still alive, as well as all the others for whom it was intended" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 557). Coming face to face with a split European subject, an elegiac Auerbach scrambles to link the fate of the project of literary interpretation to the recuperation of Western culture at its diminishing point: His hope is that his book will "contribute to bringing together again those whose love of our western history has serenely persevered" (Auerbach, 2003: p. 557). And thus, the project of literary interpretation will be tied to the existence and destiny of Western culture and the task of comparative literature, the house of philology in exile, will be to try and re-imagine the Western text outside the European library, yet be animated by the idea of Europe as it used to be. Comparative literature will take root in America as the discipline of those who love European literature in spite of the specter of history.

Now, compare Auerbach's devotion to Europe with the ending to Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) written about ten years later at the height of decolonization, the process that would come to mark the end of European

power. In Fanon's view, the end of Europe is not a moment of historical loss, one to be bemoaned at its diminishing point; rather this end marks a new beginning, an aperture or threshold. If the goal of decolonization is to start over a new narrative of history, Fanon argues, then it is futile to seek its mandate or method from a "grotesque and generally obscene emulation" (*imitation caricurale et dans l'ensemble obscène*) of Europe (Fanon, 2004[1961]: p. 239).[1] For if the task of decolonization was merely to transform Africa and America into a new Europe, then that work is better left to Europeans. But if colonized subjects want to become innovators and pioneers rather than mimics, then they "must look elsewhere besides Europe;" in order for humanity to take a step forward, even Europe needs to be liberated from itself: "For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavor to create a new man" (Fanon, 2004: p. 239). Fanon rejects the idea of Europe as the basis of a new humanism and asks his readers to walk away from a past of errors and mistakes:

> Europe has gained such a mad and reckless momentum that it has lost control and reason and is heading at dizzying speed toward the brink from which we would be advised to remove ourselves as quickly as possible. (Fanon, 2004: p. 236)

This imagination of a humanism outside the orbit of Europeaness proposes a new kind of comparative literature, one that assumes that Europe is not the center of world cultures but one of its many branches brought together under the crisis of modernity. The kind of comparative project that Fanon will generate, the one that goes under the sign of postcolonial criticism, will not reject Europe completely, but it will not base its authority on its texts and traditions.

It could be said that both ideas of comparative literature – the house of philology in exile and a postcolonial criticism in revolt – are bound to Europe in one way or another. Indeed, the conjunction between the two has compelled some scholars, most notably Emily Apter, to imagine a model of comparative literature based on "comparative exile" (Apter, 1994). But I start with divergences rather than conjunctions in order to call attention to the difficulties that emerge when scholars of comparative literature try to disengage from the entrenchment of Europe either as a promise (Auerbach) or a debt (Fanon). My chapter has two aims, one indirect, the other much more direct. My indirect goal is to argue that that so long as European literatures and languages remain at the center of the project of comparison, gestures of expansion, those that seek to embrace other cultures and national languages, will always remain feeble. How can a project of comparative literature be global or multicultural if the house of European philology remains unquestioned or, as Dipesh Chakrabarty would put it, unprovincialized (Chakrabarty, 2007: pp. 3–26)? A much more direct goal is to explore the promises and challenges of the work of translation, now increasingly adopted as the way out of the prison house of Eurocentrism: Can the translation of texts and traditions from non-European languages open up the space of comparative literature or is it always a temporary detour that always returns us to the same?

Part One

There was, of course, a time when comparative literature was not troubled by multi-culturalism or globalization because it was assumed to be a product of, and a reflection on, European high culture. You don't have to go far into the manifestos of the discipline, especially as it took root in the United States, to detect a compulsory Eurocentrism in the heart of the American academy. Seeking to identify the "many points of reference" of comparative literature, the Levin Report of 1965 attributed the growth of the field in the United States to the country's "receptivity to Europeans and European ideas" (Levin, 1965: p. 25). Harry Levin, the author of the report, could not imagine a comparative project that was not a continuation of European ideas and texts and an affirmation of what one of his former students, Charles Bernheimer, later termed a proper orientation toward "received assumptions about literary theory" (Berheimer, 1995: p. 3). Ten years later, Robert Clements, writing on comparative literature as an academic discipline for the Modern Language Association, worked with the assumption that Western literature constituted "a historical community of national literature which manifests itself in each of them" (Clements, 1965: p. 5). So, while comparative literature derived its identity from its transnational character, it was essentially a synchronic project, one that assumed literatures in the main European languages, even those located outside Europe, rendered themselves to comparison precisely because of their shared genealogy and culture. The Greene Report of 1965 recognized the growing interest in non-European languages and the emergence of a new vision of global literature, a vision that would soon "begin to make our comfortable European perspective parochial," but it was not sure how to handle "the dizzying implications" of the new trend (Greene, 1995: p. 30).

Even in the age of theory and the revolt against the old order, comparative literature seemed to be caught between two conflicting desires: On one hand, as a disciplinary formation, comparative literature was unimaginable outside a secure European center. Even when it turned to theory as a method of deconstructing "white mythology" comparative literature took its European identity for granted (Derrida, 1982[1972]: pp. 207–72). As a matter of fact, the theorists of deconstruction, though disenchanted with the idea of Europe, never set out to look for a theoretical rescue plan elsewhere; poststructuralist thought was a critique of the idea of Europe, not its dismissal (see Dews, 1987; Young, 1990). Counter-intuitively, theory, which was essentially French or German, reinforced Europeaness at the expense of other geographies of knowledge production, including the United States itself. It was not unusual for the house of theory to be embraced by academics in the United States as an escape from what was considered to be American provincialism, a way to be more European than the Europeans themselves (Apter, 1994: p. 89; Lionnet, 1994: p. 169). On the other hand, comparative literature rode on the crest of theory because of the implicit assumption that ideas and theories could travel "from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another" (Said, 1983: p. 226). Theoretical models were

transnational and international, global and worldly. The challenge of comparative literature after 1968 was how to reconcile the cross-cultural and transnational possibility implicit in theoretical work with the necessity to build a discipline around a European canon (Bernheimer, 1995: p. 42).

Issues were further compounded by the dependence of comparative literature on an unquestioned model of totalization. The self-assured nature of comparative literature was based on the notion that the literatures to be compared not only shared essential features but also had evolved in time and space. Synchrony was essential to the European house of philology in exile because it promised a vision that would hold together, in literary language and its modes of analysis, the cultural body that the wars in Europe had ravaged (Bernheimer, 1995: p. 3). When philology gave way to a new method of comparison, the inheritors still assumed that totalization was the enabling condition of the comparative method. Thus the Greene Report identified the ambition of comparative literature as the bringing together of European language departments "in a new cooperation, reawakening them to the unity of their common endeavor" (Greene, 1995: p. 28).

Often, the dilation of the geography of comparative literature was nothing more than the export of synchronic models to other parts of the world. This explains why the expansion of comparative literature beyond the boundaries of European languages seemed to work best when the languages to be compared were, or appeared to be, synchronic. Indeed, if comparative literature departments have appeared eager to embrace the literatures of East Asia (China, Japan, and Korea) rather than those of Africa or South Asia, it is because they promised cultural entities that could be disciplined into a unified structure that would then enable West/East comparisons. Reduced to what Talal Asad has called "synchronic essentialism" East and West would fulfill the desire for totalization inherent in the comparative method (quoted in Said, 1978: p. 240).

Where languages and cultures were, or appeared to be, diachronic, comparativists seemed lost and unsure about what to compare. In his 1965 report for the MLA Clements, who assumed that world literature was "the logical third step of comparative literature," had no trouble assimilating the linguistic and literary traditions of East Asia, or even the European language literatures of Africa, into the synchronic model of comparative literature; what presented serious problems to the synchronic project of world literature were the multiple languages and dialects of Africa which Clements described as a disruptive "continent-wide Babel" (Clements, 1965: p. 31). Clements considered the study of the vernacular languages of Africa "more ethical than reasonable, or even valid" for one could "hardly expect a comparatist to know these minor languages that not even the Africans themselves read" (Clements, 1965: p. 33).[2]

What was to be done with the Babels of Africa and South Asia? Two options seemed to stand out: The first one was to hand them over to area studies where they could thrive in localized houses of philology as conduits for understanding others for the project of development or national security deprived them of their identity as "active

cultural media" (Spivak, 2003: p. 9). The second was to consider translation as the only logical mechanism for collaring these literatures into the existing model of comparative literature. In the long run, argued Clements, "a masterpiece in a minor African tongue, like in a minor Indian tongue, will eventually be translated into a more available language" (Clements, 1965: p. 33). Thomas Greene was less sure about the efficacy of translation as the solution to the crisis of comparison, worrying that where teachers of translated texts were not in touch with the original, the learning experience would be diminished, and "our Comparatist integrity would be threatened" (Greene, 1995: pp. 31–32), but Charles Bernheimer was more open to the notion that translation could function as "a paradigm for larger problems of understanding and interpretation across different discursive traditions" (Bernheimer, 1995: p. 44).

One could, of course, argue that contrary to the comparativists' opposition to, or unease about, translation, comparative literature had always been pegged on powerful, sometimes unconscious gestures of linguistic and cultural translation (see Derrida, 1982; Steiner, 1998; Ungar, 2006). But if the challenge of the present is how to produce a new comparative literature, one that engages seriously with the languages and literatures of the global south, the turn to translation raises its own complicated questions: What kind of translation allows for the literatures and cultures of the global south to be studied "with linguistic rigor and historical savvy" (Spivak, 2003: p. 5)? How can we take up the challenge presented by the diachronic structure of language and culture and use translation, not as a mode of delexicalizing the original, but of coming to terms with its foreignness (Spivak, 2005: p. 8)?

Part Two

A new comparative literature cannot take existing theories and practices of translation at face value for to do so would mean to reinforce protocols already developed to translate texts in the hegemonic European languages; rather, the task of comparison must start by exploring how the reigning ideologies of translation are, or can be, dislodged, questioned or revised when scholars seriously engage with the historicity of texts produced in the non-European languages. The hegemonic European languages presuppose a synchronic structure; languages of the global south are often diachronic Babels. In this context, the challenge of comparative literature is how to rethink the role of translation as a diachronic practice in the multiplicity of languages, some hegemonic, others subaltern. Does the linguistic situation in the global south, a place where the languages of European power encounter regional hegemonic languages and localized vernaculars allow for the utopian gesture that lies at the heart of most European theories of translation?

Benjamin teaches us that translation, a "somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages," cannot "claim permanence for its products;" and yet the translator's choice is determined by the drive toward "a final, conclusive,

decisive stage of all linguistic creation" (Benjamin, 1968: p. 75). In translation, claims Benjamin, "the original rises into a higher and purer linguistic air, as it were" (Benjamin, 1968: p. 75). But what happens when the original itself refuses to render to a higher or purer form, where it can only be grasped in its lower, raw nature?

Consider the difficulties translators face when they encounter O'kot p'Bitek's poem *Wer pa Lawino,* especially its informing metaphor. Here is the original line in Acholi: "Te Okono obur bong luputu" (p'Bitek, 1969: p. 26). Here is the author's translation of the same line in the 1966 translation: "The pumpkin in the old homestead Must not be uprooted" (p'Bitek, 1966: p. 41).[3] And then Taban Lo Liyong's more literal rendering: "Pumpkins in homesteads are never uprooted" (Lo Liyong, 2001: p. 107). Each of these translations assumes the centrality of this line to the meaning of a poem whose goal is the preservation of African cultures against the onslaught of western, modern ways. Among the Acholi of Northern Uganda, the pumpkin is a metaphor of rootedness, of belonging; even when homesteads are abandoned, the perennial vegetable marks the place of cultural dwelling. What is at issue for the translators is not the meaning of the metaphor, but how the original refrain can be translated to capture the cultural politics of the space in which it emanates.

Now, one would think that Okot p'Bitek's translation is the closest to the original since he is the author; but the choice the poet makes as a translator is driven by the need to produce a text for the African canon in English, so the conventions of English verse are an important part of his project. For Okot p'Bitek, the success of the translation depends on its ability to close the gap between Acholi and English registers. The poet makes this point most explicitly in a significant note to the first (East African) edition of *Song of Lawino* where he notes that in translating from the original Acholi, he has been compelled to clip "a bit of the eagle's wings and rendered the sharp edges of the warrior's sword rusty and blunt, and also has murdered rhythm and rhyme" (p'Bitek, 1966: unnumbered preliminary page).[4]

Lo Liyong's translation is a reaction to what he sees as the watering down of Acholi poetic conventions to cater to the needs of English readers: Whatever was topical, striking, graphic and easily renderable into English received due prominence. (Lo Liyong, 2001: p. xi).

Determined to capture the meaning, rather than the poetics of the original, Liyong dispenses with the free verse scheme that has earned *Song of Lawino* a prominent place in the canon of English letters. It would appear, then, that the author has dispensed with the original altogether and produced a version that will be assimilated into English verse while his former student and adversary claims to be faithful "to the sense, spirit, and complexity" of the original (Lo Liyong, 2001: p. xvi). Okot p'Bitek lets the original rise into a higher and purer linguistic air as Benjamin would say, while Liyong provides what appears to be an untransportable version of the original, one that grates on "English-trained ears and English-trained taste" (Lewis, 2002: p. 2). By his own admission, Liyong's text can only be "orally deliverable" (Lo Liyong, 2001: p. xvi).

What is lost in these debates about the translator's role in relation to her or his target audience is the status of the original itself: Is there a *Wer par Lawino* that can claim to be original? P'Bitek's first version of the poem was written in 1956 and read to students in Northern Uganda (a revised version was published in Nairobi in 1969). And by the time the Acholi text was published, the English translation, *Song of Lawino*, was already established as a classic of African literature in English. *Wer par Lawino* was hence secondary to *Song of Lawino*. But even if we grant *Wer par Lawino* the status of an original in the textual sense, it would be a mistake to extend this originality to cultural authenticity, for Okot p'Bitek's text in Acholi was only original to the extent that it was first written in that language. As Lo Liyong has observed, the distinctiveness of *Wer par Lawino* as a written text in Acholi derives from its unoriginality – its capacity to absorb other texts and traditions (Lo Liyong, 2001: pp. xiv–xv). In fact, what makes *Wer par Lawino* a unique text in Acholi, a poetic text as it were, is the author's use of rhyme. The irony, of course, is that as a product of the colonial school Okot p'Bitek had been taught that there was no poetry without rhyme; but because the Acholi language did not render itself easily into end rhymes, the poet had to "stretch the Acholi language to its limits in order to squeeze rhyming words out of it" (Lo Liyong, 2001: p. xiv). The source of rhyme and rhythm in the poem was not Acholi songs, Lo Liyong notes, but rather the "Christian hymn-book in Acholi and Song of Hiawatha" (Lo Liyong, 2001: p. xiv).[5]

What can we learn from these African debates on origins and translations? They could perhaps help us first endorse and then question Benjamin's premise that the goal of translation is to provide linguistic compensation for the troubled status of language itself. There is no doubt that the English version of *Wer par Lawino* resolves many of the problems the original text faced as it sought to negotiate its way out of the prison house of colonialism. The English version inserts itself into a canonical framework; it is commensurable, transparent, and consumable. It has succeeded in transplanting "the original into a more definitive linguistic realm since it can no longer be displaced by a secondary rendering" (Benjamin, 1968: p. 75). But the stability of the translation is achieved at considerable loss, especially of the *différance* that came into the making of the original text. The Acholi version of the poem plays out the complicated linguistic politics of Africa as Okot p'Bitek shifts registers from "the standard orthography of the Acholi language, as well as the quaint and archaic dialects of east and north Acholi" (Lo Liyong, 2001: p. xiv).

Only the original can bear the pressures of the politics of language itself. As Lawrence Venuti has noted, translation:

> Never communicates in an untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there. (Venuti, 2000: p. 483)

The original domesticates other traditions but always carries the sign of its own relation to the cultures that constitute its source. The reader of *Song of Lawino* will encounter a text in which the mastery of English verse enables a transparent reading; the reader of *Wer par Lawino* will need to know a variety of registers of Acholi, Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha,* traditional dance forms, and Christian hymns. How can a student of comparative literature working without the original gain access to these signs and the troubled cultural context that is both the vehicle and tenor of Okot p'Bitek's poem?

Part Three

Complicating or rethinking the relation between the sources and target language is a step forward. In regard to African languages, one cannot start with the notion that translators work with two languages, one defined as a source, often assumed to be closer to an original experience, and the other one considered to be the target language, one informed by what Venuti has called "domestic intelligibilities and interests" (Venuti, 2000: p. 468). The source/target dialect raises two issues which, as I will show in the last part of this chapter, are challenged by the practice of translation in Africa: The first problem arises from the building of the dialect of translation around a communicative function which presupposes the existence of two distinct, yet stable linguistic codes. Translation is often defined as "a dual act of communication" between a source and target language, but movement across the communicative axis is almost inevitably "a unidirectional operation between two given languages" (Brisset, 2000: p. 342). It is called translation because it is unidirectional. One can translate from Swahili to English or English to Swahili but not both at the same time. That part does not raise problems of either theory or practice. The part that might raise problems for scholars of African languages is the idea that these two languages are given, stable entities. Perhaps English has become hegemonic enough to assume the stability of its givenness; but Swahili belongs to that house of many mansions addressed by Spivak in her reflections on the task of translating from Bengali to English (Spivak, 2005: p. 95).

   A second, perhaps more serious problem, is the almost instinctive privileging of the target language in theories and practices of translation. Postcolonial translators spend considerable time agonizing over the source language, its genealogies, its histories, its nuances; but within the larger field of translation and its discursive economies, the target language is assumed to present more difficulties than the source: "If the target language remains elusive," says Annie Brissett working on Quebecois, "the act of translation becomes impossible" (Brissett, 2000: p. 343). But as I showed in my brief discussion of the debates surrounding the translation of *Wer par Lawino*, the story in Africa is often different: Here it is the elusiveness of the source language that makes translation difficult if not impossible. Consider these facts: There is no single major text of the Western tradition that has not been translated into Swahili. From

the King James Bible and Shakespeare to the great Russian novelists of the nineteenth century, French and English classics, Karl Marx and Fanon, Alex Haley's *Roots*, the poetry of Tagore and Neruda, the canon of world letters has become a crucial part of the Swahili library (Mulokozi, 1985: pp. 176–77). And yet, few Swahili texts have been translated into the major European languages.

How do we explain the paucity of Swahili texts translated into European languages?[6] One could try and explain it in terms of an unequal relationship between Swahili and European languages. One might even give it a theoretical twist and argue that what we have here is an example of a language or library that lacks what Benjamin would call "translatability." But neither the pragmatic nor theoretical explanation is satisfactory: Swahili may not have the same power and authority in Europe and America as English or French, but within the Eastern African region it is without doubt the language of authority, championed by powerful political and cultural interests since decolonization. As for the question of translatability, there are significant translations of classical and modern Swahili poetry into English, including some very difficult texts such as Sayyid Abdalla bin Sayyid's *Inkishafi* published in Pate in the early 1820s. All the Swahili *tendis* (epics) exist in translation. So, there is nothing inherent in Swahili as a language to mitigate translation. Perhaps an alternative way of addressing this problem is to rephrase the question: Why does Swahili poetry, and not prose, render itself into translation into the European languages? Why do works of prose seem untranslatable?

While I have no answers to these questions, I'm willing to speculate that the problem of translating from African languages will not be found in the target languages but in source languages that evade the stability that translators and students of comparative literature take for granted. My somehow provisional claim is that Swahili poetry, especially its classical tradition, is easier to translate because its structures, often drawn from Arabic or Persian poetry, are not strange to translators grounded in European Orientalism. Classical Swahili poetry does not stray far from conventions familiar to European readers through the work of three centuries of Orientalism. And because modern Swahili poetry draws on its foundational texts, it does have a recognizable poetic quality. Swahili prose seems to present difficulties of recognition: It has no "Orientalist" tradition to draw from and it has struggled to find a structure in European prose forms such as the essay or novel.

There may be disagreements about the translation of modern Swahili poets such as Shaaban Robert, but no one has claimed that their poetry is untranslatable; no one has yet to translate and publish Robert's canonical prose texts. Questions of similitude and difference mess up the relation between source and target audiences even further: A student of comparative literature coming to Swahili through translation will assume that the heart of its canon is essentially to be found in its poetry – that which is available. And yet, if the status of a canon is judged by the texts that are taught in schools and colleges, Swahili prose and drama holds an unprecedented position in East African schools. The core Swahili curriculum in East Africa is dominated by, or used to be dominated, by Shaaban Robert's prose (*Kusadikika* and *Mkulima Bora*) and Julius

Nyerere's, translations of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (1969a) and *Julius Caesar* (1969b).[7] The key point, of course, is that in its institution as a subject of study in East Africa, especially in Kenya and Tanzania, Swahili was not considered to be a marginal language in relation to others. As I will show in the last section of this chapter, the problem presented by Swahili to its scholars and translators was how to identify and "fix" it as a source language.

Still, the persistence of a structure of marginality in comparative literature, the assumption that this is the place reserved for non-European languages demands some reflection. Here, my contention is that our attachment to the high "coefficient of deterritorialization" adduced to a so-called "minor literature" by Deleuze and Guattari has negated the fact that writers in many African languages are actually not minorities trying to produce a literature in a dominant language (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: p. 16). Indeed when one considers the populations that speak the major African languages (over twenty-eight million in Yoruba, fifty million in Hausa, around sixty million in Swahili), the notion of a minority is limited if not limiting. In Africa, the writers on the margins are actually those who write in European languages. One can perhaps equate Kafka's problem as a minority writing in German with that of Nurrudin Farah writing in English, but one cannot therefore claim that writers in Somali are minorities in the same sense (Casanova, 1999: pp. 260–61).

Furthermore, there are crucial differences between Kafka and Farah in relation to their mother tongue: Kafka's dilemma is that he is forced to write in the language of his deterritorialization, to function in a German that is both foreign and mother tongue. For Farah, English is foreign but not his mother tongue. He, indeed, could write in Somali if he wanted to. What is crucial, and this is a point that Casanova misses, is that in Somalia, English is the minor language and Somali is the dominant. Farah turns to English in order to escape from what he sees as the poetic tyranny of Somali literature, especially its poetic tradition. The turn to English enables "an individuated enunciation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: p. 25). Somali claims the status of a national language; it produces a poetic tradition invested with collective social and religious value; to become a writer, Farah must deterritorialize himself from Somalia and Somaliness; he must adopt the language (English) and the genre (novel) that seems most removed from the collective interest. And if Farah refuses to translate Somali into English or English into Somali, it is not because Somali is not a language that cannot be written or translated, but because he assumes, after Abdelkébir Khatibi, that to write "in a language that was foreign provides a foundation of legitimacy to the act of writing" (Khatibi, 1991: p. 8). Self-alienation enables a different kind of literature. These are the complications a student of comparative literature faces in the linguistic mine fields of the Global south where what might appear to be a minor literature might actually embody the cultural hegemon.

Confronted by the presence of African languages and literatures, the protocols of translation are set askew and nowhere is this more evident than in the languages that occupy what Casanova has called "median literary spaces" – languages that are considered "minor" to the institutions of interpretation but certainly not located on "the

remote periphery" (Casanova, 1999: p. 277). Instead of assuming the marginality or deterritorialization of non-European language literatures, the new comparative literature must recognize that languages and literatures that seem minor from our institutional metropolitan perspective are often powerful markers of territory, power, and cultural capital in their respective regions. It is in these languages that we can properly see how translation functions as what Spivak calls "an active site of conflict, not an irreducible guarantee" (Spivak, 2005: p. 105).

Part Four

Consider, then, the example of Swahili, the *lingua franca* of Eastern Africa. For students of comparative literature and translation, the language would appear to provide the "guarantee" of a truly synchronic transnational language: It is spoken along the East African Coast from Southern Somalia to the Comoro Islands, spreading its reach into Central Africa through Eastern Congo and the Zambian copper belt. It is the language of hybrid cultures, drawing its linguistic resources from other African languages, Arabic, Persian, Hindi and the colonizing European languages. In spite of the hybridity of the cultures that inform it, the synchronic stability of Swahili has been ensured by its long poetic canon and two hundred years of lexical control. Powerful Swahili grammars and dictionaries have been produced since the middle of the nineteenth century, mostly by missionaries such as the German J.L. Krapf and Bishop Edward Steele.

Beneath these attempts to produce Swahili as a stable transnational language, however, the history of the language in the last hundred or so years has been one of contestation and fierce debate; it is a language that, as Wilfred Whiteley noted in 1969, "meant many things to many people;" "it has provoked lifelong devotion as well as bitter hostility" (Whiteley, 1969: p. 6). In just the last sixty years alone, Swahili has been renounced by the colonial government as the major impediment to "the strong development of both vernacular and English teaching" and a "complete waste of time and effort" (Whiteley, 1969: p. 6). It has been adopted by the postcolonial government of Tanzania as the language of socialism in one country and regional solidarity. It has been condemned as a threat to local interests in Buganda and it has been promoted by none other than Wole Soyinka as the *lingua franca* of the whole of Africa.

Can Swahili, then, have presuppositions that a student of comparative literature can work with? In spite of its long life, and perhaps because of its assumed hybridity, the language seems to exist in a nervous condition even when it is the language of state power. In its cosmopolitanism, Swahili sits between entrenched vernaculars and European languages, powerful in application but deterritorialized (see Nurse and Spear, 1985: Mazrui and Mazrui, 1995). Indeed, for many years, modern Swahili poets have presented their works as a panegyric to the language and what they see as its tenuous state. For Satan Kandora, a nationalist poet in colonial Tanganyika, the

tenuous position of Swahili in the colonial order was a reflection of African marginality:

Kitumike Kiswahili

Bwana Edita andika, twakuomba tafadhali,
Kilio chetu peleka, wakaone serikali,
Kwamba tunasikitika, wenyeji kutupwa mbali,
Kitumike Kiswahili,
Baraza la Tanganyika
                                        (Kandora, quoted in Bierstecker, 1996: p. 32)

Mister Editor publish this, we plead with you,
Take up our cry, that the government recognizes
How much we suffer, we the dispossessed,
Kiswahili should be used
In the Legislative Council of Tanganyika
(My translation)

And for Shaaban Robert, the most prominent modern Swahili poet, the language seemed to be constantly under siege and needed to be defended in the most filial terms:

Kiswahili

Lugha kama Kiarabu, Kirumi na Kiingereza,
Kwa wingi zimeratibu, mambo ya kupendeza,
Na mimi nimejaribu, kila hali kujifunza
Lakini sawa na bubu, nikizisema nabezwa
Titi la mama litamu, jingine halishi hamu
                                        (Shaaban Robert, quoted in Biestecker, 1996: p. 4)

Languages such as Arabic, Latin and English,
Have been important, with many things to satisfy,
And I have tried in everyway, to learn them
But like a mute, when I speak them I'm despised,
A mother's breast is sweet, none other can satisfy
(My translation)

Kandora and Robert were, of course, writing during the period after World War II when African nationalism had turned to language and culture as instruments against a dying colonialism; but anxieties about the authority of Swahili would not disappear with its adoption as the official language of the postcolonial Tanzanian state. In the second edition of his translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Nyerere, the president of the Republic of Tanzania, decided to change the names of Shakespeare's

characters to "sound Bantu" (*yafanane na matamishi ya Kibantu*). Thus, Julius Caesar became Juliasi Kaizari. But more than phonology was at stake in this translation. For Nyerere, the change was part of a response to those people who, not knowing the language, "think that Kiswahili is not capable of carrying significant ideas or precise words [*mawezo makubwa au ufasaha safi*] without using new foreign words (*maneno mapya ya kigeni*) (Nyerere, 1969a: p. vii). What was generating this anxiety? How could Swahili, a language with such a powerful cultural presence and long literary heritage, be considered marginalized enough to generate self-referential poems of loss and longing or to need a *differend*?

This is where the issue of contested grammar becomes important to the task of translation and comparison. For in spite of its manifest political and cultural influence, Swahili functions under the shadow of its instability as a source language. Part of the problem is that the mechanisms adopted to make Swahili standard, stable, synchronic and hence translatable, have also exposed its diverse and diachronic identity. In fact, although a standard Swahili grammar was established in the 1950s, debates about the nature and authority of the language would continue in East African institutions, including the legislature, the universities, and the courts for most of the postcolonial period. So far from stabilizing Swahili as a source, the establishment of a standard grammar for the three East African territories seemed to create a hierarchy at odds with the language used by ordinary citizens and writers.

In effect, the standardization of Swahili was more a bureaucratic maneuver than a consensual project, and the ultimate selection of the Zanzibari, or southern dialect, as the standard form of Swahili did not erase the persistence and influence of other dialectics. The situation was complicated by the fact that the Lamu, or northern dialect, the looser in this contest, had been more closely associated with classical Swahili texts and the older tradition of literature. Indeed, the most important texts in Swahili, such as "Utendi wa Mwana Kupona," the famous epic, were written in the Lamu dialect. With standardization, reading the Swahili canon became an act of translation from the Lamu to the Zanzibari (standard) dialect. Ironically, when poets and translators want to sound classical, they turned to the Lamu dialect as a model.

If one assumes, as I do, that the example of Swahili is repeated all over Africa, one can only imagine the situation that faces the translator from African languages. He or she has to negotiate regional dialectics, local variations, competing taxonomies and political hierarchies. And even after a translator has mastered the politics of contested grammars and found the proper lexicon they still have to contend with its multiple, and often competing literary traditions and centers. As I stated earlier, Swahili has an insatiable ability to absorb texts from other cultures. Indeed, the precondition of modern Swahili poetry is intertextuality, what Anne Bierstecker has aptly defined as *kujibizana*, "composing in dialogue." Swahili poetry is dialogical in a foundational sense: most poems are composed "explicitly as a response to another poem and/or to elicit a poetic response" (Bierstecker, 1996: p. 12). Here, the source language, so central to the project of translation, is both textual and paratextual: it has to be located both within the text to be translated and outside it in a complex intertextual network.

And because translators of Swahili poetry and prose are also products of other literary and critical traditions, sources are also about readers, interpreters, and cultural contexts. The affiliations and contexts of translation complicate both the source and target audience.

This point can be illustrated with two variant translations of a stanza from Shaaban Robert's famous elegy "Amina." First, the original:

<div align="center">

Amina

*Amina umejitenga, kufa
umetanguIia,
Kama ua umefunga, baada ya
kuchanua,
Nakuombea mwanga, Peponi
kukubaIiwa,
Mapenzi tuliyofunga, hapana wa
kufungua.*

</div>

<div align="right">

(Robert, 1994: p. 24)

</div>

Then the translation by Ali A. Jahadhmy:

<div align="center">

Amina, the choice has fallen on you
To go,
Like a rose-bud you've shut, after
You had blossomed,
I pray for you a light leading you
To heaven,
The love that binds us together,
None other can unbind

</div>

<div align="right">

(Jahadhmy, 1970: p. 1)

</div>

And a later translation by Clement Ndulute:

<div align="center">

Amina, You've distanced yourself,
Death has taken you first
You are like a flower that closes after opening out
May light be with you and Heaven receive you,
The love-knot we made, none will untie.

</div>

<div align="right">

(Ndulute, 1994: p. 25)

</div>

The different translations of the first, second, and third lines are instructive: A literal translation would be "Amina you have separated yourself, by dying you've gone ahead." Robert mourns a wife who has chosen to die before him, decided to go ahead as it were. In Jahadhmy's translation, Amina is not the active agent; she has not decided to die; rather a choice has been placed on her by a higher agent, quite clearly an unnamed God. Ndulute's translation returns agency to Amina but the choice she

makes is one of distance not death. In the third line, Robert compares his beloved wife to a flower, but Jahadhmy translates this into a rose bud, which has familiar poetic connotations, while Ndulute keeps the generic flower.

Even without going into a discussion about the biographies of the translators, their locations, affiliations, and intended audiences, one can easily detect the contested sites of translation.[8] A translator attuned to locality can detect the distance between Jahadhmy's Lamu and Dulute's Dar es Salaam, the classic idiom of the North and the standardized Swahili of the South. The differences are not simply linguistic; rather they signal continuing debates about region and religion, the problem of Arabic influences in Swahili poetry, standardization and its secular project, and of course the education of the translators themselves. Ali A. Jahadhmy's goal is to translate Robert back into the classical, Arab and Persian influenced traditions; Ndulute's preference is for a more secular poet, one located within the politics of the postcolonial state rather than a continuing Swahili tradition.

In both cases, we can see how the politics of the source language challenge and inform the task of the translator. It is in this site of conflict, the place of what I call contested grammars, that the most useful lessons for the project of translation in comparative literature can best be comprehended. Walter Benjamin argued that the:

> Basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. (Benjamin, 1968: p. 75)

But perhaps there is another error that might befall translations from "lesser-known" languages and traditions – the error of not caring for, understanding, and ultimately representing the state in which the original text happens to be, the grammars and locality that over-determined its production and circulation.

NOTES

1 I am using Richard Philcox's translation with some modifications where necessary. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the MLA Annual Convention in Philadelphia in 2000. My thanks to Sandra Bermann for the invitation to share my thoughts on translation from African Languages.

2 Gayatri Spivak provides the most precise response to this criticism or stereotype in *Death of a Discipline*: "The old Comparative Literature did not ask the student to learn every hegemonic language; nor will the new ask her or him to learn all the subaltern ones!" (Spivak, 2003: p. 10).

3 Significantly, as it gets calibrated for its western audience at the moment of its canonization through the African Writers Series in 1984, p'Bitek's poem undergoes significant paratextual changes: The informing proverb ("Let no-one uproot the pumpkin in the old homestead") disappears as does its generic marker in the title page ("A Lament by Okot p'Bitek"), the dedications that locate the text in its sites of production in Northern Uganda and the page that designates the text as a translation also disappear. All these signs of the foreignness of the text are replaced by an introduction by G.A. Heron, a leading scholar of African literature.

4 P'Bitek's translator's choice, the decision to give up aspects of the original to fulfill the conventions of European verse, are not unusual in the postcolonial world. Rabindranath Tagore, for example, would change the style of his poems in translation to match "the target language poetics of Edwardian English" (Sengupta, 1990: p. 57).

5 As a student at the University of Nairobi, I recall p'Bitek discussing the significance of both the Christian hymn books and Song of Hiawatha to the composition of his poem.

6 Ali A. Jahadhmy argues simply that there is little Swahili prose literature and it is "dull and lacking in imagination" (Jahadhmy, 1970: p. vii). While there is a paucity of classical Swahili prose, the modern period has been dominated by fiction and drama (see Bertoncini, 1989).

7 These observations are based on my experiences and observations in Kenya during the 1970s and 1980s; the situation could have changed when the "A" Level Curriculum was abolished. My point, of course, is that the texts taught for the "A" Level examination (taken during the final year of high school) were considered to be the most advanced in the canon.

8 A native of Lamu, the cultural capital of classical Swahili, Jahadhymy sees poetry as the reflection of Kiswahili genius and affiliates it with Arabic and Islamic traditions (Jahadhymy, 1970: pp. 27–8). Ndulute's scholarship has been geared toward the recovery of what he calls the "African matrix" to refute the notion that Swahili culture is "synonymous with Arabic culture" (Ndulute, 1994: p. 3).

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18

Comparative Literature and the Global Languagescape

Mary Louise Pratt

Introduction

Vladim Perelman's 2004 film "The House of Sand and Fog," narrates a tragic confrontation between a young Anglo-American woman and an Iranian immigrant who acquires her house by government auction after a miscalculation of her tax liability. Set near San Francisco, California, the film was based on a 1999 novel of the same name by the American writer Andre Dubus III. The Iranian immigrant, a former officer in Iran's Air Force under the brutal regime of the Shah, desperately wants the house in order to establish his family and recover his lost social status. The young Californian is also desperately trying to keep the house as she fights downward mobility after losing her father and her husband. She finds refuge and help from one of the sheriff's deputies assigned to evict her. Violence looms. At a key point in the story, the distraught woman calls on the Iranian's gentle and unhappy wife, now living in the disputed house, to explain the situation. The viewer's hopes rise: Will the women be able to find a just solution where the men are acting by masculine codes of domination and self-interest? The young woman describes what has happened. The wife listens sympathetically. There's a pause, a long pause. "You don't understand a thing I'm saying, do you?" says the young woman. The Iranian wife hands her a paper, "You write down. I want for to understand for discussing with my husband, OK?" The possibility of a women's solution is blocked by another gendered reality: the sequestered immigrant wife trapped by limited access to the languages of power (the wife is terrified because, in an earlier exchange between her husband and the police officer,

which she also could not understand, she has heard the fearsome word "deport"). Later, another linguistic failure triggers the film's disastrous climax. The Iranians' teenage son is shot and killed when he attacks the deputy who has been trying to help the young woman recover her house. What triggers his attack? Over and over, the officer has mispronounced his name, calling him Ishmael instead of Esma'il. It is the last straw. Few readers will miss the allusion to the opening line of Moby Dick that introduces a new voice in American literature with the line "Call me Ishmael."

Two things struck me about these scenes from "The House of Sand and Fog": First, language, specifically communicative failures across linguistic differences, determined the plot; and second, this fact was very likely to escape the viewer's notice. Like much contemporary narrative, *The House of Sand and Fog*, both film and novel, is about immigration, its politics, ethics and economics, its transcultural improvisations, its tissues of misapprehension and miscommunication, its charged, sometimes fatal, poetics. Language and translation sit at the heart of all of these, and both sit at the heart of contemporary literary inquiry. Perelman's allusion to *Moby Dick* poses the question: Which is it going to be in 21st century America? Will Ahab learn to pronounce Esma'il, or will Esma'il accept a name change? Or will this behemoth take us all down, as it takes down the characters in Dubus' violent and sorrowful tale?

What are the linguistic dimensions of this set of planetary realignments people call globalization? If you pick up one of the dozens of anthologies about globalization that have appeared in the last fifteen years, you almost certainly won't find a chapter on language, nor even, in most cases, an entry for language in the index. Astonishing as it may seem, language has not been a category of analysis in the now vast academic literature on globalization. Though some of the people who think about language think about globalization, almost none of the people who think about globalization think about language. Yet globalization has changed the linguistic landscape of the world, and global processes are directed and shaped by language at every turn. Language channels migration, trade and communications, determining who is more likely to do business with whom, who is more or less likely to migrate where, and more likely to thrive, who are able to negotiate on their own behalf, and with whom, who can tap into the satellite communications sailing above all borders. As people are drawn and pushed into migrant labor streams, tourist circuits, and multinational corporate structures, linguistic difference acts continually as a source of what Anna Tsing (2005), calls "friction," the rough-edged interactions through which global processes act and come into being. Globalization is typically imagined through the metaphor of flow, yet linguistic differences, as Perelman's movie underscores, readily bring things to a dead halt, in situations produced by globalization itself (Pratt, 2004). Reflecting on language requires globalization to be imagined in other terms. At the same time, global forces are causing rapid change in the linguistic landscape of the planet. Even experts have no idea now what the world will look like linguistically a hundred years from now. My aim in this chapter is first to explore some ways of thinking about language in relation to contemporary global processes, then to use

those observations to reflect on the "worlding" of literature and storytelling that has unfolded since the 1980s.

This inquiry involves two questions, both pertinent to the study of contemporary literature. First, in what ways does the bundle of processes described as globalization affect what goes on with language? Second, in what ways does language shape that bundle of processes called globalization? To these I add an additional question also pertinent to literature: How are these dynamics linked to particular properties of human language? This is my way of trying to capture language as a distinctive *force* in the domains of globalization.

Migration and the Distributability of Language

Migration is as old as humankind (older, actually), but the accelerated movement of people now taking place on the planet is unprecedented. In particular, since the 1980s, free market economic arrangements have allowed multinational enterprises to enter vast regions they never occupied before, breaking up local ways of life and forcing people from forests and countrysides to cities, and from poor countries to rich ones. Political crises, notably violent dictatorships and civil wars in weakened states have also created huge emigré and refugee populations. Most communities in the world, small or large, urban or rural, have been affected by this movement of people, and it has all happened both quickly and unplanned.

To think about this through language, the starting point is obvious: when people move, their languages move with them, and this is not a matter of choice. From a linguistic point of view, then, migration can be imagined as a redistribution of linguistic competencies, something that is happening now on the planet, on an unprecedented range and scale. The news media register this fact constantly in anecdotes like the 2007 report that the Dublin police department now needed interpreters in forty-one languages, or the story of the Chinese delivery man in New York who spent four days trapped in an elevator because no one could understand what he was saying over the intercom, or the discovery that half the children entering kindergarten in Beverley Hills were, like Dubus' characters, native speakers of Farsi.

Such scenarios suggest how consequential it is for collective life and institutions that people who move have no choice about what languages they bring with them. However much you might wish it, you can't get rid of a language you know by an act of volition, nor can you acquire another language the way you can acquire a new passport or driver's license. Languages can be forgotten only over long periods of time, and under quite narrow circumstances – and even then they usually revive without one's wishing as soon as one hears them spoken. All the language policies in the world can't make these realities go away.

Migration inevitably disrupts the forms and institutional arrangements of the receiving society or community, and the multilingualism it produces poses some of the biggest challenges, most conspicuously in courts and school systems. Reducing

linguistic friction is one of the main reasons migration often retraces old lines of colonial power, as Ecuadorians migrate to Spain, Bolivians to Argentina, Surinamese to the Netherlands, North Africans to France and Spain, Haitians to Quebec, South Asians to Britain, and so on. Many people reading this chapter will have come to live where they are through such movements from ex-colonies "back" to ex-"mother" countries. This is one way colonial and imperial histories remain in play in the new world order.

Of course people can learn new languages when they move, and that is the other large scale redistribution of linguistic competencies that migration brings about, that is, the acquisition of new languages in the new place. People often regard this learning as spontaneous and natural: in any contact situation, common sense tells us, people will acquire or create the linguistic tools they need to do the things they want to do, as a matter of course. If groups need to communicate with each other, they'll develop the means to do so. Language is imagined as a kind of self-regulating market: supply will meet demand. But such an image is misleading, because language learning only takes place under certain conditions, and happens in the degree those conditions are met. Acquiring linguistic competence is neither automatic nor easy – as students of comparative literature vividly know. Language learning, even of your first language, requires five things in abundance: Time, effort, desire, input, and opportunities for use. For literacy, there's a sixth requirement: Instruction. The point I want to focus on here is that these six elements are *distributable*, that is, they can be administered and regulated, given or withheld, made more or less available in intentioned, programmatic, selective ways. Each reader of this chapter can probably identify, for the languages they know, how the availability of these six elements came about and how they shaped individual levels of competence. Though we like to think of language acquisition as natural and spontaneous, it is always socially organized and permeated by power, beginning with relations between adults and children. When it comes to multilingualism, governments, communities, families or institutions can encourage, impose, withhold, facilitate or impede the acquisition of linguistic competencies. With respect to migrant populations, those entities often engage in fierce struggles within and between each other over language. Will the schools of Beverley Hills teach Farsi or suppress it? Will parents encourage their children to learn it, or not to learn it in favor of English? Will governments provide language classes for immigrants? Should access to learning the national language be a right? An obligation? Much in the same way that people reading this chapter will have experienced these tensions in their own lives, these dilemmas mark contemporary literature too. Immigrant (or *émigré*) writers often become writers in languages that are not their mother tongues, like the contemporary fiction writers Khalid Hosseini, and Edwidge Danticat.

To the extent that the elements for language learning are distributable and governable, then, language acquisition is anything but spontaneous and natural. As human mobility increases, control over the access to particular language competencies sustains hierarchies of privilege and unprivilege. In international labor circuits, your

ability to compete for jobs, and move upward in labor markets depends critically on what languages you know or don't know and how well you do or don't know them. If you emigrate, say, from Ethiopia to Spain, it is one thing to have enough Spanish to work on a cleaning crew, and another to have enough Spanish to become a foreman or manager, or to pass a test on building codes, or enroll in a university. How do you get access to those five conditions for acquiring the language competencies you need in order to get access to the better jobs or greater social or political power? In a world shaped by the crisscrossing movement of people, socioeconomic mobility is greatly affected by the degree of access to language *learning* – to those five necessary elements: Time, effort, motivation, input, and use. Linguistic gatekeeping can keep people "in their place," establishing permanent, renewable underclasses. As an effect of power, the distribution of linguistic competencies is often gendered. The wife in "The House of Sand and Fog" who "hardly speaks any English" stages the paradigm: Monolingualism often keeps immigrant women in the sexual contract and out of civic life and the labor market. The restriction often gets coded positively, when women are seen as the guardians of tradition.

All of the above means that immigrant populations tend to be highly aware of the distributability of linguistic competence, and how it affects their lives. Discussion and innovation abound. In Mexican towns today, returning migrants can be found teaching English to the young in anticipation of their entry into the northward migrant stream. Elites often go to great lengths to ensure their children become competent in international lingua francas. Immigrant communities make arrangements to send children "back home" to learn the mother tongue.

Where immigrants encounter restricted access to languages of power, they also often encounter impediments to sustaining the languages they bring with them. Nation-states have a centralizing logic. They find no rationale for an open-ended cultivation of languages coming from far away places. Hence the familiar paradigm of language loss: the first generation born in the new place speaks their parents' language well, but only read or write it if special effort has been made; the second generation understands well, but uses the language comfortably only in limited ways; by the third generation competence is very reduced. (There is nothing inevitable about this process, and it certainly doesn't happen all the time.) For diasporic writers, painful contradictions can result: Denied education, maturity and literacy in one's first language or "mother tongue," one has little choice but to become a writer in another one, most likely the language of the national education system. The lack of full competence in a mother tongue can be a source of great anguish to people in migrant communities, because it was not a matter of choice, and marks an irretrievable loss. In a fascinating book about bilingual writers, Cuban-American literary scholar Gustavo Pérez-Firmat makes this point. Quoting the Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldua: "If you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language" (Pérez-Firmat, 2003: p. 4; Anzaldúa, 1987: p. 81), Pérez-Firmat adds, "few sources of self-reproach are more disabling" for bilinguals than the sense of a "lack of skill in a 'mother tongue.'" Writers in ex-colonies often face a similar circumstance, when the colonizer's language

has become the language of education, government, and access to publishing and readerships. After beginning his literary career in English, the Kenyan writer Ngùgì wa Thiong'o left it and began composing his literary works in his native Gikuyu. By contrast, the novelist Vikram Seth, a native speaker of Hindi who writes in English is famously quoted as calling English his "instrument," apparently in the musical sense.

Linguistic landscapes are being transformed today through yet another kind of redistribution: Language loss. In the twenty-first century, languages are disappearing at a rapidly accelerated rate. In many parts of the planet, especially areas that were relatively isolated until recently, communities are facing excruciating dilemmas about whether and how to preserve their waning languages. Of the approximately six thousand languages now thought to exist, at least half are predicted to disappear in this century, perhaps within fifty years. Of those six thousand or so languages, the vast majority are spoken by groups of fewer than ten thousand people; half have fewer than two thousand five hundred speakers. It is languages in this group that are disappearing (though only some of them are – others are doing just fine). The rapid and unprecedented process of language loss is a main reason that nobody knows what the world will look like linguistically a hundred years from now. The field of language ecology is barely beginning to figure out how to figure this out. Meanwhile, big languages are getting bigger. Half the world's population speaks one or another of the twenty biggest languages. Many, perhaps most, speak other languages as well. One of the intriguing things language ecologists have noticed is that linguistic diversity and biological diversity today are concentrated in the same places on the planet. Twenty two percent of the world's known languages are spoken in New Guinea and Indonesia, and another thirteen percent are spoken in the Amazon region (Mulhauser, 2001).

In the terms I've introduced here, language loss occurs when some or all of those five key elements (time, effort, motivation, input, use) stop being available to the older and younger community members between whom the language must pass. That can only happen in the context of dramatic upheaval in social and material life, such as the unprecedented disruption of land-based lifeways as industrial enterprises have invaded forests, highlands, and rural regions of all kinds (Tsing, 2005). To language ecologists, individual languages represent centuries of collective work developing the highly particular terms in which a group interacts with its environment, including not just material interactions, but also cosmological constructions, symbolic systems, esthetic practices and the kinds of meaning-making associated with literature (Mulhauser, 2001). When that interaction is violently disrupted – by migration to a city, say, or a change from small scale agriculture to wage labor in a mine, or the arrival of schools and missionizing religions – the group either retools its language and symbolic systems, or adopts others already operating in the new environment, or some of each. In the face of dramatic upheaval, a language's own speakers can lose confidence in its ability to continue making sense of the world or to carry the group into a new future. It is not always easy to form ethical judgments

about such situations. A language ecologist might focus on the irreparable loss of this richly encoded relationship between a human group and its environment that it took centuries to create. A sociologist, however, might relate linguistic difference to isolation. If small groups lose their languages because their isolation ends and they enter larger communicative spheres, on what grounds should it be resisted? It depends, a political analyst might say, on what degree of control the community has in determining its own future. For language rights advocates, on the other hand, nation states should guarantee the right of every person to be educated and to interact with the government in their mother tongue (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, 2004). The Mexican linguist Rainer Enrique Hamel reports that Purepecha speaking towns in central Mexico are making different local decisions about languages. Some have decided to let the language go in favor of other priorities; others have committed to bilingual education programs that will develop their children's competence in both Purepecha and Spanish.[1] Elsewhere in Mexico, indigenous writers are establishing modern poetry in languages like Zapoteco, Mixteco, and Yucatec Maya, while in Guatemala Quiché Maya today is becoming the lingua franca for a broad indigenous revival.

As with immigration, language loss presents policy challenges. What kind of intervention, if any, is desirable, legitimate, and effective in the face of dying languages? Could an international body create incentives for communities to sustain them? Should it? Why? Can languages, their archives and repertoires, be said to have a value apart from their meaningfulness to the people who use them in particular environments? U.N.E.S.C.O., the international body most concerned with these questions, says yes, the world's languages are part of the "intangible heritage" of all humanity. What kind of power does that claim create? Could a community be somehow prohibited from giving up on its language?

I've been speaking of constraints on the distribution, movement, and survival of languages. It would be a terrible thing, however, especially for students of literature, to obscure the fact that language is also an area of exceptional freedom. Nobody can own a language, or control what its speakers do with it. Language is an endless instrument of creativity and play, and people exploit those resources every minute of the day. To the extent that it is driven by desire, language is ungovernable, it will jump any borders placed around it and transgress prohibitions with gusto. Humor most of the time consists in such transgressions. In the global languagescape, new forms of linguistic distribution are in play. In electronic form, any language can travel anywhere any time. With access to tools, anyone can appropriate, broadcast, download, study any language they want, for any purpose they want, without asking permission. There's no one to ask – languages can't, at least so far, be patented. As today's diasporic citizenries know, satellite television, email, internet telephone have transformed the linguistic face of migrant experience, and altered the relation of migrancy to home. This is another reason why even the experts have no idea what the world will look like linguistically a hundred years from now. For many of the same reasons, we have no idea what literature will look like either.

Translation, Lingua Francas, and the Power of Comprehension

In February 2005, the UN convened a gathering of pastoralists, or animal herders, from twenty-three countries across the planet. The meeting took place at a site in the Ethiopian desert, thirteen hours' drive from Addis Ababa. The representatives came from places equally remote from urban centers of power in their countries, areas where pastoral lifeways are found – llama herders from the Andes, yak herders from the Himalayas, sheep herders from Spain, cattle herders from sub-Saharan Africa, camel herders from Mongolia. Reporting on the meeting, *The New York Times* quoted participants' comments about how they had identified shared concerns and exchanged notes on how they were addressing the challenges their way of life faced (Lacey, 2005). How did they do that? Inevitably, many of them spoke languages that had never come in contact with each other before. Though the meeting was sponsored by a UN "Pastoral Communication Initiative," the article barely mentioned the chains of language mediators who made it possible for these rural herders to communicate with one another. It said nothing at all of the vast translingual operations that had to take place in order to organize the meeting in the first place.

Trans- (or post-) national gatherings like the herders' meeting are another conspicuous product of globalization; by 2005 they had become a recognized geopolitical form, often organized under the rubric "world," as with the World Economic Forum (since 1987), the World Social Forum (since 2001), the World Summits on racism (2001), sustainable development (since 2002), information society (2003), innovation and entrepreneurship (2008), food security (2009) and others. As many of these titles suggest, "world" in the 1990s came to denote a geopolitical goal of creating dialogues where non-Western societies had an equal or dominant voice (Pratt, 1993). The U.N. in particular has pursued this goal. As the herders' gathering exemplified, the democratizing "world" principle is enacted in events that produce the co-presence of dozens or hundreds of languages. Linguistically, these world scenarios are planned and executed by means of two familiar translinguistic mechanisms: (1) interpretation and (2) lingua francas. In the first, a bilingual interpreter mediates between mutually incomprehensible languages, translating each party's speech into a language the other understands. In the second, parties with differing native languages have acquired competence in another language they all share, and which they may have acquired for this purpose. Often both are in play at the same time: An interpreter will translate from a relatively local language into a lingua franca that multiple listeners can understand, or from one lingua franca to another.[2] World scenarios rely on these two mechanisms, and also call forth and empower them. Interpretation and lingua francas, in other words, are simultaneously engines and products, or causes and effects, of expanding global interconnectedness. Like other linguistic dimensions of globalization, these two translingual mechanisms

are so ubiquitous it is easy to take them for granted, yet they are both extraordinarily powerful inventions.

The most frequent source of large-scale lingua francas is probably empire. From Farsi (or Parsi) in the Persian Empire, to Latin in the Holy Roman Empire, Ottoman Turkish in the Ottoman Empire, Quechua in the Inca Empire, Quiché in Mesoamerica, and Spanish, French and English in European colonialism, Russian in the erstwhile Soviet Union, imperial powers impose their languages on subject populations, as the vehicles for the exercise of power, and paths of access to power. It may seem a terrible irony, then, that people looking for ways out of imperial or colonial subjugation must rely on these imperial languages to communicate with one another. The Pan-African movement of the 1960s for example communicated in English and French; contemporary indigenous alliances in Latin America are made possible by Spanish; English is the lingua franca for aboriginal groups in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US. For some, relying on the languages of the colonizers is a bitter pill. Writers from ex-colonized societies often express this grief. But the irony also runs the other way: By imposing their languages, imperial powers guarantee that their languages will soon cease to be theirs. Subjugated populations will acquire them and do with them as they will, turning them into vehicles of collective resistance, for example, or vernacularizing them into something new, as Latin became localized into the array of languages that includes French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Catalan, and a great many others. Many people see the expansion of English today as a form of linguistic imperialism, absorbing people into circuits of power that they do not control, taking over local or national networks of communication, and creating privilege for those who have access to English, especially as native speakers. There is considerable truth to this view (Philippson,2005; Hamel, 2003). Hamel and the Brazilian sociologist Renato Ortiz, for example, have studied the worldwide shift to English in the social sciences (Hamel, 2003; Ortiz, 2006). At the same time, English today obviously does not belong to England or the United States. On the one hand, it operates as a global lingua franca among all kinds of people who acquire it for their own purposes, and on the other, it is vernacularizing itself geographically, in Englishes that will soon be distinct languages like those of Singapore and Hong Kong (Bolton and Kachru, 2007), and in amalgamations with other languages, like Spanglish in the US, Taglish in the Philippines, Franglais in Quebec, and in a variety of "netlishes" used in cybercommunication (Apter, 2006). As I noted earlier, despite the distributability of linguistic competencies, the generative and transgressive powers of language will always transgress governances or policies.

Interpretation and the operation of lingua francas both depend on another aspect of human language that, like distributability, is so fundamental it is easily overlooked: the enormously expansive power of comprehension. When you know a language, your ability to understand utterances in that language is far greater in range and more elastic than your ability to produce utterances. You can understand a great deal more

than you can say. In other words, human language capability is skewed toward comprehension. That is why all of us can understand all kinds of things we would never say, all kinds of speakers who don't speak our languages the way we do, or who speak them partially or imperfectly, or who speak in registers we don't possess. When you perceive someone else as "having an accent," for example, you are comprehending speech forms that you yourself do not use. That is what "accent" is. Imagine how different the world would be if each of us could understand no more than the sounds and words we ourselves can produce.

The expansive power of comprehension makes interpretation possible. Interpreters can comprehend a wide range of speech in the source language, and their speech can be comprehended by a wide range of hearers in the target language. The elasticity of comprehension also makes lingua francas able to be "franca:" Users with widely differing accents, degrees and ranges of expertise can still communicate with each other, as you might witness in a courtroom, or hearing a group of tourists from different countries speaking together in English. Such is the asymmetry between production and comprehension that it is possible to understand perfectly a language you can barely speak at all – some readers of this chapter may attest to that fact. Speaking and understanding are asymmetrical in another way too: Comprehension is involuntary in ways that speech is not. A person can choose or refuse to speak, but the ability to withhold comprehension is extremely limited. If you hear an utterance in a language you know, it is nearly impossible to choose not to decipher it; the decoding happens automatically.[3]

Modern linguistics implicitly theorizes language from the point of view of speech production. So does modern common sense: To say that someone knows a language we say that they *speak* it. By default, both linguistic theory and common sense incorrectly imagine language comprehension as simply the mirror image of production, as depicted in this famous symmetrical drawing from Saussure's classic *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916):
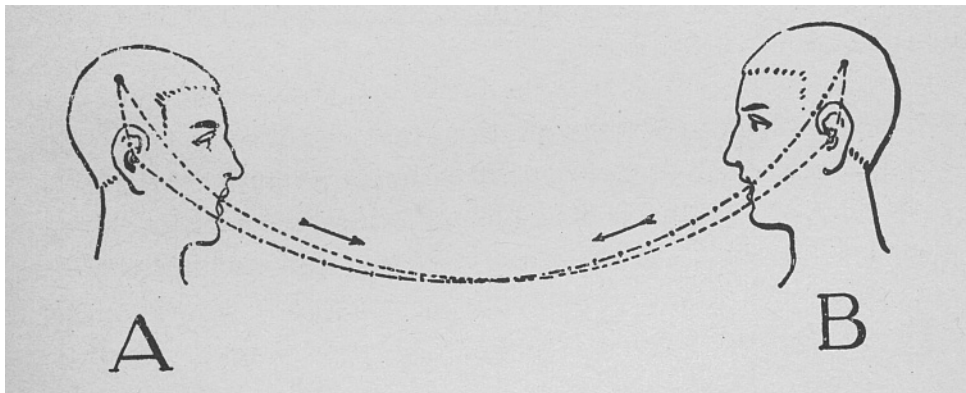
Figure 18.1 Symmetrical drawing from Saussuer's classic *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916)

The skewing of language toward comprehension is powerful for another reason: Within societies, it enables speech to mark social differences, while maintaining comprehension across difference. Men and women, old and young, educated and uneducated probably speak the group's language very differently yet they can make themselves understood to one another with little difficulty. Speaking differently is a way people express and enact who they are in relation to others. People who occupy unequal positions in class, caste or racial hierarchies are likely to mark their differences linguistically, but in order to enact or challenge their unequal relations, they still must be able comprehend each other. Within a language, the power of comprehension frees ethnic groups to mark the dominant language as their own without necessarily endangering intelligibility with others. Stand up comedians exploit these generative resources all the time. In sum, because of the asymmetrical powers of comprehension, language can be permeated with marks of difference or incompetence, and still enact communication. To the extent that global networks exist at all, they depend on this fact. At the same time, because language marks differences it is also an agent of what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls epistemic injustice, the sociopolitical fact that some people's words and meanings count more than others', and some people's words and meanings scarcely count at all. Social and economic inequalities are sustained by this fact.

The Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1934) placed the ability of language to mark difference at the center of his theory of the novel, whose signal innovation as a genre, he argued, was *heteroglossia* (hetero = "different," glossia = "speech"). Rather than seek homogeneous linguistic purity, Bakhtin observes, the novel form operates artistically by deploying different kinds of speech, different registers and voices within a language, in relation and tension with one another. Through heteroglossia, Bakhtin argues, the novel became the privileged genre for depicting bourgeois societies, because of its ability to display and explore in language the hierarchies, fractures, and entanglements that composed them.

The Worlding of Literature

To read literature is to exercise those elastic, inventive, ingenious powers of comprehension upon written forms of language. To write literature is to enter a pact with those powers as they reside in readers. The study and teaching of literature is the formal cultivation and distribution of those powers – the passing on of what Jonathan Culler has called "literary competence" (Culler, 1975). The distribution of literary competence, expertise in reading, assumes a prior distribution of literacy itself, which also requires instruction and can also be selectively regulated – required of all in some societies, and withheld from many in others.[4] Both literacy and literary competence share the feature of distributability introduced above in connection to the acquisition of language.

I suggested earlier that from a linguistic standpoint, migration can be imagined as a redistribution of linguistic competencies. What has this redistribution brought about with respect to literature? What implications does it have for the study of literature? One consequential fact emerges right away. Migration has diversified the languagescapes of the countries and cities to which migrants arrive. It has not, however, diversified the languages in which literature is written. Instead, it has dramatically diversified the range of people who write literature in the languages of the receiving countries. This result is predictable, for countries receiving immigrants almost never facilitate literacy or literary competence in the languages immigrants bring with them. Public resistance to bilingual education and foreign language study in the United States is legendary; in Europe, schools give high priority to learning languages, but they teach major European languages almost exclusively. Gatekeeping shuts out the native languages of immigrant groups, whether Arabs in France, Turks in Germany, Chinese in Spain. The children of immigrants who become writers tend to form themselves as writers in the national language, not their home language. As writers, then, they dramatically diversify the literatures of those national languages. Migration and decolonization have produced the "worlding" of literature.

This fact about the worldling of literature was first brought home to me in the spring of 1986 in California, when two startling new books appeared on the literary scene, both published by a major American press, Random House. The first, titled *Shallow Graves*, was a collaborative autobiographical work by two women, Tran Thi Nga, who is Vietnamese, and an American, Wendy Wilder Larsen. The two had met in Saigon in 1970 during the war when Larsen was a reporter and Tran worked as a bookkeeper for Larsen's husband. Years later, they renewed their friendship in the United States and together produced this two-voiced book about their Vietnam experiences. The collaboration was unusual, but even more so was the literary form: The work was written in English, but following a Vietnamese form of verse narrative called the *truyen*. The second startling book was a sentimental comic novel called *The Golden Gate*, written by the East Indian writer Vikram Seth. This book, too, was written as a novel in verse, inspired, Seth said, by his reading of Charles Johnston's English translation of the Russian poet Pushkin's early nineteenth-century masterpiece *Eugene Onegin*. The book was set in San Francisco and prominently featured a gay love story.[5] Were these works of American literature? I wondered. How would one decide? By the authors' nationality? Did they have green cards? Born in India, Seth had trained at Oxford as an economist, studied for several years in China, and wound up in California as a book editor. Tran was born in China to a family of North Vietnamese descent, grew up in North Vietnam then was forcibly returned to China as the wife of a Chinese general, eventually moving to South Vietnam when war loomed, and finally escaping to the United States as Saigon fell. If their stories were, in a way, American, their choice of literary form was not. In 1986 it was hard to imagine any literary activity more un-American than writing novels in verse. (Indeed, the literary sources, Russia, Vietnam, China, were the US's cold war rivals.)

But if *Shallow Graves* and *The Golden Gate* were not works of American literature, whose literature or what literature were they works of? Who would claim them? To

what canon might they apply for admission? Two answers were available at the time: these were California books, or they were works of world literature.[6] Like many other books that received notice in the late 1980s, these two literary experiments were aggressively trans- or postnational in character, even counter-national in that they aimed to overturn the modern linkage between literature and nation. English, used as a lingua franca, and the verse novel were the instruments of that overturning as well as of the other intervention both works made: Dissolving the imaginary boundaries by which the West separates itself from other parts of the world, in this case, South and Southeast Asia. Both works are conscious experiments in literary impurity. Like the meeting of herders in Ethiopia, they leave behind national paradigms to explore the resonances, entanglements, and collisions that happen when you transpose and juxtapose traditions from disparate places and histories. They look for originality, insight, and beauty in heterogeneity, hybridity, the juxtaposition and interweaving of difference. Difference becomes a positive aesthetic value, a space of freedom. For many of you reading this chapter twenty-five or so years later, those aesthetic values are familiar and normal, what you expect and expect to like: You have lived the change. The post-modern, post-national, and transcultural are the water in which you swim.

Over the 1980s and 90s, migration, decolonization, and travel together produced the "worlding" of literature, a trans- and postnational scenario as thoroughly constructed by translation and lingua francas as the 2005 herders' meeting. In the arts, "worlding" has consisted above all of practices that place artistic forms and productions from one region of the world into circulation and interaction in other regions, crossing barriers separating North from South and South from South. The worlding of literature and other arts is one of the changes calling for this new *Companion to Comparative Literature*.[7] Comparative Literature is indeed in new company. On the reception end, the worlding of literature refers to the emergence of a transnational reading public (a "world republic of letters" as the French critic Pascale Casanova (1999) calls it), made up of people all over the world who are interested in reading beyond their national borders.[8] On the production side, the worlding of literature means that authors can write for this transnational literary public, by writing in lingua francas or by writing with the expectation of being translated into the lingua francas.

Worlded storytelling not only navigates globalization, it seeks to engage and portray it. In fiction and film, contemporary storytelling experiments with transnational and multi-sited narratives. In 1990, for example, Argentine novelist Luisa Valenzuela published two novels, *La realidad nacional desde la cama* (translated as *Bedside Manners*) set in Buenos Aires, and *Novela negra con argentinos* (translated as *Black Novel (with Argentines)*) set in New York City. Peruvian novelists Mario Vargas Llosa and Alfredo Bryce Echeñique wrote novels about Peru from the 1960s until the 1990s, when they began telling stories set elsewhere.[9] Their younger compatriot Mario Bellatín writes novellas set in unnamed cities that could be anywhere; Bellatín himself is a Peruvian émigré to Mexico; symptomatically, both countries claim him as their own. Readers will be able to add examples from their own literary experience. A similar trend can be observed in feature films, where multi-sited stories, and shooting schedules, now abound, in both established genres like the thriller, and experimental

works like Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006). Not surprisingly translation has also become a prominent plot device and theme, as in such films as Sidney Pollack's thriller *The Translator* (2000) and Bill Murray's *Lost in Translation* (2003). Since 1986, the Spanish novelist Javier Marias has used translators or interpreters as protagonists of all his novels. In sum, storytelling has gone beyond the task of telling nations their national stories, though many novels and films certainly still do that, and do it magnificently. The work of Comparative Literature is no longer organized around comparing the corpuses formed by national literatures in different national languages, though that work still goes on, and goes on magnificently.

Since the 1980s, social spaces worldwide have been altered or transformed by the movement of peoples and the expansion of capitalism. In literature and other arts, a worlded space has emerged (it is also a market) that circulates works originating from a wide range of geographical, geohistorical, ethnic and artistic points of origin, to audiences from an equally wide geographical range. Translation and lingua francas are the means of circulation, even as old colonial connections (like those that map "francophonie" and "anglophone literature") remain in play, driven by language and the remainders of colonial power. The democratizing world ideal has not offset the grotesque inequities and economic polarizations of neoliberalism's new world order, and the space of world literature is anything but symmetrical or reciprocal (Pratt, 2004, 2005). But we have surely lived a change.

Heterolingualism and the Extroversion of Language

So far I have discussed two linguistic dimensions of globalization: First, the increased redistribution of linguistic competencies through migration, and second, the widening use of translation and lingua francas in the creation of world scenarios. I connected each of these back to intrinsic characteristics of human language: First, the distributability of the elements of language acquisition; and second, the expansiveness of comprehension. I turn now to a third and final linguistic phenomenon that global shifts have fostered: Heterolingual expressive practices, which, as I will argue, are made possible by the extroverted potential of language.

Some readers will have read Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's acclaimed novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, published simultaneously in Nigeria, the UK and the US in 2006.[10] Written in English, the novel narrates the devastating civil war that erupted in 1967 when the Igbo region of Biafra attempted to secede from Yoruba-dominated Nigeria. It was a watershed in Nigerian history, and the plight of the besieged Biafrans became a focus of international attention. The novel opens with a scene of rural-urban migration, when a village boy is turned over by his aunt to a university professor for whom he will serve as a houseboy or domestic servant:

> His aunty walked faster, her slippers making *slap-slap* sounds that echoed in the silent street. Ugwu wondered if she, too, could feel the coal tar getting hotter underneath, through her thin soles. They went past a sign, ODIM STREET, and Ugwu mouthed

street, as he did whenever he saw an English word that was not too long. He smelled something sweet, heady, as they walked into a compound, and was sure it came from the white flowers clustered on the bushes at the entrance. The bushes were shaped like slender hills. The lawn glistened. Butterflies hovered above.

"I told Master you will learn everything fast, *osiso-osiso*," his aunty said. Ugwu nodded attentively although she had already told him this many times. […]

"I will learn fast, Aunty," Ugwu said. He was staring at the car in the garage; a strip of metal ran around its blue body like a necklace.

"Remember, what you will answer whenever he calls you is *Yes, sah*!"

"Yes, sah!" Ugwu repeated. (Adichie, 2006: pp. 3–4)

The narration is taking place from the boy's point of view ("his aunty") but the reader is soon apprised that the neither the boy nor his aunty is thinking or speaking in English. "ODIM STREET" introduces English as a linguistic other and an object of desire; a few lines later, the expression "*osiso-osiso*" introduces Igbo, the language actually being spoken. Italics in turn mark it as other to the language of the text; its meaning has already been glossed. A few lines after that, English returns as the language being taught and learned (with all five key elements present), as part of the boy's entry into a master-servant relation – "Yes sah!". Moments later they enter the house:

"The houseboy, sah."

"Oh, yes, you have brought the houseboy. *I kpotago ya*." Master's Igbo felt feathery in Ugwu's ears. It was Igbo colored by the sliding sounds of English, the Igbo of one who spoke English often.

"He will work hard," his aunty said. "He is a very good boy. Just tell him what he should do. Thank, sah!"

Master grunted in response, watching Ugwu and his aunty with a faintly distracted expression, as if their presence made it difficult for him to remember something important. Ugwu's aunty patted Ugwu's shoulder, whispered that he should do well, and turned to the door. (Adichie, 2006: pp. 4–5)

The professor, is a native speaker of Igbo, but his Igbo is inhabited by English, a fact the rural boy can hear even if the professor cannot. The rest of the exchange, including Aunty's parting whisper, we know, goes on in Igbo, though of course we are reading it in English with a sprinkling of Igbo.

"*Kedu afa gi?* What's your name?"

The Master asks at one point, and later:

"You could be anything from twelve to thirty." Master narrowed his eyes. "Probably thirteen." He said *thirteen* in English. (Adichie, 2005: p. 5).

English is the lingua franca for the Adichie's novel, and the language of class and colonial power in the story. The reader of these opening paragraphs reads

English with a sprinkling of Igbo; the characters are using Igbo with a sprinkling of English. These are mechanisms by which Adichie makes the literary lingua franca (i.e. English) convey not just the multilingualism of the situation, but also the relations of power that are embodied by the distribution of linguistic competencies in the situation narrated, and the relations between languages. This work of capturing the meaning and force of linguistic difference is what I refer to as heterolingualism.

I introduce the term heterolingualism to refer to texts or performances where speakers place more than one linguistic system into play at the same time. Bakhtin identified heteroglossia as the feature that made the novel the canonical genre of national bourgeois literatures. When artists project these same expressive possibilities across languages, heteroglossia becomes heterolingualism. In a fascinating book about the history of Spanish in relation to indigenous languages in the Philippines, Vicente Rafael offers an approach to these operations (Rafael, 2006). He speaks of texts in which one linguistic system serves as "host" to another – English would be said to be hosting Igbo in Adichie's novel (while Igbo is hosting English within the master's speech). Like guests, Rafael says, the heterolingual elements introduce a foreignness into the host language and literary system, a strangeness that carries both danger and possibility, threat and promise, fear and desire. Textually this kind of visitation or occupation is one way to make lingua francas express or carry languages that have been elided. In Larsen's and Tran's *Shallow Graves*, English hosts the Vietnamese verse narrative form called the *truyen.*

Most of the time, novelists straddling linguistic divides rely on the simple suspension of disbelief when it comes to language. Readers, say, of Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* know the characters are not "really" speaking or thinking in English, though the readers may not know exactly what languages would "really" be involved.[11] You read as you would a translation, only in this case there is no original. Obviously Adichie relies on the same device throughout her novel, but she also uses heterolingual devices constantly to thematize language as a force in the story she is telling (if you are thinking back to "The House of Sand and Fog," you are right). The warring sides in the conflict are defined by language. The novel has multiple narrators, who are native speakers of different languages, including an Englishman. As in "The House of Sand and Fog," language is a matter of life and death. At one dangerous moment, two Igbo women characters save their lives from a hostile mob by speaking loudly in Yoruba, concealing their ethnicity. As the boy Ugwu matures, his love affair with English grows, and its words of violence enchant him, "He liked the way *reprisal attacks* came out of her mouth" (cited in Mullan, 2009: p. 6). The story of Ugwu's acquisition of English is an important thread in the novel that eventually leads him to become the author of the definitive book about the war we see him live. Over and over the novel shows the power of linguistic difference penetrating family life and intimate relations, and determining outcomes. A mother whose husband has a mistress asks her daughter to speak to him. She has to decide in which language to do so, and chooses English because "It was easy to be formal and cold in English" (cited in Mullan, 2009: p. 6). A failure of communication results.[12]

Heterolingualism, I suggest, appears in expressive culture when artists aim to enact and examine the force of language and the powers of linguistic difference. Heterolingual experimentation and improvisation is a proliferating feature of the global languagescape. It is one of the ways language leads an unquenchable life of its own. In written literature, heterolingualism appears not when realism calls for it, but when writers undertake to explore linguistic difference as a social force, a site of power, and a source of knowledge. Such experimentation has a long history in what is now the Southwestern United States, where migration, colonialism, and empire together produced a longtime interaction between Spanish and English, continuously acted out in heterolingual writing, spoken arts, and everyday expression. Similar Spanish/ English experimentation goes on today on the axis between US East coast cities and the Spanish Caribbean. Latino writers continually use English as a host language for Spanish, often enmeshing one into the other in amalgams that cannot be disentangled. Take for example the title of Cuban-American H.G. Carrillo's 2004 novel *Loosing My Espanish*. English here hosts elements of Spanish phonology – the *e* before *s* at the beginning of a word is required in Spanish pronunciation; the *z* sound, nonexistent in Spanish, is gone, eradicating the distinction in English between "loosing" and "losing." The result is a pun in English ("I am losing my Spanish"/"I am setting loose my Spanish") – but the pun is only there if the reader recognizes both the Spanish and English phonological elements (it is a Spanish speaker, not an English speaker, who will say "loosing" for "losing"). The two languages can't be disentangled here, as they cannot be disentangled in the society and in the speech of Latino communities, regardless of what English Only movements say. In fact in much Latino writing, a three way relationship is in play between the vernacular language of the text, standard English, and standard Spanish. Like many heterolingual works, Carrillo's title, and his novel, privilege the reader who understands all of the languages in play. Bilingual readers of US Latino literature often have the experience of reading one language and hearing the other echo in their head. Notice too the complete impossibility of translating Carrillo's title into any other language, including Spanish or English. Heterolingualism produces untranslatability, and also the linguistic echo. "Sometimes I have even thought," says Pérez-Firmat, "that every single one of my English sentences – including this one – hides the absence of the Spanish sentence that I was not willing or able to write" (Pérez-Firmat, 2003: p. 4).

As a second example, let me briefly return to the text with which this chapter began, namely Andre Dubus' novel *The House of Sand and Fog*, another text where heterolingualism plays an important role. Like Adichie, Dubus tells the story through multiple narrators, one of whom is the Iranian immigrant, Massoud Bahrani, who sets the plot in motion. Bahrani's voice opens the novel, and establishes the reader in the multiethnic, multilingual, immigration-driven dynamics of the northern California road crew on which the once wealthy and powerful protagonist now holds a job:[13]

> The fat one, the radish Torez, he calls me camel because I am Persian and because I can bear this August sun longer than the Chinese and the Panamanians and even the little Vietnamese Tran. (Dubus, 2000: p. 15)

After a showdown with another crew member, Mendez, Bahrani tells Torez, "In my country I could have ordered him beaten." To which Torez (probably Torres) replies bilingually, "*Sí*, Camello? In Mendez's country he would have beaten you himself" (Dubus 2). While the novel's other two narrators use standard English, Dubus makes Bahrani's voice heterolingual (italics added):

> Nadi is near the sink preparing the samovar for later and she calls out in Farsi for Esmail to take off his shoes, and then come into the kitchen *for washing*. She *regards* me, her hands upon the samovar lid, and she motions with her head for me to *commence* explaining. Esmail removes his shoes, asks me if the *automobile* in the driveway does not belong to that woman, *Bawbaw-jahn*. Again I am faced with the moment of not knowing how much of our situation to share with my son. But then I *tell to myself* it is his situation as well. (Dubus, 2000: p. 251, emphasis added)

Notice first the gift of comprehension – how effortlessly you understood not just the text, but the literary intent: Dubus here is marking English with another language, with foreignness – he is writing with an accent. Does this mean (i.e. are you intended to imagine) that the narrator is thinking and speaking in Farsi, or in a Farsi-inflected English? You don't know, though if you had to think about it you would probably conclude that it is some of each. Dubus worked for two years with an Iranian-American informant to create his characters and invent this heterolingual simulacrum that places foreignness into play, while retaining comprehensibility. Let us look briefly at the specific markings in the passage. Two ("for washing" and "tell to myself") are grammatical constructions that we take to be translations or interference from Farsi. Three others are lexical: regards, commence, automobile. All are formal Latinate terms where English would have called for informal, Anglo-Saxon ones: look at, begin, car.[14] The effect is of formality and what linguists call hypercorrection. Behrani's hyperpolished English is aggressively marked with the status and education that brought him the respect and prosperity in Iran that he seeks to recover in the United States. These in his mind place him above the other characters in the novel. The formal correctness and snobbery of his English echoes the formal legality and snobbery of his heartless power grab of the house. English here hosts not just his native Farsi, but his fierce aspirations, which are to be not a guest or (as he now is, a tenant), but once again the master of a house – perhaps by taking it from the host. There is one term, in the passage above, that remains in Farsi, "*Bawbaw-jahn*," his son's term of address meaning, we have been told, "dear father." Other than this, the mechanism by which Dubus has introduced the foreignness of Farsi into English is by estranging English from itself.

The possibility of heterolingualism, of one language hosting (or invading or occupying) another arises from a third feature of human language that shapes the global languagescape: its *extroversion*. Languages are not just porous, they are outwardly disposed to seize elements from others with which they come in contact. This active openness of linguistic systems makes language uncontainable and transgressive. In the new languagescapes of global cities, the extrovertedness of language is another

reason we have no idea what the world will look like linguistically a hundred years from now.

Heterolingual projects like Adichie's and Dubus' do not, however, seem to abound in contemporary literary writing. In fact, they raise the question of why, though migrations have made many people's social worlds more multilingual than ever before, attempts to capture and explore multilingualism do not turn up more often in contemporary writing. Here the contrast with oral culture stands out. Hip hop, for example, was no sooner invented (around 1979) than it became bilingual in Spanish and English (with Mean Machine's "Disco Dream," 1981) then in Haitian Kreyol and English with figures such as Wyclef Jean. In one way it's not surprising. Rap originated among black youth in the urban neighborhoods of the East coast US cities, and those neighborhoods included large numbers of people from the French and Spanish Caribbean. Moreover, rap's message was of protest against an oppressive and exclusionary dominant culture that, among other things, devalued and excluded the vernacular languages of those communities. Affirming those languages – Kreyol, Spanish, Spanglish – partnering them with English, enacted the protest. This has been the story of hip hop worldwide. Born in the prosody of African American English vernacular, hip hop has hip-hopped into languages all over the world. Singers stress the stress structures and prosodies of their languages to host the imported form, and the rhythmic transgression itself often carries the rebellious class and generational message that drives the genre. Hip hop entered France through the alienating urban suburbs or *banlieues* inhabited by immigrants from Northern and sub-Saharan Africa. France's first major hip hop star, M.C. Solaar, was born in Senegal of Chadian parents, and grew up in a Paris suburb. The French hip hop scene is overwhelmingly dominated by youth of African (including North African) descent, and its central message is their protest against their alienated status in French society. Ironically in 1996 the French government gave the French hip hop movement a boost when the *amendement Pelchat* was applied requiring a forty percent minimum of French language songs on radio stations (see Hare, 1977). Nevertheless, French hip hop is continually suffused with Arabic and sub-Saharan languages.[15] In Bolivia, hip hop became a breakthrough medium for the Aymara language, spoken by several million Bolivians but despised by official culture. The best known group, Ukamau y Ke, based in the Aymara city of El Alto, on the edge of La Paz, raps in a combination of Spanish, Aymara and Portuguese, reflecting the Aymara's experience as both as urban migrants from the Andean *altiplano*, and as migrant laborers in Brazil.[16] For many Aymara speakers, their songs were a first experience hearing Aymara performed in public.

Multilingualism is at home in hip hop because linguistic oppression is one of the experiences of subalternity it aims to explore and redress. Bilingualism – in a home language and a national lingua franca – is a built-in feature of the migrant communities that produce and transmit hip hop. Multilingualism is present in the performance simultaneously as an act and as a theme. It is also present as a privilege. Multilingual hip hop privileges the vernacular listener whose language abilities official culture decries. The privileged classes who do not understand subaltern immigrant languages

cannot decipher the songs. This is one way hip hop exploits the distributabilty of competence and the limits on the seemingly limitless capacity of comprehension.

Bilingual radio is a second medium for exploring and engaging multilingualism, and it too has proliferated with migration, in the US since the year 2000. Here too, people who live in two languages find their language worlds fully and richly affirmed. Bilingual radio exploits the skewing toward comprehension that we discussed earlier. Even second and third generation people whose home language skills have eroded can participate in it from the comprehension end, and even increase their competence. On the production end, bilingual stations often cultivate bilingual expression as a style or art form. On Spanish/English stations in the US, hosts are highly skilled in switching and mixing the two languages in rapid, witty and poetic ways, and phone callers are tested for these skills during the seven second delay. Bilingual radio, like hip hop, has become a performance space for translingual poetic practices. Standup comedy is another such space.

Finally, there is cinema. As I mentioned earlier, over the last two decades cinema has "worlded" itself in multi-sited productions that go beyond national borders. In the process, it has worlded itself linguistically as well. In the 1980s it was not common to hear multiple languages in mainstream films; however, since 2000, it has become widespread, and a source of cinematic interest. Brazilian Manoel de Oliveira's *Um filme falado* (2003) was an early example, followed shortly after by Stephen Spielberg's *Munich* and George Clooney's *Syriana* (both 2005) and Alejandro González Iñarrítu's ambitious *Babel* (2006); the action hero actor Mel Gibson has made two films in reconstructed ancient languages nobody speaks at all (*The Passion of the Christ* [2004] and *Apocalypto* [2006].[17] The shift was marked dramatically in 2005 when Hollywood's Motion Picture Academy rejected an Italian nominee for best foreign language film. The film, called *Private*, was written, directed and produced by Italians and filmed partly in Italy. The problem was that not a word of Italian is spoken in the movie, which narrates a confrontation between a Palestinian family and members of the Israeli army. The dialogue is in Arabic and Hebrew, while the Academy's rules required that nominated scripts be "predominantly written in the language of the country that presents the film." The rule was changed in 2007.

The device of subtitling enables cinema to explore and thematize globalization's postnational linguistic landscapes for audiences who may not know any of the languages in use (provided of course that they can read the language of the subtitles). In film, multilingualism need not limit or obstruct comprehension, and at the same time, multilingual films can still privilege viewers who don't need the subtitles. Compared to these highly transmissible oral forms – hip hop, radio, and cinema – world literature seems limited in its ability to explore the linguistic landscapes of globalization, and to grasp linguistic difference as a force in the world. Though nothing inherent prevents literature from hosting translingual inquiry and experimentation, the very instruments of the worlding inhibit its ability to enact and explore the new linguistic geographies of our time. When the force of language and linguistic difference is part of what a writer or performer aims to thematize and

explore, when it is part of the stuff with which she or he works, then heterolingual expression appears. Translation and lingua francas work against the possibility of exploring multilingualism and its expressive depths. Yet if comparative literature does not grasp the global languagescape, who will? The challenge to comparative literature, then, is to benefit from the gifts of translation and lingua francas without being ruled by them.

Notes

1 Personal communication. Doris Pellicer reports similar contrasting courses among speakers of Mazahua in Central Mexico.

2 The U.N., for example, provides simultaneous translation in six lingua francas: English, French, Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish, and Russian. The European Union, by contrast, in order to respect the national integrity of its members, provides translation in twenty three languages reflecting the linguistic diversity of its individual members, an enormously expensive and cumbersome commitment that many critics question.

3 The one systematic exception is if you are already decoding something else.

4 As I wrote these lines in 2010, NPR radio featured a program on an initiave in Pakistan to teach literacy to women with no access to schooling, through text-messaging on cell phones (Sikka, 2010).

5 In Pushkin's poem, St. Petersburg appears as the golden gateway for everything from abroad that will make Russia modern. Not without irony, Seth transposes the setting to San Francisco's Golden Gate which, facing Asia, is the entry point for whatever will come after western modernity.

6 In a *New York Times* review, Gore Vidal famously called *The Golden Gate* "the great California novel."

7 In fact, "world" as a social ideal implying global solidarity and connection may have originated in the arts, as a counter to the polarizing economic programs of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The terms "world music" and "world cinema" caught on in the 1980s and specifically referred to corpuses that sought to cross the first world/third world, rich/poor divide. Paul Simon's album *Graceland* (1986) and the Lionel Ritchie/Michael Jackson classic "We are the world" (1985) marked the shift in the United States.

8 The "boom" in Latin American literature in the 1960s and 70s was a watershed in creating this transnational public.

9 Bryce Echeñique's *Amigdalitis de Tarzán* (1999) is a transnational love story that takes place in Paris, El Salvador and various other locations, while Vargas Llosa's acclaimed *La fiesta del chivo* (2000) studies the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. Around the same time Mexican writer Jorge Volpi published *En busca de Klingsor* (1999),

set in Germany, and one of the first Mexican novels that makes no reference to Mexico (is it still, then, one may ask, a *Mexican* novel?).

10 I am grateful to Naima Beckles for bringing this novel to my attention, and to my hands.

11 Though Pashto and Dari are the main languages of Afghanistan, Hosseini was a member of a large Farsi speaking minority based in Kabul.

12 On language, Adichie said in an interview, "What is worrisome is not that we have all learned to think in English, but that our education devalues our culture, that we are not taught to write Igbo and that middle-class parents don't much care that their children do not speak their native languages or have a sense of their history" (Adichie, 2006b).

13 The setting is the same as for Vikram Seth's verse novel, *The Golden Gate*, whose hopeful

possibilities Dubus' character ironizes over and over.

14 English's own history of imperial invasion and occupation by Norman French is at play here, in the unique dual lexicon of Anglo-Saxon and Latinate words.

15 In the US, M.C. Solaar is known through works in which he is simultaneously accompanied by the rapper Guru, speaking in English. I thank Sam Rosaldo and Manuel Rosaldo for this and many other details on hip-hop.

16 As I wrote this essay word arrived that Ukamau y Ke's leader, Abraham Bojorquez, had been killed by a bus in El Alto.

17 For a history of multilingualism in cinema see Stam and Shohat (1985).

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19

Persian Incursions: The Transnational Dynamics of Persian Literature

Nasrin Rahimieh

Introduction

The most recent chapters in Iranian national history would not, at least at first glance, suggest openness to inter- or transcultural interactions. The hostility between Iran and the United States, and other Western governments, dating back to the 1979 revolution and the hostage crisis, have contributed to the representation of an isolationist Iran facing a globalized world. But the political ethos pervading the image of Iran distorts a rich and complex cultural history that is anything but insular, even in the post-revolutionary period. Unearthing this literary and cultural history could provide the means for engaging Iranian cultural archives as alternative sites for communication and translation across the political barriers.

Comparative Literature serves as a particularly apt arena for the reconsideration of Iranian literary and cultural phenomena in a global context. A reconceptualization of Persian literary history from the vantage point of Comparative Literature can offer a different history of the apparent political, religious, and cultural impasse defining contemporary Iran's relations to other nations. What I propose is not a comprehensive retelling of Persian literary history but rather snapshots of border incursions, translations, and transcultural encounters and clashes amidst attempts at safeguarding the nation from external influences. Concealed behind Iran's apparent anxiety about maintaining religious, linguistic, political, and cultural autonomy are countless fascinating examples of excursions outside the parameters of bounded linguistic and cultural identity and creative and transformative travels and return journeys. Reading Persian literature through such instances of border crossing as well as tropes of travel and

translation takes us away from the limits of national literature as well as the concept of unidirectional influence or borrowing.[1]

The comparative analysis I propose is informed by Edward W. Said's notion of contrapuntal reading:

> this global, contrapuntal analysis should be modeled not (as earlier notions of comparative literature were) on symphony but rather on an atonal ensemble; we must take into account all sorts of spatial or geographical and rhetorical practices – inflections, limits, constraints, intrusions, inclusions, prohibitions – all of them tending to elucidate a complex and uneven topography. (Said, 1993: p. 318)

Because this comparative approach is attuned to resistances and discontinuities it does not insist on finding parallels and symmetries only.

A good point of entry for both the discussion of world literature and its intersections with Persian literature is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's declaration on January 31, 1827 to Eckermann:

> I am more and more convinced […] that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men […] we Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit, when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us. I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach. (Goethe, 1951: pp. 165–66)

Goethe's extensive readings in literatures of the world, particularly in Chinese literature, form the backdrop of his pronouncement, as do his concerns with claims about the uniqueness of German literature. His pronouncement is steeped in his awareness of older and other literary traditions beyond the ken of most Europeans of the time. Goethe's own travels in literature were instrumental in shaping his views on world literature. To cite François Jost, "[i]t is by no means a simple coincidence that Goethe was the one who coined the word Weltliteratur" (Jost, 1974: p. 14). Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan* (*West-Eastern Divan* published in 1819) and *Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahres und Tageszeiten* (*Chinese-German Hours and Seasons* published in 1830) are examples of his conviction that the knowledge and study of other literatures can inspire new forms of literary creativity and advance critical perspectives otherwise not within the reach of a critic confined to the knowledge of one nation's literature.

In Goethe's case one of the poets whose work propelled him outside the borders of his imagination was the fourteenth-century Iranian poet known by his pen name Hafiz.[2] Goethe's knowledge of Hafiz's poetry was mediated through German translations. His encounter with Hafiz across barriers of time, language, religion, and cultural history was also facilitated by a need for a type of mobility that had been foreclosed because of war. It is well worth restating that the composition of poems that would later become the *Divan*, coincided with a journey that reunited Goethe

with aspects of his past.[3] As Katharina Mommsen points out: "In July [1814] Goethe set out for the lands of his youth which he had not seen for seventeen years because of the wars" (Goethe, 1998: p. XII). The concepts of journey, pilgrimage, and flight are central to Goethe's collection. The opening poem of the *Divan*, entitled *Hegire*, is an allusion to the prophet Mohammad's migration from Mecca to Medina and the moment that marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Likening his own poetic journey eastward to a migration in search of a more hospitable site for the propagation of a new faith, Goethe invokes the Napoleonic Wars that incite his own search for a climate of peace:

> North and South and West are quaking,
> Thrones are cracking, empires shaking:
> You must flee; the East will right you,
> Patriarchs' pure air will delight you;
> There in loving, drinking, singing
> Youth from Chiser's well is springing.[4]
>
> (Goethe, 1998 [1814–1819]: p. 5)

The Orientalist vision of a timeless and unchanging East notwithstanding, Goethe's invocation underlines the upheavals that had swept Europe and the reactions they had produced in him. His flight to the Persia of his imagination inspired him to explore how a poet in a remote time and place had coped with destruction and war. We learn from Goethe's "Notes and Essays to improve understanding of the West-Eastern Divan," (Goethe, 1974 [1814–1819]: pp. 125–290) that his knowledge of Persian poetry and history, while mediated through translations, was extensive enough to give him an appreciation of the devastating effects of a succession of wars that coincided with Hafiz's own lifetime. Hafiz served as a model for a poetic meeting ground where new creations could emerge in spite of and as a result of conflict.

Goethe's attempt to understand and emulate Hafiz is naturally inflected by his limited knowledge of Persian as well as the received knowledge about the Orient available in German at that time. It is not surprising to find Orientalist topoi both in his poems and notes on the *Divan*. The verses that serve as the epigram to the notes accompanying Goethe's *Divan* lay bare a desire to know and to cross over into the realm of the other:

> If poetry you want to understand,
> you must go to poetry's land.
> If a poet you want to understand,
> you must go to that poet's land.
>
> (Goethe, 1974: p. 125)[5]

The word *Land* in German nicely captures both the physical and the virtual world embodied in a poet and his work. That Goethe could not traverse the temporal and geographical distances separating him from Hafiz is evident in his conjectures about Hafiz and his creation of a collection of poems which could not be viewed as either

Eastern or Western, but would occupy a liminal and potentially transformative space. Goethe's encounter with Classical Persian poetry was but one catalyst to his appreciation of the limits of national boundaries in literary production and criticism. In this sense Goethe's readings in Persian literature and history and the collection of poems they inspired were an act of translation, as described by Emily Apter: "an act of love, and […] an act of disruption" which becomes the:

> Means of repositioning the subject in the world and in history; a means of rendering self-knowledge foreign to itself; a way of denaturalizing citizens, taking them out of the comfort zone of national space, daily ritual, and pre-given domestic arrangements. (Apter, 2006: p. 6)

This is the kind of self-repositioning we witness in Goethe's conversation with Eckermann and his embrace of the concept of world literature.

As they did for Goethe, real and metaphorical journeys also brought Iranians face to face with poets, writers, and intellectuals from other regions of the globe and instigated similar forms of self-reflexivity and exploration. In the pre-modern era, we find poetic migrations necessitated at least in part by political turmoil that facilitated Persian poetry's trans-regional reach.

One of the most fascinating examples of such migration is the thirteenth-century poet Jalal al-Din Rumi, whose name has entered contemporary North American culture through English adaptations of Coleman Barks among many others. This recent pattern of translations and adaptations, which I will not take up in this analysis, is true to the ethos of Rumi's own life and work. A cursory review of Rumi's life reveals the centrality of migration to his life and art.

He was born in 1207 in the city of Balkh, now part of modern Afghanistan, and fleeing the Mongols he traveled with his family across Persia, Iraq, Arabia and Syria, finally settling in Konya, the capital of the Turkish Seljuk Empire. He spent the remainder of his life in Konya and it is there that he achieved his fame in poetry. Given Rumi's trajectory, it is not surprising that he:

> has been claimed by several countries and cultures – Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, the Arabs, and the Muslim communities of the Soviet Union – on the grounds of genealogy, birth place, language, cultural orientations, adopted country, burial place, or territory of impact […]Yet a close scrutiny of biographical and other historical documents support few of these claims in any convincing way. The internal references found in his work show that Rumi wanted no "national" identification of "citizenship" in terms of our modern concepts and definitions. (Halman, 1998: p. 213)

Setting aside the anachronism of fitting Rumi into concepts devoid of currency in the thirteenth century, the effort to claim Rumi for any particular national literature speaks to a failure to seize on the movements, albeit rooted in devastation and war, which placed him at the crossroads of many languages and cultures. Rumi provides one of the most compelling reasons for the need to study pre-modern Persian literature

from a comparative perspective. The points of comparison, however, would not be European languages and literatures, but rather the languages, literatures, and cultures of West Asia in the early modern period. Unfortunately this type of complex literary and cultural history frequently falls prey to modern concepts of nationhood and Western models of literary periodization.

The periodization adopted in Persian literary historiography offers up a telling example in its conceptualization of the literature of the Safavid era (1501–1722) which has been viewed frequently as lacking originality and distinction.[6] This view is tenable only if literary production of the Safavid period is confined to territorial geography and poetry written in Persian in Muslim India is discounted. To appreciate Persian poetry of this period, we must adopt a view akin to Goethe's, and see patterns of migration across borders:

> From the geographical point of view, this literature was produced in a vast stretch of land extending from Turkey to Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. In Muslim India the language of poetry was chiefly, and in the north almost exclusively, Persian. In the Turkic-speaking countries, both Turkic (namely, Turkish, Turki, and Chagatay) and Persian poetry were written, but, except for folk poetry, they were both modeled on poetry emanating from Persia. (Yarshater, 1988: pp. 249–50)

In this historical and cultural context, it is necessary to follow the movements that made the Muslim courts of India the center of Persian poetic production. What is commonly referred to as the "Indian Style" in Persian poetry came about because "India became the Mecca of poets and artists" who were richly rewarded for their work:

> Their generosity reached not only the poets attached to their courts, but also many more, who, having heard of their patronage, sent them poems from various parts of India, Persian, and Transoxania. (Yarshater, 1988: p. 251)

The poetic migrations of this era capture an ethos that vanished under European colonial rule. When under British rule Persian ceased to be the official language of India, there began a new phase of history and a conceptualization of the history of the languages, literatures, and cultures of the region that set them against and found them inferior to European models of literary development. This process is part and parcel of a particular intersection of nationalist and Orientalist discourses in modern Iranian history. The historian Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi has traced the emergence of this double movement between reterritorialization and deterritorizaltion in modern Iranian historiography, and his findings are crucial for a re-examination of modern Persian literary history (see Deleuze and Guttari, 1986).

Tavakoli-Targhi points out that the historiography of modern Iran has been dominated by the assumption that the Persian translation of Descartes in the 1860s is the "beginning of a new age of rationality and modernity," and following an Orientalist logic "constitutes the period prior to its own arrival as a time of decay, backwardness,

and despotism" (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001: p. 8). He also charts a "dialogic interaction with India, Europe, and the Arab-Islamic culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001: p. 135) and the creation of a

> historical vista [which] sought to dissociate Iran from Islam and to contrive a counter-Arab Iranian identity. While forgetting the Arabs and purging Persian of Arabic terms, the architects of modern Iranian nationalism sought to invent cultural and linguistic affinities between Iran and Europe. (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001: p. 143)

The move between invented and forgotten histories has deeply affected the conceptualizations of Iranian history, literature, and culture.

Histories of modern Persian literature frequently speak of significant ruptures with the past and clear demarcations between the classical and the modern era. In turn, this departure from the past has been frequently celebrated as a sign of the nation's belated arrival into modernity. For example, Jan Rypka's discussion of Persian literature of the twentieth century opens with the assertion that modern Persian literature owes its inception to a shift from tradition to modernity. More importantly, Rypka links modernity to "knowledge of European languages and literatures, western education, with its opening up of new possibilities in technology, natural science, and the social sciences" (Rypka, 1968: p. 362). This historical framing of modern Persian literature is amply reflected in the works of the writers of the era. One of the most important figures of modern Persian prose, Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, echoes this sentiment in the preface to his collection of short stories, *Once upon a Time* (1922): "Today Iran is behind on the road of literature compared to most of the countries of the world" (Daragahi, 1984: p. 110). Jamalzadeh's verdict, read in light of the reputation he acquired as a transformative figure in modern Persian prose fiction, and his own unique turn to writing in Persian after he had left Iran to continue his education abroad highlight the sense of belatedness and urgent need for change that permeated a generation's view of literary production in Iran. The comparative perspective that Jamalzadeh adopted in his summation of the state of Persian literature was turned westward and his point of comparison was the European novel which he viewed as the optimal tool for attaining "literary democracy" (Daragahi, 1984: p. 110). Jamalzadeh's critique is particularly focused on the ornate style of Persian prose he deems elitist and inaccessible to the under-educated and the illiterate. He advocates the use of a more simplified Persian which could, he argues, facilitate the education of the working people who would otherwise not have the time and leisure to study but could well become readers of novels.

The position Jamalzadeh adopts *vis-à-vis* Persian literature is a function of his own extraterritoriality. His fascination with the state of Persian literature is rooted in his journey outside Iran. If he is anxious to introduce tenets of European modernity into Persian literary practice, he is equally worried about the loss of "tradition," particularly in the later stages of his career. In the 1955 preface to his memories of growing up in Iran, Jamalzadeh writes somewhat defensively:

> It ought not be forgotten that attachment to old and indigenous manners and customs, which westerners call "tradition" is, if not among the requisites of civilization, at least counted among its prominent marks. During the long years which this author has lived in Europe, he has ever been a witness to the extent of Europeans' attachment to their customs, manners, and traditions […] They plant love and affection for things which are mementos of their fathers and grandfathers – and which so often provoke laughter, derision, and scorn from many of us Iranians – in the fields of the hearts and minds of their children. (Jamalzadeh, 1983: pp. 6–7)

The thirty years that separate this passage from Jamalzadeh's assessment of the edifying potential of the novel for the Iranian population have brought out the concern about loss of "authenticity" which continues to rival the concern about Iran's need to catch up to the European nations. As we will see, the movement between these two centers of gravity is central to the study of modern Iranian literary and cultural history. In this vexed polarity we see the extent to which modern Iranian history and culture have been shaped by discourses of Orientalism and counter-discourses of authenticity. The shuttling between these poles can be seen as leading to the "formation of schizophrenic social subjects […] conscious of their belonging to two diverse and often antagonistic times and cultural heritages" (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001: p. 95). But the passage between the opposed and distinct concepts of history and identity has demanded becoming adept at translation, be it of the self, or of the nation. The process of constructing and positing an imagined Iran, alternatively embraced or contested, necessitated productive engagements with what was assumed to be native to Iran or was worthy of being transplanted on Iranian soil. It is in this "contact zone" between the self and the other that we encounter innovative translations and adaptations of both the native and the foreign (see Pratt, 1992: pp. 6–7).

It is not by chance that translation has played a remarkable role in Iran's modern literature. Historians of Persian literature are quick to mark the pivotal function of translation in the emergence of a new type of literary sensibility. For example, Hasan Kamshad attributes the revival of prose writing on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911 to the appearance of two books: A travelogue entitled *Siyahat nama-i Ibrahim Beg* (The Travel Diary of Ibrahim Beg) and the Persian translation of James Morier's novel, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*. The former he describes as the "first attempt to write a Persian novel on the European model" and the latter as a "loose rendering" of the English novel which stands out as "one of the most successful experiments in the new trend of prose writing" (Kamshad, 1996: pp. 24, 26–7). It is worth noting that the translation of Morier's novel is not valued for its fidelity to the original, but rather for the way it helped transform the nature of written Persian. The language of modern Persian prose writing emerged as a result of both journeys to Europe and attempts to introduce European literatures into Persian. But the process that led to the emergence of this new prose was far from static and exempt from the type of anxiety about loss of tradition we witness in Jamalzadeh's preface to his memoirs. Not surprisingly we find in Jamalzadeh's own works manifestations of concerns about the limits of interference with Persian.

In his short story, "Persian is Sugar," Jamalzadeh depicts the dilemma of an uneducated native of Iran, thus a person more at ease with colloquial or spoken Persian, who ends up in a prison cell with three fellow countrymen. He finds communication with two of them impossible. One of his cellmates, returning from Europe, speaks a Persian so interlaced with French words as to be incomprehensible. Another fellow prisoner, a man of the cloth, addresses him in an Arabized Persian he fails to understand. The third cellmate, who stands in for the voice of moderation, speaks a more accessible Persian and "saves" the ordinary man from panic and confusion. He is also the narrator and embodies a modern Iran that is not fearful of looking to the West and yet judicious enough not to forsake his ties to his own language and culture. We encounter this narrator "[a]fter five years of knocking about Europe and suffering" (Jamalzadeh, 1985: p. 31). Interestingly the story takes place at the traveler's point of entry, the port town of Enzeli on the Caspian Sea. This border town, a site of crossings, is a liminal space where a religious and a modernized Iranian cross paths with the narrator and the disoriented local. In this transitory space Iranian identity manifests itself as pliable and open to negotiation. Yet the difficult and jarring communication between the four Iranians occupying the same cell emphasizes the malaise accompanying the juxtaposition of four subjects. Jamalzadeh's satirical representation of modern Iranians as lost between the poles of tradition and modernity gestures at once to the changes that were sweeping the country as a result of encounters with the West and captures an underlying apprehension about preserving elements of Iranian tradition, including its Muslim identity. Living outside the borders of the country made Jamalzadeh an avid collector of Persian colloquialisms, proverbs, and sayings. His zeal for preserving linguistic and cultural traditions he felt were being abandoned in favor of a modern identity is evident in his memoirs as well as his fiction. But not all his contemporaries or successors shared his vision and passion for preserving tradition.

The drive to reinvent Iran in a modern image, as mentioned by Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, drew both on European models and a mythic, pre-Islamic Iran, believed to have been free of foreign (read as Arab and Islamic) contamination. We see this tendency in another prominent Iranian literary figure Sadeq Hedayat, who, in contrast to Jamalzadeh, viewed many aspects of Iran's Islamic legacy with a jaundiced eye.

Bozorg Alavi, one of Hedayat's contemporaries, remembers the latter's extreme views of all that had accompanied the arrival of Islam in Iran:

> Hedayat would say (heatedly): Whatever the Arab has brought, whatever is of Arabic origin is defiled and corrupt. (Raffat, 1985: p. 63)[7]

Alavi also recalls that Hedayat would discuss European writers and share his knowledge with his peers.[8] Hedayat acted as a translator of European literature and urged writers like Alavi to also undertake translations of European literature into Persian. Hedayat's own translations of or essays on Iran's pre-Islamic legacy, pre-modern Persian, or of European literary texts, reveal how he continually read and interpreted

across time and place. For instance, his translation of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and his essay on Kafka appropriate what he believed to be akin to elements of Omar Khayyam's poetic vision (see Rahimieh, 1994). Hedayat's own creativity owes much to the contacts he animated between divergent moments in time, language, history, and tradition. And yet, ironically, he continued to adhere to a reductive history of Islam.

Hedayat's views on Arab culture and Islam reflect a wave of nationalism which coincided with the rise of fascism in Europe and the development of a political affinity between the ruling monarch of the time, Reza Shah Pahlavi, and Nazi Germany. The political alliances were, by some accounts, eased by the discovery of a shared "racial" legacy between Iran and Germany. Evidence to support this hypothesis was advanced by the German archeologist Ernst Herzfeld of ancient Iranian inscriptions that suggested that Iran corresponded to the ancient term, *Aryanam Khshathram*, the Empire of Aryans (Grigor, 2007: p. 562). In Reza Shah's nationalist and modernizing vision, this discovery warranted changing the country's name from Persia to Iran. Persia, the term used in non-Persian languages to refer to the country, did not evoke Iran's true heritage:

> After the country's name change, Reza Shah's foreign ministry declared, "Iran is the birthplace of Aryans, therefore we take advantage of this name," adding, the "world's great powers esteem the Aryan race; this only points to the greatness of the race and civilization of ancient Iran." The Irano-German tie culminated with a state visit of Nazi Foreign minister Dr. Schacht to Tehran, where he informed the reformists that Hitler has excluded Iranians from the provisions of the Nuremberg race law, since Persians were now categorized as pure Aryans. (Grigor, 2007: p. 571)

The formalization of this highly problematic racial identity was meant to eradicate any form of affiliation with Islam and instead produce a secular and modern nation equal to others in Europe. Persian language and literature bear countless traces of the racist ideology underpinning the formation of a modern Iranian identity. But even this iteration of nationalism cannot be read in isolation from other engagements with European ideas that undermined this construction of a nationalist discourse devoid of references to Islam.

The generation of writers that followed Jamalzadeh, Alavi, and Hedayat, was equally invested and interested in translation. Drawing on the anti-colonial movements of their time, writers and thinkers like Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati saw a different arena for asserting Iranian identity. In his seminal and controversial treatise, *Gharbzadegi*, Al-e Ahmad, a writer, essayist, and activist, attributed Iran's problems to its enslavement by the West:

> I speak of being afflicted with "westitis" the way I would speak of being afflicted with cholera […] We are dealing with a sickness, disease imported from abroad, and developed in an environment receptive to it. (Al-e Ahmad, 1982: p. 3)

Al-e Ahmad's analysis takes aim at the institutions of Orientalism and imperialism and their erosion of Iran's Islamic legacy. His invocation of an "authentic" Iran owes much to his "readings of European literature and critical intellectuals such as Camus, Ionesco, Sartre, Junger, Heideggar, Kafka, Beckett, and their critiques of Western nihilism" (Mirsepassi, 2000: p. 101). Remarkably some of the same European writers who served to buttress Hedayat's conception of a non-Islamic Iran provided the impetus for Al-e Ahmad's critique – itself "a dialogic mode of reconciling local cultures with modernity, rather than a stubborn determination to avoid modernity at all costs" (Mirsepassi, 2000: p. 96). Similar dynamics affected Ali Shariati, who followed in Al-e Ahmad's footsteps and expanded on his work.

Shariati's education in France had brought him face to face with some of the most prominent architects of decolonization. But, as his writings demonstrate, he did not see himself as a mere follower of their doctrine. Instead he identifies in the currents of European thought possible points of dialogue with Iranian trends. In the following passage, he shows himself engaged in an exchange with Fanon and successful in persuading him of the applicability of his thought to the particularities of his native Iran:

> Frantz Fanon, whom I knew personally and whose books I have translated into Persian, was pessimistic about the positive contribution of religion to social movement. He had, in fact, an anti-religious attitude until I convinced him that in some societies where religion plays an important role in the culture, religion can, through its resources and psychological effects, help the enlightened person to lead his society toward the same destination toward which Fanon was taking his own through non-religious means. I added further that Fanon's anti-religious feeling stemmed from the unique religious experience of Europe in the Middle Ages and the ensuing freedom of European society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Shariati, 1986: p. 19)

That in the construction of his argument Shariati could draw on Western and Shi'ite Iranian discourses highlights the extent to which he occupied a position at the crossroads of intellectual traditions (see Mirsepassi).[9] Shariati's exchange with Fanon is a long way away from Goethe's encounter with Hafiz, but in his attempt to persuade Fanon of the merit of his argument he too migrates out of his "comfort zone" to make Fanon's ideas accord with his own and to bring something of Fanon into his native Iranian context. This experience of translation, like others in modern Iranian history, highlights the amalgam that emerged in the various zones of contact, whether the Iranian literati saw themselves as leaning toward nativism or the wholehearted embrace of Western ideas (see Boroujerdi, 1996). The process they delineate is itself transformative, dynamically shaping and reshaping concepts of tradition and modernity. For instance, what Shariati created as a result of his translations and contacts was a uniquely modern approach to doctrines of Shi'ism. Under the banner of returning to tradition, intellectuals like Shariati and Al-e Ahmad deftly rearticulated the very conception of tradition. Their view of what constituted native Iranian tradition

diverged radically from their predecessors' and gained currency in the dominant discourses of identity in the nineteen sixties and seventies. The transformations they wrought might be polar opposites of those Hedayat brought to the Iranian cultural arena, but the very existence of these contrasting ideas of Iranian cultural legacy foregrounds vexed and contradictory conceptualizations of Iran's history and culture. The clashes and the seemingly impossible syntheses that are part and parcel of recent Iranian history have been necessary for deeper questionings of myths of collective and national identity. We find resonances of such critical interrogations in both the engagements with questions of gender and minority – issues pushed to the periphery of both in the articulation of the modern national subject and in the creation of an Islamic Republic – in contemporary Persian literature.

A particularly rich site for the examination of the intersection of gender and minority representation in contemporary Persian literature is to be found in the works of the award-winning Armenian-Iranian writer, Zoya Pirzad, who belongs to the generation of post-revolutionary writers.[10] She has become one of Iran's most popular writers and her novels and short stories are widely read in and outside Iran. Equally significantly Pirzad, like many of her predecessors, is also a literary translator. Most of her protagonists are women, apparently caught up in insignificant details of daily life. They contend with concerns about family, raising children, or negotiating divorces and single parenthood. If gender relations figure prominently in Pirzad's works, so does Armenian-Iranian life. Her incorporation of Armenian characters goes beyond acknowledging the presence of Armenians in Iran. They become at once part of the currents of modern Iranian history and sources of anxiety about how to maintain demarcations between the self and other.

In Pirzad's first novel, *I will Turn off the Lights,* a first-person female protagonist, Clarisse, narrates the life of an Armenian-Iranian family living in an oil company compound in the city of Abadan, in southern Iran, in the pre-revolutionary era. On the surface, this family's concerns and preoccupations are no different from their other compatriots'. While Clarisse's life revolves around her chores and taking care of her twin daughters, teenage son, and husband, like other Iranians of his class and generation, her husband, Artoush, takes part in leftist anti-government activities. All along Artoush and Clarisse's lives appear to stay within the realm of the everyday chores and concerns. Each night, just before Artoush leaves for bed, he asks Clarisse: "Will you turn off the lights?" to which she responds: "Yes, I will turn off the lights," giving their days the semblance of a well-worn routine. And yet beneath this monotony are signs of the radical differences that separate this family from other Iranians. Although the story of this family's life is narrated in Persian, the experiences that make up the novel are translated from Armenian, the primary mode of communication between the family members. Beyond language, the protagonist has an internalized sense of profound displacement:

> I didn't know where to begin. I looked at the map of Iran hanging on the wall above the bed. I circled a lake with my glance, came close to read its name, and learn that it

is called Bakhtegan. I remembered my rendezvous with Mrs. Nurelahi and thought why without having seen them I know the location of all cities on the map of Armenia but don't know the names of lakes in Iran.[11] (Pirzad, 2001: p. 143)

This rumination on the part of the narrator speaks to her sense of belonging to another national map, although this map itself attests to multiple crossings. Territorial and linguistic displacements remind Clarisse that she has also distanced herself from events that have been taking place in Iran. When her husband's secretary, Mrs. Nurelahi tells her about Iranian women's mobilization for equal rights, Clarisse thinks to herself:

> I didn't know that the parliamentary elections were nearing, and I had heard something about women's right to vote. I thought, like all Armenians, I act as if I don't live in this country. I was embarrassed. (Pirzad, 2001: p. 110)

Clarisse also learns of Mrs. Nurelahi's participation in the commemoration of the Armenian massacre. She wonders what motivates a Muslim Iranian to take part in a ceremony conducted entirely in Armenian. Clarisse's puzzlement stems from her position as minority whose place in the Iranian national imagination has not given her reason to believe that non-Armenians would or could seek them out and would want to learn about their history. But even this representation of Armenian identity is troubled by inner discontinuities and incursions that manifest themselves at the level of the protagonist's name, a reminder of transferences and translations between Armenian and Western European languages. If Mrs. Nurelahi does not understand the speeches delivered at the commemoration ceremony, Clarisse notes the differences separating her Armenian from the variety spoken by an elderly Armenian from Van, Turkey who delivers a speech at the ceremony. These reminders of ruptures and differences undercut the possibility of reading either the Armenian or the Muslim Iranian identities as static and or monolithic.

The complex relationships between the Muslim and the Armenian-Iranian outlined in Pirzad's first novel are more fully filled out in her three interconnected stories entitled *One Day before Easter*. The three stories in this collection, "Sour Cherry Pits," "Sea Shells," and "White Violets" chart the life history of an Armenian man, Edmond, from childhood on the shores of the Caspian Sea to adulthood and middle age in Tehran.

Edmond's childhood is marked by his close friendship with Tahereh, a Muslim schoolmate, who is the daughter of the Armenian school's custodian. Edmond's family home overlooks the Armenian school and the church housed in its yard, and Tahereh and her family live on the first floor of the school building. Because Tahereh's parents look after the school, the school board is persuaded by Edmond's father to enroll Tahereh. He argues that: "He has been a custodian for many years. It will not please God to have his daughter go to a school at the other end of town because she is not Armenian" (Pirzad, 2006: p. 243). Tahereh proves to be a remarkable student and outperforms her Armenian classmates even in their own language:

I started a sentence many times and crossed it out. The opening sentence was always difficult for me. I wished Tahereh were there to help me. Tahereh's Armenian composition, like all other subjects, was better than everyone's in the class. There was not a single student in the school who had not been chided by an adult about Tahereh's performance. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? The daughter of the Muslim custodian speaks your mother tongue better than you!" I thought how did Tahereh manage to write such compositions? Our maternal home was not hers. (Pirzad, 2006: pp. 238–39)

Tahereh is not only adept at learning Armenian; she attends church with her schoolmates and is equally devoted to learning the prayers. But her embrace of Armenian language, religion, and culture does not stop her from saying her prayers at home. When Edmond asks her how she performs her Muslim prayers while wearing a cross she has grown accustomed to having around her neck, she responds matter-of-factly that she replaces the cross with an Allah during her Muslim prayers. What Edmond learns from his Muslim friend, Tahereh, is the constructed nature of an Iranian school child's identity along vectors of ethnicity, language, and religion. She represents the possibility of thinking outside the normative positions of minority and majority. The behaviors and practices she has learned as a child growing up Muslim in an Armenian school do not limit her to choosing one or another set of beliefs. She learns to cross back and forth between embodying Muslim and Armenian identities.

The apparent ease with which Tahereh negotiates a path between her Muslim family and the Armenian community in which she has been raised is not replicated on a broader social plane. As the story reveals, a forbidden relationship of a different kind has developed between the unmarried Armenian principal of the school and Tahereh's mother. The discovery of this relationship reveals a deep anxiety on the part of the Armenians and Muslims about crossing the religious and ethnic divide. In fact, the thread running through the three short stories in this collection is the specter of relationship or marriage between an Armenian and a Muslim. In the second and third stories, Edmond's own daughter falls in love with a Muslim man at the university and finds her family members resistant to accepting their relationship. In the third and final story, Edmond learns that the single Armenian woman who works alongside him as the vice principal of the school he runs had to leave her hometown and family because of her love for a Muslim man. Her self-imposed isolation and exile stand as counter examples to Tahereh's mobility. Ironically the lessons of diversity the young children learn in the school are undermined at the level of social mores. They learn a harsh lesson about the rigid boundaries between the self and the other and the even more troubling lesson that this "otherness" is within the home and the nation.

The impossible marriage of Muslims and Armenians depicted in *One Day before Easter*, like the jarring communication between the Muslim and Armenian women in *I will Turn off the Lights*, illustrates a turning point in modern Persian literature. The

search for and difficult engagement with the other that marks modern Persian litera-
ture has enabled a different type of journey within and the discovery of the other in
the space of the nation, rather than outside its borders. If the tropes of migration,
mobility, and translation have always been central to Persian literary history, they
have exerted special influence in the more recent chapters of that history. At the very
moment when Iran's national identity is deliberately and exclusively associated with
Islam, one of the most celebrated and well read national writers is an Armenian woman
who depicts the nation's blindness to its own internal diversities, thereby raising
probing questions about this most recent iteration of Iranian identity.

Reading Persian literature in the context of the complex movements across the
globe reveals the asymmetries, contradictions, and paradoxes that underwrite many
chapters of its history. The history that emerges demonstrates how incursions and
multidirectional movements are the cornerstone of Persian literary heritage.

Notes

1 I am indebted to Philip Grant, a PhD candi-
date in Anthropology at the University of
California, Irvine, for his insights into the
multifarious ways in which translation has
affected modern Iranian cultural and intel-
lectual discourses.

2 The word "Hafiz" means keeper and refers to
the poet having memorized the Koran by
heart, thus becoming "keeper" of the knowl-
edge revealed in it.

3 The word "Divan" has many connotations,
but in relation to poetry it means a collection
of poetic works.

4 Whaley's English translation is a verse rendi-
tion that while capturing the spirit of the
stanza introduces some changes worth noting.
For instance, in the German original, the
third line the command to flee to the East is
not as evident:

> Nord und West und Süd zersplittern
> Throne besrsten, Reiche zittern
> Flüchte du, im reinen Osten
> Pariarchenluft zu kosten,
> Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen,
> Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen.
> (Goethe, 1974: p. 4)

5 This English translation is by George Lang.
The original German reads:

> Wer das Dichten will verstehen
> Muß ins Land der Dichtung gehen;
> Wer den Dichter will verstehen
> Muß ins Dichters Lande gehen.
> (Goethe, 1998: p. 27)

6 More recent scholarship has pursued the line
of inquiry opened up by Ehsan Yarshater and
challenged the narrow definitions of literary
production of the Safavid era. Paul Losensky's
"Poetics and Eros in Early Modern Persia"
and Colin Mitchell's *The Practice of Politics in
Safavid Iran* offer invaluable new insights into
Safavid poetry and prose.

7 Alavi himself is a fascinating figure who
received some of his education in Europe.
Upon his return to Iran he became part of a
literary circle to which other influential
writers belonged. Along with fifty-two others
he was imprisoned for being a communist,
although Alavi saw himself as a mere sympa-
thizer and participant in a reading and dis-
cussion group. Upon his release from prison,
Alavi departed for East Germany and spent
the remainder of his life in exile.

8 Bozorg Alavi reports: "I remember the dis-
cussions we had! Hedayat would talk about
Stefan Zweig, and I would remark that I had
read him. Then I, in turn, would talk about
Thomas Mann. And then Hedayat would
respond by going into – what's the title now?

– *Die vezauberte Seele*! *L'Ame enchantée* (The Soul Enchanted). The story by Romain Rolland. And Hedayat would say: What, you've read that as well? And then both of us would be ecstatic" (Raffat, 1985: p. 64).

9   I am indebted to Mohammad Rafi, a young scholar, who will be pursuing his doctoral studies in German philosophy with a special focus on how it is has been taken up on modern Iranian intellectual movements. He has generously shared the fruit of his research

with me and educated me in the transfer and transmutations of German philosophy into modern Iran.

10   My reading of Zoya Pirzad and other contemporary Iranian women writers has benefited immensely from discussion and dialogue with Sharareh Frouzesh Bennett, a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at University of California, Irvine.

11   The English translations of all citations from Pirzad's works are my own.

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Rudimentariness as Home

Mireille Rosello

Rudimentariness is the keyword in this chapter. And I am fully aware that the word connotes ignorance, illiteracy, incompetence or incomprehension. The semantic field thus delineated probably evokes discomfort or even distress rather than intellectual and political or ethical pleasure. Why would I want to choose such a concept as a comparative theoretical engine?

My focus on rudimentariness is not meant as ironic or provocative. In the past ten years, the questions asked by the practitioners of the discipline of comparative literature have encouraged me to rethink what it means to encounter and then to accept certain forms of ignorance as productive instances of relationality. By relationality, I mean a type of thinking or practice that does not start from the objects that an "I" wants to compare but instead lets the "I" and what the "I" understands as comparable objects to gradually emerge.[1] I am indebted to the theorists who have struggled with the critique of identity politics even if their cultural or political agenda was apparently best served by categories such as women, lesbians, working-class workers or North and South (Africa, India, or Europe).[2] Those theories help us remember that the comparison between more than one national literature is a practice that depends on our provisional or strategic willingness to recognize that something called national literature is an intelligible object.

I doubt that there was ever a good old time when all comparatists were happy with the idea that each nation has one literature, one language and that the practice of comparing was self-explanatory and obvious.[3] At the very least since the middle of the 1990s, the idea that comparative literature has benefited from its self-reflexivity and regular examination of its values and practices or that the history of the discipline is one "permanent crisis" have become plausible (Saussy, 2006).[4] Just as the nation

and what is national about a language or literature start receding into infinite internal differences as soon as we try to define them accurately, similarly, "comparative literature" as a discipline turns into a cliché or an invented enemy if anyone attempts to police its contours too exactly.

The parameters of my own thinking through rudimentariness are both enabled and limited by the parameters of our current cultural debates: time and space matter here, even if it is prudent to state what we mean by geography or history. Such conversations are differently relevant in "comparative literature" departments throughout the world. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, in what we still call the West, it would be absurd to ignore powerful historical trends. "Comparative literature" or at least some comparatists constantly become more aware of institutional blind spots and adjust to evolving local and global cultural conditions.[5] In the US, after emphasizing "multiculturalism," current studies on what comparative literature may be(come) have recently focused on the effects of "globalization" on comparative practices.[6] Such institutional changes reflect contemporary scholars' interests in issues that are crucial if I wish to understand how to practice rudimentariness. I should point out, however, that my attempt to think through rudimentariness is not intended as a contribution to the state of an academic discipline but rather as a reflection about what it could mean to suspend our judgment on what we compare and on who we are when we compare until the comparison has done its work.

Starting from such hypotheses might mean the death of the discipline (as we know it), but it may also give us an insight on how it will survive itself, how it might eventually recognize itself as other, through practices rather than through departments or programs (Spivak, 2005). Emphasizing relationality is a way of remembering that comparing involves a theory of the self and of the other, and a theory of the comparable. Relationality suggests that we can neither treat categories as a given nor ignore them: nations, languages and cultures but also genres and types of discourse are as porous and intertwined as race, class and gender. Because such categories are themselves produced or at least made intelligible by the languages or cultures we seek to analyze, we still cannot claim to have found a vantage point that will free us from their limits after we have identified their social and historical constructedness.

Treating rudimentariness as a home would mean not trying to compare what we already know, or even not wishing to compare something that pre-exists the comparison. Such an engagement into a process of discovery would create the objects and the areas to which they supposedly belong: in other words, relationality does not so much mean that we will be crossing borders between area studies but that the borders in question will now be rethought as our assumptions are about more or less naturalized canons and territories.[7]

For border crossing, in the last decades, has crossed disciplines. Cultural anthropologists and comparatist historians know as well as literary critics that the position of the "observer," and of the "native informant," are fraught with political and theoretical problems.[8] Werner and Zimmerman remind us that the "I" of the comparatist is difficult to dissociate from the objects that he or she compares even if, "from the

standpoint of the basic scheme of the cognitive process, the comparative approach assumes a point of view external to the objects that are compared" (Werner and Zimmerman, 2006: p. 35). It is, after all, possible to live with or within such limits: the illusion that the comparatist's "externality" or "neutrality" is desirable or even possible can quickly become the alibi of a violent form of universalism which forgets that the other of universalism was always already inside but relegated to the margins of civilization, progress or reason. The native informant was always there, and foreclosed. The other risk is to displace mastery onto the supposedly authentic other whose culture is then fetishized and appropriated.

Yet, recognizing that "such a vantage point is impossible to attain in practice" or that the objects that we compare will never be seen from a "symmetrical view" does not help us figure out what else we can do, as comparatists (Werner and Zimmermann, 2006: p. 35). I accept to dwell in rudimentariness when I recognize instead that the "I" of the comparatist can only see (construct as intelligible and visible) objects which also contribute to creating that "I" as a recognizable cultural analyst. This enables me to constantly check that I do not exclude objects according to criteria that I have stopped taking for granted (popular culture versus high culture, genres that fall outside the Eurocentric list of novels, poetry, prose fiction).

Recognizable objects of study are what our culture renders perceptible to our imagination. A cognitive and ideological system precedes our ability to experience and identify them so that what we think of as our reality is reduced to what that regime enables us to recognize. In Jacques Rancière's words, our world is organized by "the distribution of the sensible:"

> I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it … A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and excluded … Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. (Rancière, 2004: pp. 12–13)

As comparatists, we may worry about unequal relationships between cultural productions, about Eurocentrism and about gendered subjects, but we may still not be aware of which objects cannot even be perceived because the distribution of our sensible (or the way in which we are distributed by the sensible) creates frames that we may not even be aware of. The objects have created us and our ability to see: some objects are forever foreclosed by our comparative practices.

At this point, and not knowing full well if it is or not the next step, I tend to look for what Michel de Certeau calls "oppositional tactics" (invisible and miniscule operations that do not require that we step out of a given system yet re-appropriate a level of creativity that the "ruling order" would rather we'd be blind to) (Certeau, 1984, p. xxii). What can be done in this historical context? In the humanities, scholars from

various disciplines have explored forms of academic writing that change the questions we ask ourselves, not before we start working, but as we work:

> Feminist anthropologists have maintained their long-term interest in questions of personality, knowledge, and the impact of these factors on ethnographic writing and the nature of anthropological knowledge. Some have pulled apart the difficult questions of insider and outsider, interrogating the notions that there can be true insiders researchers in anthropology (Abu-Lughod 1995; Altorki and el-Solh 1989; Lewin 1995; Narayan 1993). Others have used experimental narrative strategies to convey the complex intersection of ethnographer and informant (Behar 1993, 1996, Chin 1999, Frank 2000, Kondo 1990, Sing 1993). Other feminist scholars have engaged directly with questions of anthropological epistemology questioning the nature of data and the way in which ethnography makes its object (Jarsneiewics, 1002; Wolf, 1992). (Lewin, 2006: p. 25)

As well as adopting some of the practices advocated here, or rather as an attempt to figure out what such practices really mean for someone with a background in comparative literature, I propose to ask, not "who am I" when I compare X and Y? But, instead, "what becomes of me" and "what becomes an object" or "what becomes of them, of us" as I compare? In other words, rudimentariness here is conceptualized neither as an attribute of the self nor a characteristic of the other but as a form of comparative intelligence, a way of thinking.[9]

Doing so enables us to avoid or perhaps complicate the issue of who might be ontologically or culturally ignorant: is ignorance the attribute of the *infan*s (who does not speak a language yet?), of the migrant or diasporic subject (who does not speak my language and whose language I choose to ignore) or of the arrogant bourgeois jet-setters (who systematically impose their *globish* when they wish to communicate with the foreigner in his or her land)? Each of these figures could be a model for comparatists who interpret texts written in a language that they think they know, or think they don't know, or recognize as slightly opaque yet familiar. Perhaps it was once the (distressing) epistemological privilege of diasporic or socially disenfranchised subjects to be acutely aware that one need not cross a national border to encounter a different language. Today, that awareness is part of the comparatist's theoretical baggage, which does not mean that the comparatist is simply "like" a migrant or that the migrant is "like" a comparatist (and of course it is possible to be both).

Rudimentariness, conscious or not, can be the name of a positionality usually associated with relative power: the resident of a hegemonic culture, for example, a French critic of European origin, reads a book written by a Beur or a Caribbean novelist and fails to recognize "literature."[10] She is alienated by *verlan* (backslang) or the colloquial style and the genre. He may not be aware that he is implicitly comparing the text to what he has been taught to identify as literature within his culture. If the process of comparison is not made explicit, the comparatist who does not know he compares, will be working with rudimentariness without necessarily recognizing it as a critical tool. She may ignore her ignorance of the other and treat the object as rudimentary. The language used by Beur writers is treated as substandard within

French and the novel is deemed too sociological: the foreigner is always a barbarian who should assimilate but never will and will forever be in a state of rudimentariness; rudimentariness will then become his or her identity. If I read a Beur novel as literature (French literature) and wonder if it is "French enough," I recognize a difference that I did not anticipate, and that I fail, once having created, to recognize as the effect of my comparison: comparing the text I am reading to my implicit canon, I identify the space of a possible comparison which then leads me to construct a distinction to which I attach a negative value: the foreigner is rudimentary, not me. The moment when the reader becomes a comparatist is negated and turns into a judgment of the other's difference as undesirable rudimentariness.

On the other hand, if I embrace rudimentariness as what gives me the opportunity to identify a site of ignorance, a space opens up for a comparison between two objects (two languages, two cultures) that I used to think of as one. The previous unity now appears to have been an illusion and the new multiplicity does not stand for the new pluralized real (the new categories are the product of my provisional intersectional perspective, whether or not I treat the new construction as a temporal or geographical paradigm). Recognizing my own rudimentariness creates an "I" who constructed "French literature" as one (previously dominant) canon and who morphs into an observer capable of recognizing the value of his or her rudimentary knowledge of Creole or *verlan*. I see myself as involved in the process of learning a language. Not knowing a language is the specific area of cultural ignorance that I would like to discuss in the rest of this chapter as a productive site of comparison. In comparative literature, language is an issue, a site of struggle and irritation for students, teachers, administrators and theorists. The comparatist is expected to know about several areas and therefore several cultures and several languages. And if we do not know them yet, we are expected to learn them.[11]

But if we assume that areas, cultures and languages cannot be aligned or organized as self-contained objects, then knowledge of one given language may be less productive than the appreciation of one's (unknown) ignorance. The native speaker of a hegemonic European language is also a subject whose individual performance is constantly limited by and inscribed in a register, an accent, a more or less powerful geographical variant. Rudimentariness does not only manifest itself at the moment when a national, linguistic or cultural border is crossed.[12] Even the most dominant language is a result of historical creolization; each language is creolized in its own way; no native speaker can be identical to a native language; languages are often in competition or in the process of appearing and disappearing. Languages are not equal. And finally, a translation, or translation as a practice is also a language in the presence of which we can also be rudimentary.

At the same time, it is crucial to question the ways in which a traditional practice of "translation" pretends to solve the problem of language incompetence.[13] I take seriously Spivak's warning that it may be "discouraging," "impractical," or "laborious" to remember that "[t]here are a few hegemonic European languages and innumerable Southern Hemisphere languages" (Spivak, 2005: pp. 10–11), that there is a great risk

that "the languages of the cultures of origin are invoked at best as delexicalized and fun mother tongues" (8) and that the "kind of language training that would disclose the irreducible hybridity of all languages" (Spivak, 2005: pp. 8–9) may not be what is most common in traditional language acquisition units. The process of language learning always takes place in a relational context that may remain hidden and conceal the exacerbation of those power relationships that a "common language" is supposed to balance. It may be crucial to check that the other whose language we wish to learn does not use (from within his or her own culture) the language of a form of power we do not wish to be allied with. Otherwise, comparatists might find that they are in the position of the anthropologists who do not want to see that the village they are observing has already been changed by their very presence, or in that of the non-governmental organization representative who unthinkingly establishes a specific bi-lateral vector between two limited sections of the North and the South. As Spivak points out:

> Collaboration is generally possible only with the class, physically "based" in the global South, increasingly produced by globalization, that is sufficiently out of touch with the idiomaticity of the non-hegemonic languages. (Spivak, 2005: p. 10)

No matter how desirable it might be to read texts written by African intellectuals, it is prudent not to assume that they constitute or represent (the whole of) African philosophy.

How then, can we let examples of linguistic incompetence gradually emerge? The pre-existing categories that both enable me to look and frame my horizon are "films," "migration," and academic discourse. I have in mind, on the one hand, recent representations of the migrant who has just arrived in a country whose language he practically does not speak, and on the other hand, a completely different type of linguistic relationality: the encounter between the reader and a difficult theoretical text. In both cases, the moment of rudimentariness manifests itself through a proliferation of conversations that include the migrant and the national, the writer and the reader. All are involved in a community of speakers who do not share the same language. The theorist or the migrant become figures rather than specific subjects and no one in particular ever occupies one function for long. More important than the identity of the speaker (native or not, subaltern or not) is the network of relationalities that emerges in the presence of such situations. They involve the migrant and the native speaker, the reader and the writer, as well as the community of rudimentary communicators who may find that they can treat rudimentariness as a language if they accept to remain in that moment.

Beautiful People was written and directed by Yasmin Dizdar, originally from Bosnia and settled in Great Britain.[14] Set during the war in Bosnia, this dark comedy follows characters who are attached both to London and the ex-Yugoslavia. A journalist from the BBC is traumatized by what he witnessed in a war zone. Throughout the film, a Serb and a Croat attack each other, yelling insults in languages that no one around

them understands. They end up in a British hospital in the same room as a Welsh fire bomber. In that hospital, two of the other relationships between refugees and nationals slowly develop. A British doctor and a Bosnian couple must slowly find a way of talking to each other. At first, it is almost impossible for the woman to accept that she will have a child and just as impossible for the doctor to understand why she would want to "kill" the baby. Only after a long series of tentative, painful, interrupted and incomplete exchanges does the issue of rape slowly emerge from the chaos of traumatic memories. Each of these situations generates moments of misunderstandings, conflict and mistranslation but also of discoveries and learning. I propose to focus on the way in which rudimentariness functions between Pero (Edin Dzandzanovic), a Bosnian refugee and Portia (Charlotte Coleman), the nurse who will eventually marry him, both because they are in love and to free him from the fear of being deported.

I do not offer the film itself or what it represents as an example of rudimentariness. I suggest that watching *Beautiful People* may trigger a form of thinking that makes me focus on the productivity of rudimentariness. Once the dwelling-in-rudimentariness lens starts structuring my viewing of the film, then that frame highlights some aesthetic qualities and downplays others, privileges some representational techniques and leaves out other elements of the plot. In other words, the objects of comparison that emerge are no longer neatly aligned according to categories such as genre (filmic techniques), geo-political areas (Britain and the former Yugoslavia) or social groups (nationals and refugees). Focusing on the use of rudimentary language creates a scene of interpretation that is not representative but paradigmatic: the specificity of the historical situation is superimposed over other apparently less traumatic, less politically charged linguistic encounters.

In *Beautiful People*, the absence of a common language is a given that organizes the choice of aesthetic practices in a number of important scenes. Two episodes are particularly significant from that point of view. In the first one, we see Pero learning English, alone, in his tiny flat in a housing project teeming with refugees and undocumented immigrants. The second scene takes place at Portia's parents' house and is a version of the traditional "new partner meets the in-laws" topos. Whenever a moment of language acquisition is portrayed, the film represents the impossibility to isolate competence from performance, words from a specific social, political and cultural context, and the use of English from the interaction between the characters who imagine themselves as the native speakers who belong to the culture and those who are relegated to the status of ignorant foreigners.

In the first scene, Pero is alone, listening to tapes. If we focus on the fact that the character is structured by his linguistic rudimentariness, we highlight the difference between his activity and another scene of learning: the situation of a student learning a foreign language at school or at university. And such a comparative frame then underscores the specificity of his experience but also the assumptions that we have about what it means for us, comparatists (wherever we come from) to learn a language in order to study what we think of as a foreign literature or culture. Here, Pero is not

in a classroom, he does not read books, he does not have a teacher nor can he count on a community of learners. He is lying in his bathtub, listening to tapes, inviting us to reconfigure the borders between learning, languages, culture, private and public. Pero is at home, not at work. We may associate the bath with relaxation, privacy, even with the luxury of idleness and alone time. But the film obviously does not encourage us to celebrate the creativity of the poor migrant who has found a model that most undergraduate students would envy: no class, no schedule, no exam, and no peer pressure. Instead, we have a situation where there is no class and therefore no institutional support, no schedule and therefore no vacation, no examination or rather the level of competence is never clearly assessed according to criteria while his level of (in)competence constantly makes him vulnerable when bureaucrats act as if he knows (must know) English. The implicit comparison does not celebrate the figure of the Western student who learns a language in a classroom either (after all such settings are also involved in disciplinary apparatuses and Bourdieusian processes of reproduction that make the category of the "Western student" untenable).[15] Still, the migrant in his bathtub presents us with an image that troubles the notion that there is a proper territory for the learning of languages.

His nakedness, for example, both evokes and repudiates issues that are often the source of cultural conflicts. When students go to school in one given city, district, country, what is an acceptable dress code? When do dress codes get reinterpreted or confused as religious and political markers and when does the State intervene in such matters?[16] The film implicitly confronts the assumption of viewers who systematically associate language learning with an academic setting but also reminds us that we run the risk of assigning certain subjects to one specific relationship to language if we insist on the distinction between the place of learning and real life. For Pero, life does not start when he is finished learning and learning is not the equivalent of a job that stops when he leaves the classroom or has finished his homework. This is not a year abroad experience. Learning traverses every aspect of his life, even in the most intimate and private moments. There is no end to language learning. If we imagine language students as a class or a coherent group who learns during the day and parties at night, or lives their normal life once they leave the classroom, we also construct the community as a collection of "parts" from which Pero is excluded. Like the workers in Rancière's *Nights of Labor*, who write poetry or tracts at night he makes it impossible for us to fragment his reality according to a logic that opposes the worker to the refugee or to the student and constructs specific spaces and times for each subject (Rancière, 1989).

The fact that language learning continues in the bathtub, however, does not mean that language acquisition is a private affair separated from the social conflicts and power relationships that can easily transform Pero into a victim of discrimination. This is not a hobby or art and learning a language does not simply entail the memorization of new words, of new sentences. When Pero listens to the tapes, he hears words that he is supposed to learn. But when he repeats what he hears: "break broke broken," then "steal stole stolen," the viewer realizes that the examples are a fictional

critique of the ideological content of the tapes. When the tape proposes sentences that are supposed to teach him the use of "can," it becomes clear that there is no such thing as learning "only" vocabulary or grammar. For the tape immediately proposes: "Can can't […] is a special word. It is often used to show ability: can the policeman arrest the thief?" Immediately followed by "can the policeman arrest me?" that Pero is expected to repeat, remember and internalize. The point is obviously not subtle but it does have the advantage of concision. A whole theory of the link between pedagogy and discipline is didactically offered, via a quick example that confirms that no language learning is ever politically neutral. The scene also makes the point that in Pero's case, the rudimentary phase has everything to do with learning, at the same time, a few words of the new language and the fact that his lack of mastery deprives him of any control over the complicity between some (supposedly random) words and those cultural norms that will make him even more vulnerable.[17]

And that simple but forceful point is then refined by a moment of interruption. Even in his bathroom, Pero cannot simply learn the language. That process is both always infinite and always interrupted. In this case, interrupted by practice: interrupted by the need to use that language that he is still in the process of learning. Rudimentariness is also coterminous with daily life. As usual, Pero must use rudimentary English without having been reassured that he has first mastered level A or B, or that he has understood exactly the lesson about the policeman and ability. A series of quick knocks forces him to get out of the bathtub and to open the door almost naked while the tape continues to play, turning into barely audible noise, parasitic language that we are both expected to treat as irrelevant to the conversation but also, precisely, recognize as an inherent part of the dialogue. The structure of the language acquisition experiment is always in the background, framing conversations that are not, in the end, more difficult to interpret than the choice of words such as "steal," "break" or "policeman."

Pero opens the door, two immigration officers show him a picture of a Jamaican woman and ask if he knows her. Pero mumbles "never seen" and is handed over a business card. "I wonder if you would give us a call if you see her around. Do you think you could do that for us?" In the background, we hear, or perhaps miss, the faint echo of the tape: "No, the policeman can't arrest me if I have not done anything wrong" and "… to show ability." Both the immigration officer's requests and the grammatical examples sound like questions, which, of course, do not have any real answer. Pero is supposed to have no choice: he must repeat the model and say "yes" to the rhetorical "Could you do that for us?" He both learns and must immediately use what he has learned about "can" and the notion of "ability." Yes the policeman can arrest him just as "he" is about to arrest his neighbor. Yes Pero "can" call them to report the Jamaican woman because he has that "ability." But his obvious reticence to even admit that he knows the woman next door and his silence when he picks up the officer's business card is also an eloquent commentary on the fact that "ability" is not only a two-way street but a reductive definition of a complex web of semantics and ethics. As Frantz Fanon famously put it: "To speak a language is to

take on a world, a culture" (Fanon, 1967: p. 38). But the staging of the moment of rudimentariness also represents the fact that there is room for maneuver. Here, it enables the beginning of a conversation about the complicity between language and cultural norms which the film stages with humor and irony.

Learning a language does not only happen in the classroom or in a bathtub and sometimes, even the presence of a foreign language is rendered unintelligible by our assumptions about mastery and fluency. Let us consider what happens when rudimentariness occurs in the presence of academic language. Positing that theory is like a foreign tongue is already a comparison and the gesture is not more and not less legitimate than the type of practices that I deploy when I compare national literatures or cultural objects. The hypothesis will suffer from the same drawbacks: where does academic language stop? In which way is the hierarchy between academic language and common language naturalized or inscribed in a power differential?

When theory triggers the readers' hostility, however, it may be because they feel rudimentary and project the feeling of alienation on to the text itself: that opaque passage is poorly written. If readers accept to dwell in rudimentariness however, they need not assume that they are rudimentary in the presence of a master-text nor that the so-called master-text is a fraud whose opacity comes from an inability to communicate even at an elementary level in the common language. The relationship between reader and text can then be seen as the long and drawn-out process during which one learns how to encounter opacity and incomprehensibility rather than to dismiss them or disconnect prematurely. And he or she may have discovered a model that would enable him or her to recognize theory as an unknown language.

The choice that we make when we envisage theory as a (foreign) language or assume instead that each theorist is a speaker of our own language has consequences: if I treat theory as a language, I assume that it functions like the migrant's sometimes incomprehensible words. Some readers will be tempted to delegitimize that language in order to protect themselves from an unbearable feeling of incompetence and alienation. One of the ways of refusing the responsibility to learn that language is to refuse the comparison between a theory and a language. Instead, I will consider that theory is the language that "we" all speak. The incomprehensible theorist's performance is unacceptable when implicitly compared to "our" theoretical competence. If we treat theory as a foreign language, our responsibility is to learn the language.

At that point, encouraged by a community of similarly disappointed peers, I may be willing to displace my own discomfort on to the theoretician's text and award him or her the prize for bad writing. One of the simplest and perhaps pedestrian lessons I have learned while working on this chapter is that linguistic incompetence, if perceived as intolerably painful or unacceptable, can always be treated as a ball in a game: if in doubt, just send it back. If the language I encounter is incomprehensible, one of the most effective ways to refuse my own incompetence is to accuse the text or the speaker of incompetence. The other's language becomes noise and the other, therefore, becomes a barbarian. The process is simple, quick, effective and I hardly need so-called "jargon" to articulate this "return the incompetence to the sender" game.

What is less simple however, and this is the kind of comparative work I think I want to do here, is to spot the clever rhetorical strategies that some speakers deploy to do just that. Typically, a form of universalizing is at work in such encounters because the incompetent subject who would rather not dwell in rudimentariness must make sure that his or her formulation appears as the only natural, or dominant, or normal or acceptable common language. Their own anxiety may become invisible and effectively attached to the "bad" text or the foreigner's "barbaric" tongue.

And even more complicated I think, is the task of locating counter-narratives: for example, where would I find a work of art that stages not only the refusal of incompetence by some anxious (but otherwise powerful) subject, his or her process of incompetence-othering (only the other is incompetent), but also, hopefully, the fictionalization of counter-tactics. How do I look for what is comparable to theoretical discourse or rather to the type of conversation that goes on when one researcher accuses another of bad writing. The reason why I find this second stage crucial is that the first task (the identification of those moments when a subject repudiates his or her own incompetence) can be performed within one language, within one's own language, in short within the same theory that is used to bash theory.

I have to suppose, I want to suppose, that Dennis Dutton was in good faith when, as a long standing editor of the journal *Philosophy and Literature*, he thought it absolutely necessary to find the time and energy to launch the "Bad Writing Contest" that Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha were to win in 1998.[18] Bad writing, in this case, is the name given to bits of prose that some readers reject and wish to translate into a language that they feel more comfortable with. I suggest that the apparently aesthetic value judgment (bad writing) masks the moment of relationality created between text and reader. We can only know what "bad" writing is because we implicitly compare the impenetrable prose to a model that we have in mind. Like the French critic who imagines what kind of French the creolized Caribbean writer could substitute for his or her own hybrid style, readers who identify bad writing replace the passage with a series of sentences that make more sense (to "them," that is to the "we" they presuppose). The barely hidden values here are clarity, simplicity, and the existence of a common language, which we assume to be commonsensical. That theory of a common language is what Butler refutes when she responds to this type of criticism.

> What does it mean to say that there is a language that is common, that everyone under-stands, and that it is somehow our social responsibility to speak? It seems to me that our social responsibility is to become attuned to the fact that there is no common language anymore. Or if there is a common language, it is the language of commercialism that seeks to extend the hegemony of commercial American English, and to do it in a way that violently effaces the problem of multilingualism. That is one of the most profound pedagogical problems of our time, if not one of the most profound political problems of our time. (Butler, 2005: p. 330)

Dwelling in rudimentariness would mean that we accept the absence of a common language as a given, whether we are talking to another native speaker or to a foreigner. The result is not a universalizing of difference and a flattening of the power relationship that is established if one speaker condemns the other to ontological rudimentariness. What changes are the ways of recognizing ignorance, of dealing with opacity. If we assume that we don't know what we don't know, something exists that asks to be learned but it may first manifest itself as a block of opacity. Learning "the" language may make us forget Butler's questions:

> What travels under the sign of "clarity," and what would be the price of failing to deploy a certain critical suspicion when the arrival of lucidity is announced? Who devises the protocols of "clarity" and whose interest do they serve? What is foreclosed by the insistence on parochial standards of transparency as requisite for all communication? What does "transparency" keep obscure? (Butler, 1999: p. xix)

The demand for transparency and the "ruses" of lucidity are not restricted to academic language and seen from that point of view, Pero's story constitutes the type of counter-narrative that we can add to our repertoire and read as an obscure theoretical text. Pero is not only the foreigner who does not speak but the subject whose language is unintelligible when another subjects usurps the position of powerful linguistic subject. When Portia decides to introduce Pero to her parents, all characters have to deal with mutual ignorance and various levels of cultural incompetence. Pero's knowledge of English allows him to say and understand only a few words and Portia's parents are incapable of pronouncing his name, let alone speak his language (their ignorance is foreclosed). Pero does not know anything about "British culture" (which in this episode manifests itself as a ritualized dinner party) but the guests know nothing about former Yugoslavia although they have opinions about the conflict. The scene is a satire of the most traditional side of Portia's cultural legacy. She has obviously rejected the values of her upper middle class British family and, during the dinner party; she acts as a translator, as traitor and as "British" native informant. She points out, at the same time, that there is no reason why only Pero should be treated as informant but also that the category of the "informant" is brittle since no British "we" is tenable once we realize that she is as much a representative of Britain as her parents and siblings.

When Pero meets his future parents-in-law, he must fulfill an apparently impossible mission: he wants to be polite, respect a complex protocol of conventions, and perform his desire to conform to that script in a language that he does not know. One striking episode occurs towards the end of the meal, when the respective positioning of ignorant foreigner and competent native speakers have been reiterated to the point that they seem to have become identities. The pattern that occurred in the episode of the language tapes is reproduced: a dialogue starts between the foreigner and the native speaker and is then interrupted and complicated by the intervention of a third partner, here Portia who will make visible the hidden violence of the encounter. Pero signals his desire to leave the table:

Pero:	I go toilet.
Portia's father:	What did you say?
Pero:	I go to toilet.
Portia's father:	Ha, yes, I see. A word of advice: in this country, when we leave the table we don't say "I go toilet," we say "excuse me."

Contrary to what the father performs (he asks Pero to repeat what he has just said), Pero has produced a perfectly understandable statement, but in a certain agrammatical, rudimentary way. If we listen from within rudimentariness, the meaning of this sentence is already more complicated than it seems because it does retain a level of opacity that has nothing to do with grammar. The rhetorical function of his statement is not clear: after all, is he simply stating that he is about to get up or does he need directions to the bathroom (what, in Britain, people would call "the toilet" except that the point is precisely to avoid the word at all costs)? That type of ambiguity, however, has to do with the complicated relationship between rudimentariness and nuances within any language. Even a grammatical sentence such as "I would like to go to the bathroom" would be opaque from that point of view. Assuming that the father does not understand because the sentence is rudimentary, obscures the fact that there are many other reasons not to grasp the meaning of words.

Similarly, the father's "what did you say?" is relatively opaque: we don't know why he wants Pero to repeat. Maybe he has not heard what his guest just said, in which case, he is giving Pero enough space to function with rudimentariness: he can say it again, take his time. But, as his reply makes immediately clear, he does not really want Pero to repeat himself because he has not heard him, but rather because he is looking for a new formulation. He compares what Pero has said to a sentence that he finds more appropriate and does not recognize the words of his own language because they are not properly framed. Instead of doing the work of translation that would make him understand, he lazily insists that the foreigner only meet him on the grounds of perfect grammar. If the point of Pero's statement was not obvious, the father's remark, on the other hand, is framed by a meta-comment about what he wishes to achieve: he is giving advice. He is not rudimentary and has not allowed for the possibility that there is something that he has not correctly understood except his ignorance. He adds, to his correction, a reference to Britain ("in this country") that implicitly suggests that even if his guest had known which words to use, he would not have been civilized enough to pick them carefully. The "we" forces whoever is "civilized" and "from this country" to side with him and relegates Pero to the margins.

The duplicity of the allusion to his "advice" is that the supposedly benevolent attitude is expressed in the language Pero does not master. It is therefore lost on him. But the father, who gives up on a rudimentary dialogue, also finds himself at a disadvantage. He cannot use irony, and if he wished to insult Pero, then his nonrudimentary language misfires because his son-in-law will either not understand or pretend that he does not. We have seen earlier that Pero is capable of not engaging

with the immigration officers and in both cases, his silence is both powerless and powerful, or at the very least undecidably so. There is no possibility to check whether he refuses to address the immigration officers' veiled threat or Portia's father's paternalism because he has not decoded them or because he uses silence oppositionally. Like the reader who objects to the grammar of the "bad" academic test, the father wants not only clear statements, but also the kind of relationship to language that he finds acceptable.

Here what "travels under the sign of clarity" is a double constraint: "speak English!" That is, speak a language that disallows any allusion to bodily functions. In other words, "speak English!" i.e. do not use those English words that you have learned. What is foreclosed is that it is impossible to compare the "protocols" that belong to another culture and the manifestations of Pero's rudimentariness. The "price" is obvious: the mother-in-law promptly concludes that Pero is a "peasant" from a barbaric culture. What is "parochial" about the "advice" is the father's inability to separate, even provisionally, grammar and style or one certain form of clarity due to Pero's effort at speaking English (he does not use euphenisms and goes straight to the point) and another (he would paradoxically be "clearer" if he followed the rule that the obscene must remain unsaid and therefore potentially opaque). At the same time, it takes this performance of the staging of style and grammar, or protocols and clarity for us to recognize the violence and wish to side with Pero. The only alternative to Pero's silence, in this case, is theory, or at least, the fictional equivalent of theory, which, in the film, takes the form of Portia's intervention. After listening to the exchange, Portia turns towards Pero, looks him straight in the eyes and says, mimicking her father's intonation: "In this country when we leave the table we say … fuck off."

When Portia intervenes, the difference between her father's sentence and her intervention is both small and significant. She forces us to notice the parallel, she invites us to compare and to heed the parameters of this comparison. The quick iteration of the father's words and their replacement with a slightly different formulation radically changes the illocutionary paradigm. By using aggressive and vulgar language, Portia forces us to notice that she means to insult. And once we have interpreted that her formulation is deliberately injurious, it is easier to look back on the father's sentence and to ask questions about his performance, given that they both use the same words, and that only the scene of address has changed. She repeats the father's lesson and provides an alternative model, like a graffiti artist playing with the language tape. She does not overtly question the father's right to "give advice," she contaminates his perfect grammar with the possibility of injurious speech. The fact that the insult is not addressed to the father reproduces his hypocrisy but at a different level. She pretends to repeat the "word of advice," addresses herself to Pero, but underscores that there was violence. Her statement is itself, relatively opaque: is she suggesting that Pero could tell her father to "fuck off," is she telling her father to "fuck off," is she exposing the fact that it is obscene to accuse Pero of obscenity for not recognizing that the word "toilet" stands for what must remain unsaid? Possibly all of the above

but, most of all, the goal is to side with him, in her own perfect but vulgar English. She reappropriates the role of the benevolent teacher while exposing its extreme paternalistic violence. She forces us to move to a meta-level and to consider what the father's perfectly grammatical sentence hid. I suggest that her "fuck off," inserted in the middle of a "word of advice," functions like the difficult and resisting bits of theory that the reader sometimes receive as aggression and unexpected violence. It also performs what Butler claims:

> Neither grammar nor style are politically neutral. Learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalized language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of intelligibility itself. […] It would be a mistake to think that received grammar is the best vehicle for expressing radical views, given the constraints that grammar imposes upon thought, indeed upon the thinkable itself. (Butler, 1999: pp. xviii–xix)

Portia opens up the space for the unthinkable: that Pero also has the right to express anger and that when he fails to be understood, it is not only because his interlocutors insist on perfect grammar but because they only wish to hear what can become intelligible, thinkable when such grammar is used. Pero's linguistic "ability" is already contaminated by the assumption that "the policeman can arrest him." His rudimentary silence, as Portia indirectly proposes, should perhaps not be systematically assumed to be a form of submissiveness.

Conclusion

The two objects that I compared, offering three different moments of rudimentariness, did not exist as comparable objects before I became aware that bringing them together (re)created them as a theoretical issue. They do not belong to one discipline, their national origin could not have been described as their identity, and even if nationality is relevant to the comparative practice, their "scale" is quasi incommensurable (Werner and Zimmerman, 2006: p. 34). They became understandable as three moments during which a "we" and a relationship between the "I" and that "we" became thinkable through the concept of rudimentariness. The point was not to wonder who (always) is in a position of rudimentariness and might therefore be construed as having a rudimentary identity. Instead, the objective was to focus on and compare the different types of practices that one can deploy in the presence of (one's) rudimentariness, depending on whether one's rudimentariness is constructed by the self or the other.

Those examples suggest that rudimentariness is not something one "has." Instead, it becomes the first signal that a comparison is taking place that I may not yet have recognized as such. When Jacotot, the hero of Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, invites his students to learn French on their own, after giving them a bilingual edition

of Fénelon's novel *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), he points out that the first step towards new knowledge is comparison: "There is always something the ignorant knows that can be used as a point of comparision, something to which a new thing to be learned can be related" (Rancière, 1991: p. 28). He does not, however, advocate comparing already known objects but going back and forth between the block of opacity that one encounters and areas that we are already familiar with. Here, what emerges is the "I" relationally imagined as a comparatist who does not (yet) know the language of the book that he wishes to study and still compares because learning the language is in itself a practice of comparison rather than a precondition. This involves not only learning languages that are not already imagined as hegemonic but also unlearning what has been constructed as the native speaker's fantasmatic privilege. Although we may object that the danger is to appropriate the new, as one of the facets of the old, (after all, this is the structure of what Edward Said called "orientalism"), the risk may be alleviated if we define rudimentariness as a paradigm of continued temporality constituted of successive moments that can never be transcended. The moment when we have, finally, learned that language will never come, or is an illusion we cherish.

Therefore, instead of treating linguistic rudimentariness as a stage that I must overcome, I may wish to adopt rudimentariness as home, even after the first years of paralyzing ignorance have come and gone. Rudimentariness then becomes a form of thinking that I no longer need to dismiss as an exceptional and temporary phase soon to be forgotten. It can no longer be confused with the territory of the other, those unfortunate, uneducated and powerless others to whom, as a native speaker, I can give advice. The learning of languages is still crucial but the stage during which we learn the rudiments of the language becomes a perhaps more generous paradigm of our relationship to language and culture in general.

Comparing from a place a rudimentariness means that it is no longer necessary to fetishize the comparatist as a scholar who is already an expert in at least two fields, two languages and two cultures, hopefully more. I am not at all suggesting that the cultivation of ignorance and rudimentariness as home could or should become the only practice among comparatists nor am I convinced that just any version of "dwelling in rudimentariness" has a chance of being culturally productive or socially responsible. Yet, one of the possibly fruitful effects of theorizing moments of rudimentariness may be to teach us how to approach one of the most vexing issues of comparative studies: that of languages, be they national or regional, recognized or delegitimized, foreign or native but also difficult or clear, opaque or commonsensical.

Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other* is one of the texts that students of comparative literature can invoke to name our constitutive alienation from language. As a Jew alienated from the Arabic he never learnt and from the Jewish languages of the diaspora, Derrida functions in a French that is both his only language and a language that is not his (Derrida). The fundamental loss that we experience when the illusion of a linguistic at-home-ness is shattered is not something that will be repaired, but instead exacerbated by the acquisition of new languages. This form of dispossession may, if we choose to treat it as an epistemological starting point, become a form of

knowledge of one's own rudimentariness. The aim of such a positioning is not to wonder whether this relationship to language is, or not, a universal condition but to analyze the consequences in a given historical context.

NOTES

1   Since the 1990s, the concept has been declined in various disciplines. One of the webs thus created involves theorists who are not necessarily aware of being linked to each other through their thinking about relation. In *Poetics of Relation*, Martinican cultural analyst, novelist and poet Edouard Glissant insists on the polysemy of a practice involving the opaque, baroque and infinitely chaotic interweaving of texts, voices and cultures when he points out that "Relation" means at the same relaying (text and voices), or narrating (relater) or linking or re-linking (Glissant, 1990: p. 187). Like Glissant, Judith Butler emphasizes the productivity of opacity and relationality in any attempt to "give an account of oneself," suggesting for example that "if I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the 'we' except by finding the way in which I am tied to 'you,' by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss." (Butler, 2005: p. 49)

2   Such theories struggle to critique identity politics without falling into the trap of constructing and celebrating universalizing hybridities. Nor do they attempt to do away with historically situated categories such as gender or class, race or ethnicity, which continue to enable and limit social relations. See legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw's analysis of "representational intersectionality" in her study of violence against women of color (Crenshaw, 1991: pp. 1282–96) or Patricia Hill Collins' critique of the traditional family ideal as a basis for solidarity or struggle (Collins, 1998).

3   Many nations have more than one language and some "nations" or people have no language even if the state recognizes one. (See Glissant's remarks about Martinique: "The official language, French, is not the people's language. This is why we, the elite, speak it so correctly. The language of the people, Creole, is not the language of the nation" [Glissant, 1990: p. 166]). The one language/one culture/one nation paradigm is no longer dominant, at least theoretically although it continues to haunt many assumptions about who is capable of representing a given community through a language.

4   Didier Coste links the permanent "state of crisis" to the fact that Comparative Literature is both a discipline and an indiscipline – an (in)discipline (Coste). See also Higonnet, 1994: p. 1; and Etiemble.

5   For a comparative analysis of the state of comparative literatures in North America, France and Brazil, see Hart and also Saraf.

6   See the recent decennial reports published by the American Comparative Literature Association (Bernheimer, 1995; Saussy, 2006) as well as Spivak, 2003.

7   A systematic celebration of border crossing would forget that conquerors as well as asylum seekers share the practice. At the beginning of his history of comparative literature, Carl Ferhman points out that a fascination for other literatures leads either to a non-nationalistic cosmopolitanism or one that reinforces nationalisms (Ferhman, 2003: p. 11). As Spivak puts it, even trying to recognize the "other" as the producer of knowledge may end up constituting an "appropration by the dominant" (Spivak, 2003: p. 11).

8   See Spivak's critique of the way in which the native informant is foreclosed or treated as a figure "who can only provide data, to be interpreted by the knowing subject for reading" (Spivak, 1999: p. 49).

9   A sort of "Greek mètis" (Détienne and Vernant), an art of transformation or an aes-

thetics of the ruse, a form of intelligence which, as postcolonial thinkers have argued, often nurtures the imagination of hybrid texts (Lionnet, 1991: pp. 1–30).

10 The implicit question here is whether or not testimonies "belong to" literature or sociology. For an analysis of the kind of paternalism involved in such critical reactions see Hargreaves. See also Caribbean writers who identify a state of "pré-littérature" (see Chamoiseau's reference to our "pré-littérature de cris de haine et de revendications" in *Solibo Magnifique* [Chamoiseau, 1998: p. 65]).

11 But language "acquisition" is not politically innocent or systematically progressive. The English word "acquisition" exposes the complicity between learning and consumption. And the new marketability of previously minoritized languages is sometimes the result of a sinister military agenda.

12 Moreover, the recognition that no language is bound by national borders does not constitute a progressive agenda in itself: in the aftermath of political decolonization, the desire to compare different types of literature written in the "same" Europhone language may well be motivated by the assumption that such literatures are derivative (the worst of what Jean-Marc Moura calls "francophonisme," the idea that literature "in French" is at the service of France's culture).

13 Spivak remarks that "in order to reclaim the role of teaching literature as training the imagination – the great inbuilt instrument of othering – , we may, if we work as hard as old fashioned Comp. Lit. is known to be capable of doing, come close to the irreducible work of translation, not from language to language but from body to ethical semiosis, that incessant shuttle that is a 'life'" (Spivak, 2003: p. 13). See also Apter.

14 Originally commissioned by the British Film Institute, *Beautiful People* came out in 1999 and was later shown at the Cannes Film Festival where it won the Best Film Award in the *Un Certain Regard* category.

15 The film is careful to establish distinctions between different processes of "integration" and learning one language. The Serb and the Croat characters who end up in hospital because they have tried to kill each other never learn English systematically. Instead, they discover the role of Welsh culture and the minority status of the Welsh language, the possibility to cultivate it through songs, because they share the hospital room with a Welsh fire bomber who severely burnt himself when he tried to detonate his device.

16 Compare for example the level of controversy generated in France or in the Netherlands by the presence of religious "signs" or "symbols" in schools or of recognizably Islamic dress in pubic, and the relative indifference to such issues in other (equally culturally divided) countries such Britain.

17 Postcolonial or anti-colonialist theories have taught us to be aware that political independence does not guarantee the "decolonization of the mind" (Ngùgì wa Thiong'o). But still, the film chooses to highlight the most pessimistic conflation between the language of power and the power of language. As Bill Ashcroft reminds us in his "Language and transformation," the unavoidable complicity between the dominant language and the dominant culture should not be reduced to paranoid interpretations. Glissant's observation alerts us to the "frequency with which a particular *use* of a language can be conflated with the language itself" (Ashcroft, 2006: p. 277).

18 See Dutton; and Butler, 1998.

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Part V

Postcolonial Mobilities

Afro-European Studies: Emerging Fields and New Directions

Allison Crumly Deventer and Dominic Thomas

Il était un afropéen, un Européen d'ascendance africaine. [He was Afropean, a European of African ascendancy.] (Léonora Miano, 2008: p. 53)

Ultimately, the one certainty for Europe is that she knows a "nigger" when she sees one: she should – they were a figment of her imagination, a product of her creative mind […] Black people have always been present in a Europe that has chosen either not to see us, or to judge us as an insignificant minority, or as a temporary, but dismissible, mistake. […] Europe must begin to restructure the tissue of lies that continues to be taught and digested at school and at home for we, black people, are an inextricable part of this small continent. And Europeans must learn to understand this for themselves, for there are among us few who are here as missionaries. (Caryl Phillips, 2000 [1987]: pp. 121–129)

When the European powers gathered in Berlin in 1884–1885 to negotiate the future coordinates of their African territorial holdings, they took a significant step towards determining twentieth- and twenty-first-century demographic configurations. In many ways, contemporary debates and policy initiatives pertaining to ethnic minorities, immigrants, race relations, and "European" identity are inextricably connected to this colonial history. But what might be the pedagogic implications of exploring race, gender, religion and identity today in a pan-European framework? How might such an approach foster cross/inter/pluri-cultural/disciplinary inquiries and thereby connect in productive ways with existing scholarship in African, African American, Black, race, (im)migration, francophone, and postcolonial studies? How might we achieve Paul Gilroy's ambition that we "see how the presence of strangers,

aliens, and blacks and the distinctive dynamics of Europe's imperial history have combined to shape its cultural and political habits and institutions" (Gilroy, 2004: p. xiv)?

The geographic parameters of the European Union have themselves expanded dramatically in recent years, and these transformations have brought into contact multiple cultural and political experiences. In fact, in public discourse (and often in the collective imaginary), the EU is often mistakenly rendered indistinguishable from the broader geographic space represented by Europe itself, and for that matter continues to confuse people given that the EU itself includes such diverse areas as the Canary Islands (in close proximity to the West African coastline) as well as the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Interestingly enough, the EU itself has struggled to define its identity, arguing on the one hand that it "is a family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity" but then adding that "It is not a State intended to replace existing States, nor is it just an organization for international cooperation." We thus find two (at the very least) constructs operating side by side – the one that is inclusive, underscoring elements of belonging, juxtaposed with the second that stresses *what it is not*. One is left pondering what Europe really is, to what degree family resemblances are to be found, and in turn how this community might undertake the complex process of *imagining* itself. We have also been able to witness "a new phase of state racism [that] began within the context of globalization, the establishment of the European Union, and above all the war on terror. In that context, the risk is that the *banlieues* will become one of the designated targets of authoritarian populist movements, whose increasing power in the last quarter of the twentieth century has been observed in all European democracies" (Mbembe, 2009: p. 65). Naturally, such questions extend into other domains, yielding additional questions. How are *European* populations racialized, *Europeanized*, and *non-Europeanized*? How can one think this relationship comparatively, relationally, in terms of common denominators, particularly when Europe (certain *Europeans*) persist in defining sections of the population exclusively based upon racial criteria (see Goldberg, 2009)? And finally, how can one begin to address relationality between diasporic communities with connections to Africa (both North and sub-Saharan), the Caribbean, and the DOM-TOM (French Overseas Departments and Territories)?

Each of these categories offers alternative facets of the African diasporic experience and is defined by complex trans- and supranational networks which in turn have displaced received notions of Britishness, Frenchness, Germanness, and Italianness (among others of course), while also challenging the indissociability of Europeanness with whiteness (see Tshimanga, Gondola and Bloom, 2009). Likewise – and this has been evident in discussions on European identity – there has been a growing awareness that Europe itself does not correspond to a homogenous entity. In fact, the struggle to define what a "European" identity would resemble – in other words, what effectively constitutes the European "We" (Balibar, 2004) – has yielded two opposing models for identity formation: the first establishes European identity in *inclusionary* terms as the result of constitutive formations structured around existing demographic,

historical, and cultural modalities, whereas the second functions through recourse to *exclusionary* constructs in which identity is simply expressed in negative and dissociative registers – being European means *not* being African, Latin American, Asian, and so on. The persistent recourse to groupings such as "insiders" and "outsiders," second and third generation immigrants, and what Balibar describes as "the equivocal interiority-exteriority configuration which had, since the period of colonial conquest, formed one of the structuring dimensions of racism" is undergoing new mutations and extensions (Balibar, 1991: p. 43). As we shall see, further scrutiny of these categories serves to highlight the complexity of such identitarian formulations, particularly when one considers the potentialities of the emerging field of Afro-European studies.

The very notion of Afro-Europeanness is necessarily infused with the above-mentioned issues and compels us to consider what might be at stake in delineating or affirming separate and diverse/diverging identities within such a space and to think carefully about how micro-identities or nationalisms may advance research. Indeed, as Barnor Hesse has argued,

> A decision must be taken on the idea and symbolization of Europe, where issues of representation arise in the face of competing, contested and alternative possibilities. This undecidability is what impregnates Europe when the colonialities, migrations, settlements, and racializations that signify the incubation of Black Europe can no longer be aborted from Europe's representations of its progeny. […] Through the rites of European undecidability, we need to reimagine the meaning of the signified *Europe* in the signifiers "Europe," "non-Europe" and "Black Europe," where each implies the other and is encountered in each other's racial configuration. (Hesse, 2009: p. 297)

After all, Afro-European populations are themselves far from being homogenous and have diverse roots and links with both Africa and Europe according to historical periodization, associated with slavery, colonialism, postcolonial migration, labor mobility, etc., or influenced by other migratory patterns (students, marriage, work, military, sport, entertainment). Thus, as Sabrina Brancato has underscored, this question

> of whether we can consider the corpus of texts produced by the African diaspora in Europe as a whole, that is, or whether it makes sense to speak of Afro-European literature(s), is a fundamental one given the plurality and heterogeneity within it. (Brancato, 2009: p. 4)

The attempt to circumscribe an Afro-European space is rendered all the more complicated by the disparities in numbers among different European countries – with the largest presence recorded in Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Portugal – and, as Allison Blakely has pointed out, "While the percentage of Europeans of Black African descent is still under 2 percent, the social construct of 'blackness' has throughout modern times carried a significance that cannot simply be measured in numbers" (Blakely, 2009: p. 5). Given that the EU itself continues to

confront the daunting nature and scope of building a civil society that can protect and valorize this diversity while at the same time enhance identification with Europe itself, some scholars have signaled the difficulties associated with Black Europe as a discursive category. For Kwame Nimako and Stephen Small,

> one can observe a Black presence in Europe, but one cannot use the European Union as unit of analysis because a European citizen does not exist. Equally, Black European citizenship does not exist because black Europeans belong to EU member states. (Nimako and Small, 2009: p. 235)

Yet, what nevertheless remains incontrovertible is the fact that "it makes sense to speak in terms of an 'Afro-Europe' [because] increasing signs of some form of black community are appearing" (Blakely , 2009: p. 19) and because "The Black populations in these host societies are aiming at integration or assimilation on the one hand and formulation of racial and cultural identity on the other" (Blakely, 2009: p. 7). Naturally, all these factors influence diasporic community-formation issues and the various ways in which they have sought representation.

   In focusing on Afro-Europeans, we are reminded of the existence of numerous other "racialized" groups, for as Stephen Small has shown, "if we ask who is Black European, we must also ask, who is Black in Europe […] Blackness is not just, or even, about African ancestry. It's about racialization and the ascription of blackness" (Small, 2009: pp. xxv-xxvi). One therefore needs to note that "blackness" in a more general manner has itself enjoyed a long and complicated history in Europe, and in Britain in particular where it is often used to describe Africans, Caribbeans, and South Asians. "And still," Salman Rushdie has written, "the word 'immigrant' means 'black immigrant'" (Rushdie, 1991: p. 132). Thus, Afro-Europeanness and Euro-Blackness draw attention to the tenuous relationship evidenced in the apparent irreconcilability of the two components residing on either side of the hyphen. And so, one must ask, are these to be understood as mutually exclusive or rather as potentially constitutive elements that stand to redefine and reconfigure? As Mark Stein has argued with reference to Black Britain, "this tension is a reciprocal one in that 'blackness' redefines 'Britishness' and 'Britishness' redefines 'blackness'" (Stein, 2004: p. 8), a point confirmed by a cursory overview of the works of such highly original writers as Biyi Bandele, Diran Adebayo, Bernardine Evaristo, Caryl Phillips, Monica Ali, Zadie Smith, etc. But does such a conclusion apply to Afro-Europeanness in a more general manner, especially when important distinctions exist among national spaces in terms of the manner in which difference, diversity, and multiculturalism are treated?

   As we have seen, circumscribing Afro-Europe is indeed an intricate endeavor. For example, the non-differentiation of "visible minorities" in France, where Republican ideals and values do not allow for ethnic identification and where heated debates have taken place between advocates and opponents of ethnic and/or diversity statistics, contrasts sharply with British multicultural policies and with a tangible maturation on the question since the publication of Paul Gilroy's landmark 1987 study *There*

Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, neither framework offers an exhaustive paradigm with which to address these questions. In France, populations from the DOM-TOM co-exist with populations of North African (Hargreaves, 1991) and sub-Saharan African origin, and one finds as little consensus over such labels as African French, French African, Black French, Blacks, Franco-Congolese, Franco-Senegalese, Franco-Cameroonian, etc., as one does across the Channel concerning the often interchangeable usage of African British, Black British, Nigerian British, Afro-British, etc. However, what does remain consistent is the indissociability with the African continent, with blackness, and with notions of diaspora – that is, with the multiplicity of hyphenated identities involving Afro, Black or nation specific terms (Wright, 2003: p. 301) – arguably the defining modules of an Afro-European identity and a partial response to Kwame Nimako's and Stephen Small's probing question:

> Are the dynamics of black Europe and the African diaspora in Europe dependent on their own internal dynamics and logic or on the status and position assigned to them in the European Union? Put differently, what makes Black Europe a community of its own within the EU and its member states? (Nimako and Small, 2009: p. 213)

The emergence of organizations such as the Representative Council for Black Associations (Conseil représentatif des associations noires, CRAN) and the Natives of the Republic (Les Indigènes de la République) in France provides strong indications as to the kinds of ways in which Black communities are thinking about political activism, visibility and representation. Motivated by the shared experience of discrimination – either in recent history or extending as far back as slavery – such groups are less concerned with ethnic factionalism and the attribution of social roles according to national/non-national or European/non-European entities, than they are with the various ways in which inclusion and belonging could be fostered and in turn redefine the hegemonic tendencies of current political configurations. Such measures can be inscribed within broader European Unionization efforts to combat discrimination and to advocate for the harmonization and standardization of policy on these issues across EU member-states, efforts which may enhance and promote adherence to common and shared identities. The evolution of these questions must be closely monitored for the ways in which they are reformulated while duplicating age-old exclusionary patterns, given that

> The old "new racism" exerts an influence even as it fades and cedes its dubious authority to emergent genomic and bio-social explanations. Its distinctive tones are still audible in the anthropological subtleties and evasions characteristic of the racializing discourse to which it gives enduring expression. […] But the old codes remain alive. They have become buried inside forms of nationalism and patriotism. (Gilroy, 2004: p. xiii)

In what constitutes one of the foundational essays in the field of Afro-European studies, "Afro-European Literature(s): A New Discursive Category?", Sabrina Brancato provides an insightful analysis of the ways in which a comparative approach to this corpus of *Afro-European* works of literature produced in multiple geographic sites "would signal not so much the emergence of a new field as a systematization of something that had remained nameless and fragmented, the coming together of previously isolated efforts to shed light on the African experience and creativity on European soil" (Brancato, 2008: pp. 1–2). Thus, "foregrounding the reciprocal embeddedness of the histories of the two neighboring continents" (Brancato, 2008: p. 2) serves to accord the signifiers located on either side of any hyphenated category a recognition of mutually symbiotic influences, thereby introducing a productive relationship structured around fundamental principles of comparison, whereby

> Exploring Afro-European literature(s) comparatively therefore means tracing diachronic and synchronic connections that reveal new configurations across linguistic and national boundaries. The texts themselves are transnational and transcultural and foreground a comparatist perspective where Africa and Europe – and Africa *in* Europe – are continuously set against each other in an effort to problematize what the two continents mean to each other, how they interact and give place to new syncretic cultural formations. (Brancato, 2008: p. 11)

Official political independence in francophone sub-Saharan African countries – achieved for the most part by 1960 – had the effect of demarcating a range of cultural, economic, geographic, political and social factors that would make it possible to distinguish works of literature according to "nationalistic" components. Analysts of these developments explored this "universe of discourse" (Bjornson, 1991: p. xi) and demonstrated the multiple ways in which topography ultimately shaped the specificity of literary works. Naturally, such conclusions did not erase the imaginative capacities of individual authors, or for that matter ignore radical differences between works produced in analogous locations. But they did convincingly identify the impact environmental elements were likely to have on literary production. Afro-European literature has also been marked by a multiplicity of factors, both within and across national communities, according to colonial histories, different diasporic experiences, multicultural and integrational politics and policies, transnational networks, and so on. Thus, as a distinct grouping, Afro-European writing can be useful in order to compare works produced in different national contexts while also allowing us to situate findings within a broader European framework. As Michelle M. Wright has argued, the notion of Afro-Europeans may exist as a discursive phenomenon precisely because of the manner in which such identities are constructed: "Western discourses are often numbingly predictable regardless of which North American or Western European country one happens to be in. Specifically, the way in which Blacks are Othered in these discourses is often quite similar" (Wright, 2003: p. 296). Individual country case studies will help clarify some of the challenges.

France and *Afro*-Francophone Writing

The French context is particularly rich in examples when it comes to discussing Afro-European literature. The colonial enterprise was anchored in the *civilizing mission* and French-language print literacy emphasized this influence; perhaps not surprisingly, the anti-colonial struggle was itself profoundly influenced by the writings of francophone intellectuals from Africa and the Caribbean such as Mongo Beti, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Léopold Sédar Senghor. France was a privileged space for the elaboration of a global Black consciousness (Thomas, 2007), even paradoxically receptive to such important writers as James Baldwin and Richard Wright. In turn, French and European discourse on race was infused by the influence of African American writers who were often outspoken on colonial practices and racial issues, many of them present at the Sorbonne for the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists September 19–22, 1956, later in Rome in 1959, and subsequently at the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar in 1966. Of course, the journal and publishing house Présence Africaine, founded in 1947 (Mudimbe, 1992) played a major role in advancing thinking on and awareness of these questions. For example, the philosophical and political ingredients of *négritude* were conceptualized in Paris. Indeed, the processes of countering negative representations and affirming the cultural attributes of non-Western cultures, of qualifying and redefining racial classifications and attributes and embracing positive associations with Africa have served to delineate the terms of the debate on these questions in postcolonial France and stand as precursors to what can today be called Afro-European literature. Invariably, each new attempt at describing ethnic/minority/immigrant writing in France has observed a degree of intertextuality with this timeframe: *beur*, Afro-Parisianism, *migritude*, *banlieue*, Afropean, Afrodescendents, littérature-monde …

In identifying a new corpus of works, selected according to the status of the authors as children of North African immigrants, Alec G. Hargreaves showed how the *beur* (a term produced through *back-slang* by reversing the dominant consonants of the word "Arabe") generation addressed the ambiguities of bi-culturalism and multiple cultural adherence in Republican France. Later, critic Bernard Magnier evaluated these works and expanded the terms of the debate by incorporating other "visible minorities" into the equation: "They live and write in Paris" and can be called "Parisian Blacks" (Magnier, 1990: p. 102). "They are 'blacks beurs' or 'beurs noirs' for some," he would go on to argue, "'negropolitans' or 'Gallo-negroes' for others. They live and write in Babylone-sur-Seine, in the 'black Babel' of Paris or its banlieue" (Magnier, 1990: p. 106). Bennetta Jules-Rosette devoted a study to African writing in Paris and deployed the notion of *Afro-Parisianism*, whereby "Parisianism refers to a literary interest in Paris as the social context for the author' works, the subject matter of their writings, and the source of their focal audience" (Jules-Rosette, 1998: p. 7, see also Cazenave, 2003). The links with *négritude* were confirmed by Jacques Chevrier's coining of the term *migritude*, a "questioning of

certain prevalent discursive configurations" and "simultaneous disengagement from both the culture of origin and the receiving culture […] within a new identitarian space" (Chevrier, 2004: p. 99). "This neologism," as Chevrier explains, "designates both the thematic of immigration that is at the heart of contemporary African works, but also the expatriate status of most of the writers […] their inspiration comes from their hybridity and decentered lives, elements that now characterize a kind of French-style 'world literature'" (Chevrier, 2004: p. 96). Likewise, the transhistoricity finds an echo in Franco-Djiboutian author Abdourahman A. Waberi's allusion to the "enfants de la postcolonie" [the children of the postcolony] ("Les enfants de la postcolonie") and debates have taken place on the transnationalization of French/Francophone literature and on the usefulness of postcolonial theoretical paradigms for rethinking the hegemonic tendencies of the French publishing industry (Thomas, 2010), under the aegis of the claims and assertions made in 2007 in the *Manifeste Pour une 'littérature-monde' en français*:

> The emergence of a consciously affirmed, transnational world-literature in the French language […] With the center placed on an equal plane with other centers, we're witnessing the birth of a new constellation, in which language freed from its exclusive pact with the nation, free from every other power hereafter but the powers of poetry and the imaginary, will have no other frontiers but those of the spirit. ("Toward a World Literature in French", 2009: p. 56)

There is a long tradition of writing about the African presence in France (Thomas, 2007). Both colonial era texts (by Bernard Dadié, Ousmane Sembène, Ousmane Socé, Camara Laye, Ferdinand Oyono, Cheikh Hamidou Kane) and a long list of postcolonial authors (most notably Calixthe Beyala, Fatou Diome, Simon Njami, Gaston-Paul Effa, Sami Tchak, Daniel Biyaoula, Pius Ngandu Nkashama, Blaise N'Djehoya, Léandre-Alain Baker, Saïdou Boukoum, Sayouba Traoré, Bilguissa Diallo, and Lauren Ekué) have turned their attention to this question. More recently, Franco-Congolese author Alain Mabanckou has devoted a novel, *Black Bazar* (Mabanckou, 2009), to the Black community in France, a subject which Franco-Cameroonian writer Léonora Miano has also explored, adopting terms such as "Afropean" and "Afrodescendants" in works such as *Afropean Soul et autres nouvelles* (Miano, 2008), *Tels des astres éteints* (Miano, 2008), and *Blues pour Elise* (Miano, 2010). But such undertakings are far from standard, and as we shall see in our consideration of different national frameworks, approached in very different ways elsewhere in Europe. Arguably the most well-known writer of African descent in France, Marie NDiaye (who was awarded the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 2009), has actually argued *against* such associations with blackness and Africa, stating that "never having lived in Africa, and having scarcely known my father (I am of mixed race), I cannot be considered to be a francophone novelist, that is a French-speaking foreigner" (Hitchcott, 2000: p. 24). Likewise, some non-fiction authors have also rejected what they perceive as potentially essentializing mechanisms, as for example in Gaston Kelman's 2003 book *Je suis noir et je n'aime pas le manioc* [I'm Black but I don't care for manioc].

Italy and *Afro*-Italophone Writing

In 1990, a Senegalese author named Pap Khouma published a memoir in Italian that narrated his experiences of supporting himself as an illegal migrant in Italy by selling miniature elephant figurines and other items on the streets. This book, *Io, venditore di elefanti* [I Was an Elephant Salesman], met with significant success among an Italian public curious about the living conditions of its growing immigrant population. It was joined in the same year by two other autobiographical texts by African migrants: *Immigrato* [Immigrant] by Salah Methnani, from Tunisia, and *Chiamatemi Alì* [Call Me Alì] by Mohamed Bouchane, from Morocco. The publication of these three books closely followed the 1990 passage of a law that granted residence permits to "foreigners" already living in Italy – one of the first laws to regulate the status of immigrants in a state that, like many other countries in Western Europe, was experiencing an increase in migration from Africa, South America, the Middle East, Asia, and Eastern Europe. Compared to countries such as France and Great Britain, Italy at this time lacked both a history of numerically significant immigration and policies to deal with it; in fact, it was not until 1998 that the number of immigrants arriving in Italy exceeded the number of Italians departing as emigrants (Di Maio, 2009: p. 122). The 1990 law signaled a new willingness on the part of the Italian public to consider the legal status and living conditions of its immigrant residents. The appearance of first-person narratives by immigrant authors, in turn, expressed the determination of their authors to add their own voices to the debates surrounding immigration and minority populations in Italy.

The texts by Khouma, Methnani, and Bouchane are widely regarded as the first prose exemplars of a growing body of migrant and minority literature in Italian that explores the multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic reality of contemporary Italy (Brancato, 2007; Parati,1999; Di Maio, 2009). In this body of literature, works by authors who are African or of African descent figure prominently. The 1990s saw the continuing publication of memoirs and autobiographies by migrant authors with roots in Africa, including a number of women, such as Nassera Chohra (Algeria), Shirin Ramzanali Fazel (Somalia), and Maria de Lourdes Jesus (Cape Verde). Several authors who began their publication careers with autobiographical or semi-autobiographical accounts went on to publish fiction. Khouma's second work, for instance, was a novel entitled *Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* [Grandfather God and the Dancing Spirits] that appeared in 2005. A literary award established in 1995 for migrant writers by the association Eks & Tra encouraged the professional development of a number of writers, and it led to the publication of a series of anthologies of poems and short stories. The later 2000s saw the appearance of numerous works that experimented with a wide variety of styles, genres, and voices, from Amara Lakhous's polyvocal, multicultural reworking of Italian detective fiction in *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittorio* [Clash of Civilizations in an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio, 2007] to Gabriella Ghermandi's coming-of-age novel set in Ethiopia and Italy, *Regina di fiori e di perle* [Queen of Flowers and Pearls, 2007].

A number of Afro-Italian texts bear witness to the lives and experiences of migrants who move to and through Italy. Together they construct new literary maps of Italy and of Europe that reveal how these spaces are inhabited, negotiated, imagined, and transformed by people from across the world. Although highly diverse works of literature in Italian are often grouped together on the basis of their shared concern with issues of migration, many of them also challenge the idea that Afro-Italians are outsiders to the Italian nation, raising complex questions about belonging, race, borders, and history. African diasporic literature in Italian, in fact, builds on a long history of political and ideological entanglement between Italy and Africa. Italy lies geographically close to the African continent and, like Spain, has often been perceived as culturally close to it as well (Brancato, 2007: p. 656). As Alessandra Di Maio notes, characters of African descent (Hannibal, Othello, the young African girl in the fascist song "Facetta Nera") have played roles in Italian literature and historical accounts for centuries (Di Maio, 2009: p. 119). Moreover, Italy engaged in aggressive colonial enterprises in Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Libya between 1911 and 1941. At times, contact between Italy and Africa has been exploited to reinforce the myth of a unitary, non-African Italian identity – as in the case of Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, a campaign undertaken not only to increase Italy's prestige on the world stage, but also to inspire Italians with nationalist enthusiasm and to distract them from Italy's internal divisions by emphasizing the perceived differences between primitive "others" and civilized, heroic Italians (Ponzanesi, 2004: p. 107). At other times, the historical links between Africa and Italy have been ignored or minimized. Scholars have argued, for instance, that Italy suffers from amnesia in regard to the brutality and aggression of its colonial past, tending instead to dwell on the image of itself as "little Italy," a struggling country at the margins of Europe (Harris, 2008: p. 601; Ponzanesi, 2004: p. 109).

In this context, African diasporic literature in Italian performs the important task of bringing to light the ways in which contemporary African immigration to Italy, far from being an entirely new and unprecedented phenomenon, is part of a historical continuum of complex relations and exchanges that includes Italian colonial activity in Africa, as well as Italian emigration to the Americas and northern Europe (Harris, 2008: p. 602). An emerging body of Italian postcolonial literature takes up the challenges of revealing the continuities between Italy's colonial past and its multicultural present and of "writing back" against traditional narratives and images of Italian colonialism that ignore African voices. Gabriella Ghermandi's 2007 novel *Regina di fiori e di perle*, for example, recounts episodes from the Ethiopian resistance to Italian occupation in the 1890s through the 1930s. The narrative frame that situates these stories is provided by the interaction between a young Ethiopian girl named Mahlet and her grandfather, who fought against the Italians as a young man. The grandfather extracts from his willing listener a promise to write his stories down and take them to Italy, in order to compel the Italians to remember the bloody history of their invasion of the Horn of Africa. The novel rewrites a scene from a classic colonial text by Ennio Flaiano, *Tempo di uccidere* [The Short Cut, 1947], in

which an Ethiopian woman bathing in the forest is subjected to the objectifying gaze of an Italian soldier who eventually kills her. In Ghermandi's retelling, the woman caught bathing is a warrior who swiftly shoots the Italian soldier. With this text, Ghermandi not only contributes to making the history of Ethiopian resistance visible in Italian literature, but also insists that her Italian audience recognize their implication in this shared history.

Issues of identity and voice are central to many African diasporic texts in Italian in which characters negotiate a wide variety of individual and collective identities. Numerous works explore various possible identities that newcomers to Italy may assume, or that may be imposed on them: tourists, guests, refugees, students, immigrants, legal or undocumented workers, entrepreneurs, artists, and so on. *Immigrato,* by Salah Methnani (2006), describes the Tunisian protagonist's struggle between his desire to perceive himself as a cosmopolitan traveler and the unwanted role into which he is inexorably drawn, that of a homeless and unemployed clandestine immigrant. His diary of his journey through Italy, however, offers a site in which he can turn the struggle between these two identities into the productive tension of literary creation. This exploration of the complex endeavor of constructing a literary self is especially significant because many works of Italian migrant literature continue to encounter the assumption that they should be regarded as sociological documentation rather than as fully realized works of literature. This dismissive assumption was encouraged in the early 1990s by the fact that several of the earlier first-person texts were co-authored with native Italian speakers, a practice called *scrittura a quattro mani* or "writing with four hands." Although this collaboration with Italian journalists and writers has sometimes been a source of conflict and frustration for migrant authors, it has also helped authors such as Pap Khouma to launch independent careers in literature, and it has allowed the co-authored texts to function as sites of cultural encounter (both positive and negative) in the process of their development as well as in their published form (Brancato, 2007: p. 654–655; Di Maio, 2009: p. 128–129). More importantly, these and other Afro-Italian texts engage in complex processes of invention, proposing new fluid identities and revising old fictions about what it means to be Italian.

In these engagements with cultural identity, Afro-Italian authors forge diverse relationships with the languages in which they write. Many African immigrants to Italy come from countries that were colonized by other European nations, and even those who come from Italy's former colonies and occupied territories in East Africa may not speak Italian upon their arrival. Using a native Italian collaborator is one way for authors to establish linguistic credibility as they speak to an Italian audience. Other authors publish works first or concurrently in languages other than Italian, allowing multiple languages to cross-pollinate each other. A small but increasing number of Afro-Italian authors, however, grew up in Italy and write in Italian as a native language. Ubax Cristina Ali Farah is one such author, and her first novel, *Madre piccola* [Little Mother, 2007], is narrated by characters who speak both Italian and Somali with native fluency. This novel tells the interlocking stories of three protagonists who migrate to Italy after the eruption of civil war in Somalia in 1991. Tracing

these characters' attempts to cope with trauma and forge new communities, the novel explores the complicated ways in which language at once connects and separates people. With its intricately woven tapestry of narration, dialogue, and song in Italian and Somali, Ali Farah's work not only writes the experiences of minority and migrant Italians onto the Italian literary scene, but also demonstrates their ability to bring aesthetic innovation to the Italian language and literary canon (Brancato, 2008: p. 58).

Some literary texts are centrally concerned with exploring mechanisms of racialization and expose racism in various forms: job and housing discrimination, insults on the streets, racial stereotyping, physical violence, and the assumption that people with dark skin are foreigners. These and other works raise significant questions about the nature of multiculturalism in Italy:

Who is recognized as part of the community, and what are the conditions for membership?
What are the conditions and limits of "tolerance" for those considered to be outsiders?
What transnational trajectories and networks link this destination to the rest of the world?

The Italian-Congolese author Jadelin Gangbo raises these questions in an œuvre rich in aesthetic experimentation. Like Cristina Ali Farah, Gangbo writes as a native speaker of Italian, having grown up in Italy after emigrating from the Republic of Congo as a young child. In his first novel, *Verso la notte bakonga* [Toward the Bakongo Night, 1999], Gangbo narrates a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story that unfolds as his protagonist explores what it means to be a Black European man in Paris and Barcelona as well as in his hometown of Bologna. His second novel, *Rometta e Giulileo* Romiet and Julio, (2001), experiments with mixing different registers of language (youth slang and antiquated Italian drawn from translations of Shakespeare) as it represents life in a racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood. His third novel, *Due volte* [Two Times, 2009], features twin African children abandoned in an Italian orphanage. In all these explorations of marginality in contemporary Italy, Gangbo challenges his readers to question their assumptions about race, culture, community, and the boundaries between the real and the fictive. Collectively, these authors emphasize that "They are new voices in the discourse on an Italian multicultural identity and point out that the nation's alleged homogenous identity is nothing but a deliberately constructed myth" (Di Maio, 2009: p. 120).

Portugal and *Afro*-Lusophone Writing

There exists today a well-established body of literature in Portuguese from Portugal's former colonies of Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé

and Principe. Most of this literature centers on continental Africa, while the African diaspora in Portugal plays only a marginal role. A diverse body of Afro-Brazilian literature explores the contours of the African diaspora in Brazil and interrogates the cultural and historical ties that link Africa and Brazil, but it is generally little concerned with the African diaspora within the borders of the former colonizing power. In a small but growing group of texts, nonetheless, some writers who are African or of African descent give life in Portugal an important place. This emergence of new voices in Afro-Portuguese cultural expression extends beyond literature: documentary film and rap music, for instance, have been cited as two of the most significant expressive genres produced by Black and mixed-race residents of Portugal (Knudson-Vilaseca, 2007).

The presence of the African diaspora in Portugal is by no means a new phenomenon, since slavery (exploiting at first "mouros" from North Africa and later primarily "negros" from sub-Saharan Africa) was practiced on Portuguese soil from the mid-fourteenth century until it was finally abolished by decree in the metropole in 1869 (Ramos Tinhorão, 1988: p. 43; Marques, 2008: pp. 115–16). After that date, many slaves' descendents continued to live in Portugal and assimilated into Portuguese society. Today, Portugal is home to over 100 000 legal "foreigners" from the African continent, largely from the five African nations formerly colonized by Portugal, and to a number of illegal immigrants. The majority of African immigrants arrived after these countries gained independence between 1973 and 1975. In addition, a number of Portuguese residents who were born in Portugal are of African descent. Precise numbers are difficult to obtain, since the Portuguese government does not publish statistics about the racial or ethnic composition of its population (Reiter, 2008: p. 407). Many of the short stories of the Cape Verdean author Orlanda Amarílis portray the life of emigrants from Cape Verde in Portugal, notably in the collection *Cais do Sodré Té Salamansa* (1974) and explore the forms of solidarity created through everyday interactions as Cape Verdeans in Lisbon negotiate the harsh realities of life in urban Portugal and reflect on memories of their lost homeland.

People of African descent in Portugal are frequently treated as foreigners regardless of where they were born, and public attention tends to focus more on issues surrounding immigration than on race or ethnicity. A law enacted in 1981, in fact, redefined a number of Portuguese-born children of immigrants as foreigners by making their citizenship contingent upon proof that their parents had lived and worked legally in Portugal for at least six years, while at the same time it offered citizenship rights to people of Portuguese descent living abroad (including in Africa) (Fikes, 2009: p. 44). The perception that members of "visible minority" groups are necessarily foreigners has been linked to Portugal's anxieties about its own status as a modern European nation and a member of the European Union. Bernd Reiter, for instance, characterizes the 1981 citizenship law as part of a nation-building project designed to distance Portugal legally and discursively from its ex-colonies by emphasizing its "modernity, Europeanness, whiteness, and difference to the non-European world" (Reiter, 2008: p. 407). The refusal to acknowledge that non-White people may be Portuguese

appears in several taunts and comments made to a Black Portuguese character in José Eduardo Agualusa's 2007 novel *As Mulheres do Meu Pai* [translated as *My Father's Wives*, 2008]. This character, the son of Angolan immigrants, ultimately claims his right to a thoroughly Portuguese identity, even as his White companion explores the nature of her connection to Africa through the Angolan man she wrongly believes to be her father. The novel as a whole is a sweeping tour of memory, history, representation, family, and racial politics across southern Africa. Agualusa himself is an Angolan of Portuguese and Brazilian descent, and his numerous novels trace the connections and interdependencies that link Angola with other Lusophone spaces, as well as the ties between these spaces and other cultural and political centers.

The literature of the African diaspora in Portugal, like Lusophone African literature in general, is influenced both by the history of Portugal's colonial rule in Africa and by the mythologies that sustained this rule. Even Afro-Portuguese and Lusophone African literature that does not thematically foreground the independence struggles of Portugal's former colonies is nonetheless often invested in contesting the ideology of Lusotropicalism, a central myth of Portuguese imperialism that continues to affect Portuguese attitudes toward Black cultural production today. First explicitly articulated in 1951 by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, Lusotropicalism compares Portuguese colonialism favorably to other colonialisms by positing it as a soft, natural form of cultural and racial mingling that spread as Portuguese explorers married and procreated with indigenous women. The dictator António Salazar drew on this myth of Portuguese exceptionalism in his efforts to justify ongoing imperial rule by claiming that the colonies formed part of one multi-continental and "pluri-racial" Portuguese nation. Today Lusotropicalism lingers in the Portuguese imaginary in the form of a reluctance to acknowledge the brutality and the long-lasting consequences of its colonial enterprise, though Kesha Fikes argues that a Lusotropical idealization of miscegenation largely gave way in the 1990s to a widespread perception of blackness and whiteness as polarized entities, facilitating Portugal's self-definition as European in contrast to its Black African "others" (Fikes, 2009: pp. 7–8).

One author whose work challenges the postcolonial forms of the Lusotropical mythology is Germano Almeida, who lives and writes in Cape Verde. His novel *Eva* (2006) is one of the relatively few works by Lusophone African authors that emphasize postcolonial immigration to Portugal. The main action of *Eva* takes place in Lisbon, where the well-traveled narrator conducts journalistic interviews with several of his Cape Verdean compatriots who have chosen to live in exile because they opposed the idea of independence from Portugal. One of these compatriots is an acquaintance with whom he shares a longstanding passion for the same woman, a white Portuguese immigrant to Cape Verde. Philip Rothwell argues that in its portrayal of these two men's strategic revelation and withholding of intimate knowledge about this woman, *Eva* stages a cruel charade of exclusion and complicity that masks itself as love; in this way, the text distorts and exposes the Lusotropical myth of love between the colonizer and the colonized, revealing the underlying cruelty that continues to structure Portugal's neocolonial relation to its former colonies (Rothwell, 2009: pp. 401–10).

Spain and *Afro*-Hispanophone Writing

Spain, like Italy and Portugal, has in recent years undergone a shift from being a country that sends abroad a large number of emigrants to being a country that receives immigrants. This shift, along with Spain's ongoing participation in the EU, has led to a variety of new debates, policies, and challenges regarding immigration and minority populations. Afro-Spanish literature has yet to establish itself as a significant intervention within such debates, but it nonetheless contributes unique perspectives to the landscape of African diasporic cultural production in Europe. The majority of African diasporic texts from Spain are written by immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, both by authors from Spain's former colony of Equatorial Guinea and by those born in non-Hispanophone countries. Although the corpus remains relatively small and faces significant barriers in terms of distribution and recognition, it still plays a significant role in bearing witness to Spain's new realities and obscured histories. The territories of what is now called Equatorial Guinea came under Spanish control beginning with the islands in 1778; the continental area called Río Muni was added to the Spanish colony in 1900. During the last several decades of the colonial period, Spain was ruled by the dictator Francisco Franco. This combination of colonial rule, linguistic isolation from other African colonies, and a dictatorship that strictly censored the flow of information to the colony served effectively to isolate Equatorial Guinea from nationalist movements elsewhere in Africa and the diaspora (See Ugarte, 2010: pp. 30–1; Ngom Faye, 2008: p. 90). As a result, Guinean literature in Spanish developed for the most part without the anti-colonialist and cultural nationalist influences of *négritude*, which played a much more significant role in Anglophone, Francophone, and Portuguese African literatures. After Equatorial Guinea gained independence in 1968, however, its literature entered a phase characterized by resistance to the highly repressive dictatorship of Francisco Macías Nguema and by efforts to articulate a cohesive national identity (Ngom Faye, 2008: p. 90). This literature, which consisted mostly of poetry, was written largely in Spain by exiles who had fled Macías's regime. As Mbare Ngom Faye argues, it drew on idealized descriptions of the homeland and evocations of shared memories of violence to appeal to Equatorial Guineans in diaspora to imagine themselves as part of one nation, united beyond ethnic divisions (Ngom Faye, 2008: pp. 95–6). Guinean literature had a very limited circulation in the 1970s due to the marginalized status of Guinean expatriates in Spain and to the Franco government's ban on the dissemination of information about the former colony, but the 1980s brought greater freedom and the publication of a number of significant works by poets in exile, including Juan Balboa Boneke, Anacleto Oló Mibuy, Pedro Cristino Bueriberi Bokesa, and Raquel Ilonbé (Ngom Faye, 2008: pp. 94–6; Brancato, 2009: pp. 38–9; Ugarte, 2010: p. 49; Lewis, 2007: pp. 14–64).

Guinean literature in the 1980s and beyond has joined other Afro-European literatures in addressing diverse facets of life between Spain and Africa. Donato Ndongo, a longtime advocate for Afro-Hispanic literature (and editor of the groundbreaking

1984 anthology *Antología de la literatura guineana*), has written three novels that sharply interrogate processes of racialization and colonialism in Europe and Africa. His third novel, *El metro* [The Subway, 2007], narrates the disillusionment of a young man who emigrates illegally to Spain from Cameroon in a dangerous boat passage, struggles to find work and evade the Spanish authorities, and is eventually stabbed to death by a gang of skinheads who observe him with a white woman at a metro entrance. Among the other works by diasporic Guinean authors that explore connections between Spain and Equatorial Guinea are the poetry collection *Memoria de laberintos* [Memory of Labyrinths, 1999] and the extended essay *Cómo ser negro y no morir en Aravaca* [How to Be Black and Not Die in Aravaca, 1994] by Francisco Zamora Loboch; the short fiction collection *Adjá-Adjá y otros relatos* [Hustle and Other Stories, 2000] by Maximiliano Nkogo; the novel *Huellas bajo tierra* [Footprints Under the Earth, 1998] by Joaquín Mbomío Bacheng; and the novel *El desmayo de Judas* [Judas's Faint, 2001] by Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel (Ugarte, 2010: pp. 90–104, 112–32).

In addition to examining the complex dynamics that shape life in the protagonist's Guinean village, Ndongo's *El metro* performs the important work of bringing to light the operations of racism in contemporary Spanish society, especially as they affect immigrants. Similarly to Italy and Portugal, Spain has often been perceived as a border zone between Europe and Africa. This position of geographical, cultural, and even racial in-betweenness has produced in all three countries a tendency to imagine themselves as fundamentally non-racist and especially welcoming toward African immigrants, but this myth of cultural tolerance exists alongside episodes of racist violence and state efforts to secure good standing within the EU and to respond to significant pressure (particularly from France) to observe migration and asylum policies by enacting increasingly restrictive policies regarding immigration and citizenship (Flesler, 2008: pp. 17–54). In Spain, tensions over immigration are exacerbated by media and political rhetoric that uses the language of "invasion" to describe African immigrants and their descendents, a vocabulary that recalls the history of military incursions into what is now Spain by North African occupiers and which therefore can easily trigger an aggressively nationalist response (Flesler, 2008: pp. 56–57). Daniela Flesler argues that even some literary texts that document and denounce the harsh conditions of immigrant life in Spain slip into a rhetoric that portrays contemporary Moroccan immigration as "the return of the Moors" to claim their land, and thus paradoxically contribute to the impression that rejection of Moroccan immigrants is justifiable as a protective measure against the threatening invaders (Flesler, 2008: p. 94).

Another challenge faced by Afro-Spanish literature is its potential recruitment into discourses of exoticism fueled by texts marketed as sensational portrayals of African (and often Muslim) otherness (Brancato, 2009: p. 42; Ugarte, 2010: pp. 162–4), a phenomenon which has also been observed in France (Hargreaves, 2006; Thomas, 2007: pp. 114–30, 131–54). Sabrina Brancato remarks that texts by authors whose origins lie outside Spain's former empire seem most subject to being marketed in this way; nevertheless, she notes several important Afro-Spanish texts that resist this

tendency: *Rebeldía* [Rebellion, 1996] by Inongo-vi-Makomé; the autobiographical *Más allá del mar de arena* [Beyond the Sea of Sand, 2005] by Agnès Agboton; and *Amina* (2007) by Sidi Seck, a work originally written in French but published in Spanish.

Germany and *Afro*-German Writing

The term "Afro-German" may refer to people born into a wide variety of historical circumstances: slaves and servants brought to Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the children of German settlers and African women in colonial Africa; the children of German women and African soldiers in the French army during World War I; the children of German women and African American soldiers during World War II; and African immigrants and their descendents, among others. As Michelle Wright has shown, "Most often, Afro-Germans identify themselves differently depending on the context or group, understanding themselves as connected to a rather rich array of nations, ethnicities and communities" (Wright, 2003: p. 296). Although the members of this highly diverse population have historically been scattered throughout Germany and isolated from each other, the 1980s saw the emergence of a community with a common identity that explicitly defined itself as Afro-German. In fact, according to Wright, the term "Afro-German" usually indicates someone of *both* German and African descent. It is important to note, however, that this term is not used by all Germans of African descent and that people define themselves in a variety of ways: as Black German, Afro-European, African, German, or African American, or with hyphenated terms that include an African nationality (Wright, 2004: p. 195). As we saw earlier, analogous conclusions could be applied to the French context. Yet, this community, which can be characterized as thoroughly diasporic in orientation because of its transnational outreach to other communities that experience discrimination, has proclaimed its existence and advanced its causes through organizations such as the Afro-Deutsche Frauen [Afro-German Women] and the Initiativer Schwarze Deutsche und Schwarze in Deutschland [Black German and Blacks in Germany Initiative] (Wright, 2004: pp. 195–6). These organizations and others like them have struggled for rights and recognition against the simultaneous insistence that anti-black racism does not and has never existed in Germany (a notion proven wrong by research on issues such as constructions of race in Germany's colonial enterprise and on the persecution of Afro-Germans by the Nazi regime) (El-Tayeb, 2001, 2005: pp. 27–60; Campt, 2005) and that Black people cannot possibly be German, even if they were born and grew up in Germany (El-Tayeb, 2005: pp. 27–30; Wright, 2004: pp. 184–94). "The Afro-German," Wright argues, "is both an Other-from-within (a member of that country) and an Other-from-Without (misrecognized as an African)" (Wright, 2003: p. 296).

The first literary assertion of Afro-German identity occurred with the 1984 publication of the seminal anthology *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren*

ihrer Geschichte [*Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out;* Ayim, 1992] (Ayim, Oguntoye and Schultz, 1986). This publication was followed by a number of autobiographies in the 1990s and early 2000s, including *Daheim unterwegs. Ein deutsches Leben* [translated as *Invisible Woman: Growing Up Black in Germany*, 1998] by Ika Hügel-Marshall; *Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany* (1999) by Hans J. Massaquoi; *Die Farben unter meiner Haut* [The Colors Under My Skin, 2002] by Thomas Usleber, and *Schokoladenkind. Meine Familie und andere Wunder* [Chocolate Child, 2003] by Abini Zöllner (Mazón and Steingröver, 2005: p. 11; Hopkins, 2005: pp. 199–206). According to Leroy Hopkins, Afro-German autobiography frequently follows the pattern of a "reconceptualized *Bildungsroman*" in which the narrator – often a woman – gradually acquires a consciousness of the racial attitudes that surround her and learns to take pride in her own identity with the help of the African diasporic community (Hopkins, 2005: p. 202). These works, in Wright's estimation, represent efforts to literally write Afro-Germans into the history of a nation that has for a long time refused to recognize them (Wright, 2004: p. 192). Beyond autobiography, hip-hop has become a significant vehicle for the self-representation of the African diaspora in Germany and for the advocacy of diasporic consciousness and solidarity (El-Tayeb, 2003). Finally, Afro-Germany's major literary figure outside the field of nonfiction is the poet May Ayim, who was also the editor of the anthology *Showing Our Colors*. Her 1995 poetry collection *Blues in schwarz weiss* [*Blues in Black and White*, 2003] explores art, community, diaspora, blackness, racism, and other issues in nuanced and complex detail. Through all these works, Afro-Germans are making themselves visible not just under the sign of difference from a dominant group, but as able contributors to a rich panorama of German, Black European, and African diasporic cultural life.

If indeed a field of Black European studies is going to be accorded increasing legitimacy then, as Sabrina Brancato has argued, "rather than being seen as a subcategory of Europeanness – which would involve a perpetuation of a Eurocentric vision – Afro-Europe should be incorporated into the debate on European identity as a constitutive element of the cultural heritage of the continent" (Brancato, 2008: p. 11). Such inquiries will necessarily foster new ways of allowing cross, inter, and trans-disciplinary research to operate in productive partnerships with related research in the Humanities and Social Sciences and will underline more rigorous ways of understanding the global nature of entangled and multifaceted historical relationships, which in turn will serve to challenge those who have elected to adhere to narrow conceptualizations of twenty-first-century European identities.

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The Comparative and the Relational: Meditations on Racial Method

David Theo Goldberg

Much of the work on race and racism has been indexed, perhaps understandably, to local national contexts. This mode of analysis has ranged across historical, sociological, political, legal, cultural, and indeed critical contributions. It marks a great deal of what goes under the designation of critical race studies. Racial conception and racist social arrangements at least at first blush seem indelibly tied to specific national socio-political, economic, legal, and cultural conditions. Racial arrangements and their implications are overwhelmingly considered a response to and product of local arrangements, relations of power, and historical legacies. They seem to acquire meaning and take on significance only as a function of the specific contexts contained and constrained by the fabric of life, meaning-making, and administrative arrangements indexed to a specific society, a state configuration, at a given place and time. In this, racial studies in the broad follow the dominant strand of ethnic studies quite faithfully.

Here 'whiteness studies' is a contemporary case in point: think of its emergence over the past twenty years in the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and more recently in various European countries (Bulmer and Solomos, 2008). How Irish, Jews, Italians, East Europeans, the working class, or for that matter Indians ("Hindu"), Syrians, Lebanese (in the US or South Africa), or Indonesians (in the Netherlands) became white has been narrowly tailored to the relevant legal and political histories in this place or that. Perhaps understandably so, as the histories differ from one site to the next, how the status and privilege associated with "being white" are ascribed, "earned," or denied are very much a matter of where and how. But whiteness studies simply represents what has long been at play in thinking about racial and ethnic matters.

It follows from this that, where studies seek a larger frame of reference for thinking about race and racism – both, note, in their singularity – they have resorted to a methodology of comparativism. They seek to compare the histories of, for the most part discretely conceived, state experiences. And the comparisons have tended to draw together almost exclusively those states considered to exhibit the most extreme and extremely different modes of state racism.

These dominant examples of compared racisms are taken to indicate either that their differences are not so extreme as first thought or to reveal, at least tentatively, that there are a limited number of different models for state-based racisms. So the United States and South Africa have been repeatedly placed besides each other to reveal their similarities – consider, for instance, Jack Cell (1982) on histories of segregation, Massey and Denton (1993) on American apartheid, and so on. Brazil, has been juxtaposed to both to reveal their relatively significant distinctions and overlaps – from Pierre van den Berghe (1967) to Carl Degler (1971), and from George Frederickson (1982) to Anthony Marx (1998). Today, many are turning to apartheid South Africa as the appropriately revealing comparison point for the structures of oppression imposed by Israel on Palestinians (Carter, 2006; Davis, 2004; Glaser, 2003).

There's no doubt these studies have been useful, revealing similarities and differences, bringing to notice the ways racial governmentalities from one state to another converge and diverge, how racial consciousness can take hold, the work it does, the power it expresses, the shaping of national consciousness it effects, and so on. The specificity of the local, then, has been important in the development of critical studies of race and racism, even crucially so. Also, local conditions, given the structures of political, economic, social, cultural, and legal life, in large have been configured throughout modernity at the state or even more local level.

Literary focus on race – both novelistic writing in which race is a major theme and critical writing about such writing – has tended to be similarly restrictive within national configuration. Consider twentieth-century contributions from the likes of Hurston, Faulkner, Wright, Ellison, and Baldwin to Roth, Morrison, Walker, and Percival Everett. Or in the South African case, Alan Paton, Njabulo Ndebele, Zakes Mda, Nadine Gordimer, Andre Brink, J.M. Coetzee and Zoe Wicomb. The only surprise is that the list could be extended so easily, whether the reference is to Brazil or Britain, the Netherlands or Australia, Canada or France.

The point can be reiterated for writing about such writing, as two otherwise wonderfully insightful works by Nobel literature laureates attest: Coetzee's *White Writing* and Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*. Similarly, where there is reference in such studies to racial conditions or experience outside of the nation-state primarily at issue in the study, the frame of reference and mode of analysis are overwhelmingly likely to be comparative.

Such a comparativist frame, resting as it does on a presumptive model of geographic discreteness, on incontrovertible and reductive cultural, socio-political, and legal uniqueness, however, is deeply connected to the structuring assumptions of post-war

area studies (Spivak, 2003: p. 2–3). It may hide as much as it reveals. Accounts restricted to these frames of relative localism seem to miss a crucial dimension for comprehending racial significance and racist conditioning in all their complexity. While undeniable that racial configuration and arrangement may speak thickly to local conditions and reference points, it is nevertheless the case that racial conditions pretty much anywhere are shored up and sustained by (at least implicit reference to) racial articulations elsewhere. And while any claim to the universality of racial thinking and practices is problematic, at best, local racial ideas and understandings are likely to have been enlarged, if not to have emanated, as a result of wider racial circulations.

To this comparativism that has dominated analysis of race and racism, then, there can be contrasted another tradition of theoretically driven critical work. The latter can be traced genealogically to those such as W.E.B. du Bois, Ruth Benedict, Oliver Cromwell Cox, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, Edward Said, and Stuart Hall. I will call this counter-disposition relational and interactive rather than discretely comparativist. Crucial to note is that the work of each of these analysts grew out of linking racial conception and racist expression constitutively to histories of the colonial condition. Amitav Ghosh's recent novel, *Sea of Poppies*, and his now well known exchange with Dipesh Chakrabarty about the latter's *Provincializing Europe* signal a contrasting way of approaching the subject matter at hand. (Yasmine Gooneratne's *The Pleasure of Conquest* or Tan Twan Eng's *The Gift of Rain* suggest others.)

It's not that racism is reducible only to some narrow connection to colonial subjection and repression, ordering and governmentality. Colonial outlooks, interests, dispositions, and arrangements nevertheless set the tone and terms, its frameworks for conceiving and thinking about, the horizons of possibility for engaging and distancing, exploiting and governing, admitting and administering those conceived as racially distinct and different. Additionally, relatedly for elevating and privileging those deemed racially to belong to the dominant.

Racial conception and racist practice are *relational*. They are to be fully comprehended, then, only once the constitutively relational aspects are not just integrated into but centered in the account. The conceptions and comprehensions as well as the institutional arrangements and exclusionary expressions no doubt are deeply local in the exact meanings and resonances they exhibit as well as the effects and implications to which they in the end give rise. But these local resonances nevertheless almost always are tied to extra- and trans-territorial conceptions and expressions, those that circulate in wider ripples of meaning and practice.

Local expression can be both prompted by and prompt interactive expressions elsewhere. They come and go with travelers, commerce, governing ideas, mail and media (letters, newspapers, books, comics, magazines, journals, sermons, lectures, radio and television programming, etc.). Terms circulate, practices are shaped, and fail, only to be taken up and refined in environments that prove to be more conducive to their articulation. Ideas and practices from one place interact with conditions and expressions tried and tested elsewhere.

A comparativist analytic might enable one to indicate how ideas and practices in one place – a nation-state – have taken on a meaning, a nuance, a "color" or an impact different to expression elsewhere. But it fails to account for the interactive relation between repressive racial ideas and exclusionary or humiliating racist practices across place and time, unbounded by the presumptive divides of state boundaries. Indeed, a comparativist account pays attention to the relational only as an observed outcome of the compared states, failing for the most part to consider the constitutive condition of the relational components for their very possibility, historically and manifestly. Race and racisms are also and at least as importantly globally circulating, interacting, relational conditions as they are locally indexed, resonant, impacting.

In a recent discussion piece for *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Frank Dikötter at first looks like he is concerned to develop something like a relational account. He dismisses standard accounts of racism as trading on understanding it "as a uniform phenomenon, as if there were only one form of universal in its origins, causes, meanings and effects." By contrast, he insists, racisms are not "fixed or static entities" but "interactive," taking "appropriation, differential usage and re-signification as key to understanding the rapid spread of racist worldviews in parts of the world outside Europe" (Dikötter, 2008: p. 1482).

Dikötter at least points in the right direction. Although he starts out well he all too quickly seems to choose the cul-de-sac fork in the road. His account bogs down in an argument for recognizing the unique national traditions of racist articulation in areas of the world outside of Europe, such as Japan, China and parts of West Africa. Far from enabling a robust relational account, Dikötter's is an "interactionism" among already constituted discrete national configurations, suggesting perversely exactly the sort of universalism of racisms he claims to reject. "[P]eople across all continents," he concludes, "express profound interest in the outward appearance of people and are likely to divide people along some sort of racial classification, "white" and "black" being poles now adopted almost everywhere." Indeed, he even gives title to this: "The racialization of the globe," from "Latin America to East Asia" (Dikötter, 2008: p. 1494). By contrast, the relational account I'm suggesting takes leave from this universalizing of racial naturalization bound to finding color prejudice recurrent from Latin America to East Asia. Racial relationality turns by contrast on two *interactive* claims. Dikötter loosely recognizes the first, only to pull back from its development and ignore its implications.

In the first instance, racial ideas, meanings, exclusionary and repressive practices in one place are influenced, shaped by, and fuel those elsewhere. Racial ideas and arrangements circulate, cross borders, shore up existing or prompt new ones as they move between established political institutions. Gayatri Spivak characterizes something like this in literature as "uneven permeability," and the notion reflects the movements and impacts at work here (Spivak, 2003: p. 17). Ideas and practices emanating from elsewhere are made local; local practices that appear homegrown more often than not have a genealogy at least in part not simply limited to the local. The local may provide a particular timbre and color to the ideas' reference or application,

their sound and style. It gives *voice* to racial expression and racist arrangement in specific ways. But while the accent may be unique, as too the semantic content and even the syntax, their influences and implications most often are not.

Who counts as "black" and who "white" differs from one place to another, as too do specific meanings attached to the designations and their placements. Nonetheless, in the broad, their relational conditions – to each other as concepts, to the pragmatics of those concepts wherever in use – strongly suggest that, once so designated and determined, conditions of privilege and disprivilege, power and vulnerability will pertain.

Second, racist arrangements anywhere – in any place – depend to a smaller or larger degree on racist practice most everywhere else. Absent racist institutionalization most everywhere else local (at least in every place marked by modernity) racist expression, if not disposition, would certainly be less resonant and impactful, if not (quite) cease in significance altogether. The support racial thinking and racism "here" gets from "there" – both as a symbolic matter and materially – sustains and extends the impacts. This, in short, might better be characterized as the *globalization of the racial* than the racialization of the globe.

The globalization of the racial is predicated on the understanding that racial thinking and its resonances circulated by boat in the European voyages of discovery, imported into the impact zones of colonization and imperial expansion. Racial ordering, racist institutional arrangement, and racial control were key instruments of colonial governmentality and control. Made local to apply to lived conditions of the everyday, the colonies became in turn sites of state experimentation, as Bernard Cohn long argued (Cohn, 1996), laboratories for metropolitan class rule, the maintenance of order, rehearsals in the intimacies and morals of class life (Stoler, 2003, 2006). Reimported as the baggage of colonial administrators and the "return" of the imperial repressed of colonial charge, strands of racial governmentality seeped into, ordered if not colonized also the imaginations of metropolitan burghers. The racial out there came, by extension and connection, default and design, to shape home rule, if with local specificity. Cohn insisted that "the metropole and colony have to be seen in a unitary field of analysis" (Cohn, 1996: p. 4). I am urging, by extension, that this unitary field of analysis is deeply if differentially, heterogeneously, relational.

A relational account accordingly reveals something not otherwise comprehensible. It signals how state formations or histories, logics of oppression and exploitation are linked, whether causally or symbolically, ideationally or semantically:

> A comparativist account undertakes to reveal through analogy. A relational account reveals through indicating how effects are brought about as a result of historical political or economic, legal or cultural links, the one acting upon another.
> A comparativist account may choose to contrast racially conceived or ordered relations of production in one place and another. A relational analysis will stress the (re)production of relational ties and their mutually effecting and reinforcing impacts.

A comparativist account contrasts and compares. A relational account connects, materially and affectively, causally and implicatively.

For example, an account in which contemporary Israel is *compared* with apartheid South Africa aims to tell us something about Israeli treatment of Palestinians analogous to white treatment of blacks in apartheid South Africa. And the comparison then serves to sustain the implication that the same sort of response to apartheid South Africa – economic sanctions and cultural boycotts, for instance – may properly be in order in the case of Israel. The account makes a point through likenesses and implications from those analogical connections.

Such an account, however, can obscure as much as it reveals, seeking to establish likenesses by ignoring distinctions. So though the Palestinian territories seem like Bantustans or Homelands, there are ways in which they are not quite like them also. The territories no longer provide labor to Israel in the way Homelands did to white South Africa, and were set up always intending to do so. Apartheid was about formalized *segregation*, contemporary Israel seems wedded to a policy of more or less absolutized *separation*, economically and socially, to invoke a distinction John Hope Franklin made useful in talking about his experiences growing up in the American South. To press the point, comparing the occupied territories to Bantustans ignores the distinctions between the West Bank and Gaza. The former now is akin to a colony, settlers and all; Gaza is more like a highly policed, very oppressive concentration or prison camp.

It is easier to respond to comparativist criticisms than to relational accounts. To object to a comparativist account requires simply pointing out disanalogies: for example, that Palestinian Israelis have many of the rights Jewish Israelis do (of course, they don't have equal rights, a point often side-stepped in the name of security); they vote for Knesset representation; they can own (some) property, etc. Often, the response takes on the indignation of the "how dare you *compare*," never "how dare you *relate*:" Israel couldn't possibly be like apartheid South Africa, let alone Nazi Germany, as Israeli existence has been threatened as South Africa's never was; Jews were subject to the exterminating angel of Nazi final solution – another point of contextual comparison – while Israel is simply defending itself from the exterminating angel (once again)!

Evidence of this preference for the counter-comparativist resides in attempts to reduce relational critics to comparativist accounts (I am tempted to say accountings, intending both meanings of the term, the making up, a narration, and the ledger, the balance-sheet, of counting). Some relationalists will cite instances of Israel's own military officers urging that the control of Palestinian refugee camps such as Jenin tactically should follow or learn from the Nazi vice-grip of the Warsaw Ghetto. Others have long pointed out apartheid South Africa's support for Israel, militarily and economically, in reciprocating Israel's willingness to consort with the apartheid state and in criticism of the A.N.C.'s longstanding support for the Palestinian cause. Relationists here are especially concerned to reveal how new formations look to older modes of

repression for resources of control and domination, relating new circumstances to the experiences of the tried and tested elsewhere, no matter the "pedigree." Their pro-Israel critics will react with horror, chiding them for comparing victims (Israelis, Jews) to villainous exterminators and arch-racists. How dare you indeed.

For relational accounts, accordingly, specificity is important, the micro-details of the considerations related revealing of the conditions needing to be accounted for, to be explained. For comparativist accounts, the broad stroke is more likely revealing. If the latter works through drawing on impressions, the former reveals by showing how movement in one place ripples through impacts in another, and how structures at one time are taken up and put to work in another elsewhere.

Here, it is not just that Gaza is *like* (or, depending on one's point of view, unlike) the Warsaw Ghetto, a comparison point. Rather, that some Israeli military officers are on record for explicitly invoking the Warsaw Ghetto, as a model for thinking about how to regulate the Palestinian refugee camps, suggests that the Warsaw Ghetto provides a model. It is an experiment the process of which can and has been taken up by later repressive regimes to suppress an ethnoracially identified population considered dangerous and expendable. Just as early twentieth century British and German concentration camps in Africa – the British camp imprisoning Boer enemies during the Anglo-Boer War, for instance, or the Germans rounding up Herero in German South West Africa first to exploit their labor and then to exterminate them – became models for the Nazis almost half a century later (Gilroy, 2000). Comparativist methodological dispositions are unlikely to reveal this sort of connection, its efficacy and productivity in helping to produce the technologies of repression and control. Or if they did it would only be indirectly, as an inductive inference after the fact, at best, not a constitutive connection. That could only be composed and comprehended relationally.

Comparisons, as I say, are generated outwards from within the parameters – the bounded reference points – of states. Within these parameters, comparisons of course may be especially revealing. To take a different reference point, comparisons can indicate that average wealth of blacks in the US, say, is significantly less than that of whites in a given society or social domain, that blacks are unemployed traditionally at twice the rate, charged more for insurance, automobile purchases, mortgages, suffer a significantly shorter life expectancy, and so on. But all this tells us, as such, is the *fact* of inequality. In order to determine whether there is discrimination at work, patterns would have to be established, a connection to interests or intentions, dispositions to or reproductions of treating the racially differentiated differently. In short, the move from comparison to a conclusion regarding racial discrimination or racisms requires establishing certain sorts of patterns of relations.

To go back to drawing a revealing link between Auschwitz's Musselmanner and Gaza's Muslims, then, reveals two further considerations. First, I concede that comparisons of this kind can be powerful rhetorically and morally. It is hard to remain unmoved by the degradation experienced in the Nazi death camps. Those unmoved are probably in some mode of deep denial. An analogical comparison of a set of

experiences at another time and place shown to be like the one at hand in relevant respects is likely to effect at least a critical response, to move to action of some kind those who feel the analogical force. It is revealing, perhaps, that for a related reason, if pulling in the opposite direction, the analogy may be resisted: There can be no analogy here because the Nazi death camps were unique, the Holocaust exceptional. In a sense the denial is a resistance not simply to a comparison but to the taint of connection, of some sort of relation to exemplary evil. The larger point, one perhaps lost in the resistance to the analogy, as the case of the Israeli military officers demonstrates, is that comparisons like this can also be taken up for their more nefarious lessons in "effective" repressive state apparatuses.

Second, there can be a thin line sometimes between comparison and relation, bridged perhaps by some other form of argumentation or insight. That the ghetto of Gaza today may be (somewhat? sufficiently?) like the one in Warsaw in the late 1930s and early 1940s might be turned into something more causally connected via say a group psychoanalytic account that attempts to explain the former as a consequence of lingering psychic trauma fixating on a fantasized sense of ongoing victimization. I am less concerned here with the propriety or content of this argument than with its form, the ways in which analogicality can be taken up as a mode of causality, comparativism in the service of relationality. That comparativism can service the relational rather than the reverse reveals that relational accounts even in their specificity offer a wider, more telling purview. The relational undercuts the reach of the comparative, outstripping it. It subsumes comparison in a way the reverse cannot. Comparison can reveal an initial insight likely hidden from view but for the comparison. But it takes the relational to make evident the deeper connection constitutively unavailable to comparison.

The relational outstrips the comparative disposition precisely because it puts the elements in question into play, causally and productively, in relation to each other. The comparative holds the elements apart, insisting upon because assuming their discreteness. In this, the relation of the comparative disposition to the relational is reminiscent of the differing elements to which Descartes famously drew attention in his *Discourse on Method*. The first stage of philosophico-scientific method, Descartes insisted, was to decompose the constituent components of the object under analysis, breaking the object down into its most basic discrete elements in order to comprehend them in their simplest, barest formation (Descartes, 1637). In this, comparison consists of one to one (to one, reiterative) assessments of relevant conditions or social arrangements characteristic of each site. Relationality, by methodological contrast, involves mapping conditions in their interactivity, drawing out their transforming impacts. Relationality, in short, offers a cartography of reiterative impacts, of their transformations and redirections.

The supposed discreteness of the compared elements, as I have hinted, nevertheless is a product of the artifice of national (or local) boundaries. It is curious how the national continues to figure the analytic imaginary, to structure its possibilities, to limit analytic capacity and force. The national or state frame privileges comparison

over the relational perhaps because the comparativist frame analytically preserves by presupposing established boundaries, the socio-structural givens, in turn helping to fix them in place. Likewise, comparativism and the positivity of reductively empirical accounts of racial phenomena turn out to be mutually reinforcing, the boundary conditions of one mapping on to those of the other.

In service to the relational, then, the comparative accordingly is put to productive purpose, its insights extended, its inherent because presumptive and narrowing limits prised open. The comparative operates, at (its) best, at the level of first-order insight, uncovering what calls for extended exploration and ultimately what requires explanation. On its own, the comparative stops short, at the border – of the nation-state, perhaps of discipline and disciplinarity itself.

What then about the connection of the racial to the colonial raised in passing at the outset? As a point of comparison, the contrast of say contemporary racism in the US, South Africa, Latin America, Europe or, yes, also Israel-Palestine with colonial modalities of racial governance and control can tell us something about how things looked then and how they operate now. That can be revealing, as much about the differences as about the similarities. What a relational account adds, however, is not just the historical legacy. It enables one to see how the colonial shaped the contemporary, planted racisms' roots in place, designed its social conditions and cemented its structural arrangements. It reveals how, what today social agents might take as given, as supposedly natural conditions of the social, were socially composed by the relatively powerful over the backs of the relatively powerless, how far from natural they became naturalized, cemented and retained in place by a mix of design, default, ongoing social labor, habitus, and carelessness. By the (re)production of relationalities. The traces of those formations run very deep, both directly and by extension.

This is not to say that contemporary racisms are colonial; it is to point by contrast to their constitutive connection even as racisms' immediate prompts and expressions may have morphed over time. To put it in the register of contemporary theoretical commitments, it is to reveal how the postcolonial in its varieties remains marked constitutively though not completely by its colonial underpinnings. The postcolonial – and one could add the postracial in this vein too – does not signal the definitive and conclusive end of the colonial (or racial) so much as different, new modes of structural arrangements of exploitation and exclusion, disadvantage and dislocation. This is to insist that the horizons of possibility were set in place a good while ago, the modes of racial governance and the orders of racist exclusion, humiliation, and death deeply rooted in the sorts of disposition, social and personal, and their ordering by a subjugating govern-mentality to which coloniality and historical racism gave rise and which is constitutive therefore also of the condition(s) of postcoloniality and the postracial.

Today this may tell us only half the story, the half captured by the clichéd phrase "we are here because you were there." The "here" now especially across urban localities most everywhere not least in the global north is composed in part by the presence of the "there" in it, whether "you were there" or not. The often denied or resisted

heterogeneities making up the urban embody the connectivities to elsewheres and other times, the local also constituted anew by the distant in place and time. "Home" is reinvented in the complex and morphing relations between the familiar and the strange, the local and the distant, the here and the there, the now and the then (Simone, 2008).

So comparativism alone can tell us little about contemporary racial Europeanization, for instance, about what has brought about the indignities Europe's contemporary peoples of color – those peoples once thought to have no history – continue to suffer (through). Why are Europe's peoples of color so readily reduced in imagination if not by explicit reference (though that too) to "non-Europeans?" Why do Europe's supposedly "non-Europeans" continue to be so readily discriminated against in the employment and housing markets, and why are they relatively absent from its institutions of higher learning, as students, faculty, and staff? Perhaps the quickest and most direct way to make such connections is to point out that a people thought historically to have no history come to have thrust upon them relationally a history only racial fabrication can shape, a history – and so a contemporary – of racially ordered limitation and the exclusions expressed and reproduced in its name.

Revealing relationalities, thick and deep, then, uncovers constitutive and transforming connections, circuits of mutual making that are never (totally) unidirectional. In this joint making emerges the more likely prompts for co-habitation and mutuality than for resentment and rejection. The latter is a product of what we might characterize as a "politics of unrelation" rationalized by histories of antagonisms and violence towards each other. The former offers histories of complex co-constitution revealing possibilities in the face of challenge, the messy unsureties and insecurities that emerge and swirl around the politics of making each other (up) through making together rather than the violent predictabilities of the given and discrete. There is no guarantee here that the outcome will be viable, that the relations in question are not constraining. But the constitutive relations at work in any case are denied only at the extensive and damaging cost of repressive and repressing violence.

The challenge, then, is to trace the inter-coursing connectivities of the ethnoracial (Goldberg, 1993) across their geographies and temporalities. It is to comprehend their complexities, the possibilities and challenges, the convivialities but also the dangers and violence that heterogeneous socialities conjure and condition. And it is to sense the prompts and implications, fabrics and effects, fragilities and ambiguities that the transnational networks' ethnoracialities have long conceived and created.

I do not mean by all of this, either, to romanticize relationality, to cloak its constitutively deep historicity in an inevitable teleology of presumptive sameness. The substantive knowledge I am suggesting relationality as a method is concerned to produce will not be the same across different points or streams of connection, between different histories or their space-time loci. That the abstract methodological form of relationality – its logic – may be common across cases (that's what method amounts to) does not entail that this is an instance of what Paul Gilroy, in a different theoretical context, has called the Changing Same (Gilroy, 1997). From the fact that the form

of knowledge formation is common, it does not follow that the substantive knowledge thus produced, must be so too. Knowledge, all knowledge, is a product of form and content, as Kant made so clear, and relationality complicates.

Comparison without relationality, then, inevitably falls short, hypostatizes, sets the analytic horizons close to the vest. A comparativity open to relational extension is in effect a different mode of comparativity. Relationality reveals, pulls productively together, connects prompting and causal conditions across otherwise seemingly discrete instances and "uneven permeabilities," offers a more telling description of "making the world up" and an explanatory account where otherwise there is likely none, in fiction as much as in non-fiction. Race critical theory thus calls for a more complexly nuanced relationality as its method. The challenge is to place the method in play, in a methodological and theoretical practice at once self-conscious and systematic.

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23

Kidnapped Narratives: Mobility without Autonomy and the Nation/ Novel Analogy

Deborah Jenson

What does it augur when kidnappings are part of the primal scene of postcolonial nation building and self-representation? In this chapter, I explore the emblematic nature of kidnapping in the African diasporan colonial encounter with the conditions of textual and print culture. As a point of departure, let us consider an episode from the new millennium in which this history of kidnapped narratives was evoked. The 2004 Bicentennial in Haiti was supposed to have inaugurated a year of celebration and commemoration of the 1804 Independence and its global legacies of African diasporan self-emancipation and nineteenth century decolonization. Instead, in the morning of February 29, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was reported to have resigned, and to have left the country under American military escort for an unknown destination. By March 1, the plane carrying Aristide and his American-born wife Mildred had landed in the former French colony of the Central African Republic. "I was forced to leave," the Haitian leader said in a phone call to associates in the US (McLaughlin, 2004). In an address to the Haitian people broadcast on Telehaiti in Haiti, Aristide formulated a sort of descriptive maxim: his departure had been "a modern way to have a modern kidnapping" (Slevin and Wilson, 2004). Later he nuanced the description further as "a geo-political kidnapping, terrorism disguised as diplomacy" (Aristide, 2004). (A common witticism promptly emerged to describe the confluence of kidnapping and coup: a "coupnapping.")

Aristide then adapted to his own plight the memorable line pronounced by the famous Revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture on the occasion of the latter's kidnapping by the French government in June 1802. Toussaint had said, in Gonaives where he was embarked for his exile and imprisonment in France, "In overthrowing

me, they have uprooted, in Saint-Domingue, only the trunk of the tree of the liberty of the blacks; it will grow back because its roots are deep and numerous.[1] Aristide began by citing Toussaint and then, situating himself in "the shadow of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the genius of the race," he hybridized the original: "I declare in overthrowing me they have uprooted the trunk of the tree of peace, but it will grow back because the roots are Louverturian."[2] From that point on, Aristide's bicentennial billboards in the capital Port-au-Prince, adorned with back-to-back images of himself and Toussaint, proclaiming "Two Men, Two Centuries, The Same Vision," took on new meaning.

Aristide's allegations of kidnapping, whatever their ultimate truth or falsity, made history. Creole linguist Bryant Freeman called Aristide's highly disputed February 28 kreyòl resignation letter "one of the three most important historic documents in the history of Haiti" (Byrd, 2004).[3] They continue to resonate as a symbolic kidnapping of political process in a former colony inhabited by the descendants of self-emancipated slaves. The mimetic backdrop of the Haitian Revolution and the Haitian Independence – 1804 in 2004 – load this allegation of bicentennial kidnapping with the historical weight of a centuries-old struggle for black freedom and equality in the Western hemisphere. And like the roots of Toussaint's fabled "tree of liberty," the foundations of kidnapping as a form of colonial violence are numerous and deep.

Liminal and urgent narratives of kidnappings are representative of the dynamics of self-representation in an African diasporan population whose forced migration was shockingly reiterated in Napoleonic kidnappings within the families of Haitian Revolutionary leaders. This chapter will analyze the complex narrative of the kidnapping of the oldest son and sister-in-law of Haitian King Henry Christophe. Invoking the work of Benedict Anderson to broach the intrusion of layers of African diasporan and Haitian Revolutionary kidnappings into the relationship between novel and nation in the imagining of New World communities, I will argue that the history of kidnapping points to a different model of narratives in Haitian Revolutionary and early independence history: kidnapped narratives. This is a comparative literature field situated at the violent interstices of national literatures and the literature of the black Atlantic.

The African Diaspora in Triangular Trade and the Intercultural Modalities of Kidnapping

Just as Aristide's charges of kidnapping beg a "flash back" to the Haitian Revolutionary era, kidnappings within the families of Haitian Revolutionary leaders require contextualization within the mass kidnappings in the previous two centuries of the colonial slave trade. Kidnapping (*enlèvement* or *ravissement* in French) was the traumatic starting point of eventual creole or hybridized identity for the African diaspora in the Caribbean. It figures in virtually all family histories related to the New World angle of the triangular slave trade, and was a fundamental mechanism of the large-scale transnational

movement of populations in the colonial era. (Aristide's story simply involves an odd reversal of the directionality of colonial kidnapping, as Cilas Kemedjio has noted. The "modern kidnapping" described by Aristide was a kidnapping *back to Africa* rather than from it, symbolic of an attempt to put black power back in the continental Pandora's box from whence it came.)

As Prosper Mérimée's 1829 story "Tamango" brutally shows, the movement of large populations through the Middle Passage involved individual African profiteers partnering with the system of the Western slave trade. Through these kidnappings, Africans were pitched from a world of shared languages, cultures, and genealogies, to the near-absolute disruption of identity and representational structures that Orlando Patterson has described as "social death," from which a new social existence could only emerge like a phoenix. In the context of ravished individual and diasporan trajectories, the politics of the inhabitation of space are porous, violent, chaotically opportunistic, traumatic, and metamorphic. They frame a zone of inscrutable relations between law and non-law, in which anthropological structures of exchange and sacralization of familial bonds are negated wholesale; a zone in which, in other words, the way that communities "imagine" themselves, from the family to the tribe to the regional geopolitical and linguistic entity, has been subject to the severe stress of arbitrary nullification.

The drama of kidnapping into enslavement was well documented by Western observers of the colonial system from the early phases of Caribbean colonial exploitation. J.-B. Labat, in his famous late seventeenth/early eighteenth century Caribbean travel narrative, cited four categories of Africans forcibly brought to the New World as slaves. The first three categories represented a minor proportion of slaves: wrong doers; prisoners seized in local wars; and the personal slaves of princes who decided to or were compelled by necessity to sell them. The fourth category, far and away the largest, consisted of those who were randomly kidnapped for their human commercial value:

> Those that they steal away, either by order or with the consent of princes, or by certain thieves, called merchants, who kidnap everything they can catch in the way of men, women, and children, and take them to a ship or a merchant's establishment, where they are marked with hot irons and put into chains for security.[4] (Labat, 1993: p. 222)

Labat was in no way alone in his contemporaneous recognition of the linkage between kidnapping and slavery; among the many texts that protest kidnapping in the Atlantic slave trade are Willem Bosman's *Kidnapping, Enslaved, and Sold Away*, and John Newton's *Kidnapping and Retaliation*.[5]

And yet, in counter-distinction to this specificity of kidnapping in the African slave trade in the post-Columbian New World, kidnapping as intercultural movement is also, paradoxically, arguably at the very foundations of what we associate with "civilization." The name "Europe" itself derives from a mythological scene of a sort of Europeanization by kidnapping. In the myth of Europa, the Phoenician princess of

that name, wandering along a beach, was persuaded by Zeus, disguised as a snowy white bull, to ride upon his back. The ride turned into an abduction/ravishment, as Zeus carried the princess across the Mediterranean to Crete, where she became the mother of Minos, Lord of Crete. Norman Davies points out that among the connotations of Europa's ride is the movement of knowledge and reading practices from East to West, locating the cultural identity of Europe in a sort of kidnapping, ravishment, and familial merger of cross-cultural influences: "Zeus was surely transferring the fruits of the older Asian civilizations of the East to the new island colonies of the Aegean …". (Davies, 1996: p. xvi).

> Europa's ride provides the mythical link between Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece. Europa's brother, Cadmus, who roamed the world in search of her […] was credited with bringing the art of writing to Greece. (Davies, 1996: p. xvi)

On a mythological level, the origins of European civilization lie not in a founding nationalist scene, but in this involuntary hybridization that evokes the tension between force and exchange in colonialism.

The sheer scale of the phenomenon of kidnapping in the modern colonial slave trade, and its overlap with other forced and unforced migrations that have ceaselessly reshaped boundaries of ethnicities and other communities into diasporan trajectories, makes it a fertile testing ground with regard to Benedict Anderson's famous analogy between nation and novel in the 1983 *Imagined Communities*. Anderson argued that within the modern print cultural convergence of capitalism and technological dissemination, the novel highlighted a synchronic temporality that simultaneously characterized the nation's self-concept. In Pheng Cheah and Jonathan Culler's description, temporal mimesis in the novelistic narration overlapped with "the simultaneity that allows one to imagine a limited sovereign community beyond face-to-face relations." It goes on to say the nation is supported through the novel's "interpellation," its readers into an omniscient "symbolic mapping of external social space" (Cheah and Culler, 2003: p. 7–8). Anderson's linkage of the cognitive and infrastructural foundations of nationalism to the structure of the novel recalls Erich Auerbach's conception of a humanist historical perspective that is fundamental to literary realism. In other ways it recalls György Lukács' theory of the essential relationship between literary realism and the "totality" of capitalism, a totality outside of which the social comes to defy imagination. In both these latter literary/historical paradigms, the styles of our narration of historical experience shape that experience, just as historical infrastructural conditions such as capitalism mold narrative styles.

If the nation finds a form of mimetic analogue in the novel, what kind of mimetic architecture might we associate with the kidnappings that launched the African diasporan movement into the colonial spaces of modern Western nations? Can we use any such analogy to help us locate and read texts that do not conform to the Anglophone model of the slave narrative, but that nevertheless represent slaves and former slaves? How might consciousness of diasporan kidnapping challenge our

acceptance of national parameters for African diasporan literary studies in various languages, and our expectations of the kinds of genre and other textual characteristics that shape our "symbolic mapping of external social space?" How might we begin, in other words, to schematize the coming to literary and national consciousness for the African diaspora, catastrophically kidnapped into the spaces of New World modernity, not initially as partners in capitalist exchange, but as commodities?

Intuitively, Anderson's focus on the "Creole Pioneers" of New World nationhood would seem to open the door to consideration of the colonial African diaspora generally, and to the first postcolonial black New World nation, Hayti. However, although Anderson mentions Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution, they are forcefully relegated to the role of contrapuntal anecdote, because his argument relies on the concept of a linguistic and genealogical continuity between the New World and the European metropoles as the backdrop for the new imagining of communities.

For Anderson, the newly independent nations in the New World in the period from 1776 to 1838 provide the evidence for the association between novelistic and journalistic print capitalism and the national imagination, because unlike the European states that had transitioned from old to new regimes, these were "the first real models of what such states should 'look like'" (Anderson, 1994: p. 46); furthermore, they had "established their concepts of nation-ness [—] *well before most of Europe*" (Anderson, 1994: p. 50). Whether exemplified by "Brazil, the USA., or the former colonies of Spain," the "new American states of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" share for Anderson a crucial identity as places where:

> Language was not an element that differentiated them from their respective imperial metropoles. All were shaped by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought. (Anderson, 1994: p. 47)

This sharing of a common language and descent meant that New World creole "printmen" could travel back and forth between colonial and metropolitan spheres, disseminating literature and shaping new imaginings of the nation. For Anderson, this mediation, more than any European factor, contributed to the metamorphosis of New World colonies like the US into New World nations:

> What I am proposing is that neither economic interest, Liberalism, nor Enlightenment could, or did, create *in themselves* the *kind*, or shape, of imagined community to be defended from these [metropolitan] regimes' depredations […] In accomplishing *this* specific task, pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen played the decisive historic role. (Anderson, 1994: p. 65)

This limited New World category of creoles sharing a "common language and common descent" starkly excludes both the African diaspora generally, lacking common descent and, often, common language with the metropole, and more specifically, the French

colonial Americas, where creole status derived from birth in the colonies, regardless of African or European descent. In the French Caribbean colonies of the New World in the Revolutionary era, the term *créole* was generally synonymous with *américain* and designated anyone born in the colonies, whether of African or European descent. By contrast, in Latin America the term *criollo*, often also translated as "creole," referred to those born in the Americas but of unmixed Iberian descent; members of the African diaspora could not be creole in this context. Anderson's white creole printmen expanded the domain of a shared symbolic mapping of social space to introduce their own relatively autonomous psychological communities, emancipated from some of the most direct "depredations" of European metropoles, and also from some of the most radical extensions of European revolutionary imaginings.

The nation-building role of the creole printmen depended, according to Anderson, partly on their attempts to consolidate autonomous communities in order to deflect the Enlightenment metropolitan interest in modifying however minimally, to our eyes abusive power over slaves (Anderson, 1994: p. 49). "Far from seeking to 'induct the lower classes into political life,'" Anderson writes;

> One key factor initially spurring the drive for independence from Madrid, in such important cases as Venezuela, Mexico, and Peru, was the *fear* of "lower-class" political mobilizations: to wit, Indian or Negro-slave uprisings. (Anderson, 1994: p. 48)

Thus, although Toussaint Louverture, by French Caribbean definitions, was a creole, and although the Haitian Revolution, as Anderson duly notes, "produced the second independent republic in the Western Hemisphere" (Anderson, 1994: p. 48), Haiti does not serve in *Imagined Communities* as an example of a "creole pioneer." Instead, it serves as an example of a catalyst for white creoles to reject European state interventions in a humanist mold.

Yet, the Haitian Revolution, can be seen as an especially useful model of a creole pioneer. Since the original publication of Anderson's book in 1983, historiography of the Haitian Revolution has confirmed in great detail that slaves and former slaves were instrumental in shaping revolutionary concepts of nation-ness, to the extent that modern nationalism, conceptualized without consideration of African diasporan contributions, may be, in Sybille Fischer's expression, "modernity disavowed." I am not the first, of course, to note the delimitations of Anderson's location of a new, national form of imagined communities in the Anglophone, Hispanophone, and Lusophone spaces of the colonial New World. Partha Chatterjee's (1993), *The Nation and Its Fragments,* targets the secondary role implicitly ascribed to the postcolonial nationalisms of Asia and Africa, and Andrew Parker and Harry Harootunian respectively return to this problem in the 2003 *Grounds of Comparison*. Not only had the New World colony of Saint-Domingue been built on the importation of kidnapped Africans, but its steady movement toward autonomy led to a phenomenon of Napoleonic kidnappings of prominent Haitians that is exemplary of a profound *discontinuity* of the "symbolic mapping of external social space." That discontinuity did not exclusively

take the form of silence and non-dialogue, however, as Anderson's model might imply; it simply necessitates that we consider non-novelistic models of self-representation in early French-language literature by the African diaspora.

Within the Haitian and French Revolutionary eras from 1789 to 1804, the strange ballet of trust and hostility between the former slaves of Saint-Domingue and the French government led to moments when, for Napoleon Bonaparte and his associates, one black leader or another seemed to be France's best and fondest hope for an ongoing colonial future in Saint-Domingue, even in cases where these leaders clearly had been involved in earlier violent conflict with French colonial hierarchy. At other moments, when the primary fidelity of these black leaders to their own constituent communities became clear, it apparently became irresistible for the metropolitan power simply to seize and sequester members of the Haitian Revolutionary leadership or their families, in kidnappings that recapitulated the abusive deportations of the Middle Passage. But these leaders were already decisively exploiting the self-representational opportunities of print culture; their political strategies and individual poetics of anticolonial identity were blazing through the journalistic and political domains of key swathes of the Western world. In the context of deportations and captivity, their self-representations emblematized the structures of kidnapped narratives.

Kidnapping *le petit Christophe*

Compared to the kidnapping of Toussaint Louverture and his family, far less is known about the kidnapping episode involving the eldest son of the Haitian Revolutionary general Henry Christophe. Christophe, who served as president of the new African diasporan state from 1807–1811, and as King of Haiti from 1811 until his 1820 suicide, is commemorated in various creative works, including the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire's (1963), *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and the 2002 film *Royal Bonbon* by French-Canadian filmmaker Charles Najman. Accounts of Christophe's life generally speak of Prince Jacques-Victor-Henry (1804–1820) as Christophe's oldest son and heir, passing over the singular earlier episode in which the son of a Western leader was detained and died in captivity in another Western nation.

Young Ferdinand Christophe was voluntarily sent to France by his father in September of 1802 to be educated as a guest of the French government. The politics behind this arrangement are obscure; no direct correspondence in which Henry Christophe discusses his son is known to exist. Controversies of historical interpretation over Christophe's alignment with or resistance to the French government and its representatives in Saint-Domingue only indicate the contrasting ways in which one might speculate about his motivations in sending his eldest son to France following the French invasion of Saint-Domingue. As was evident in the case of Toussaint's sending of Placide and Isaac to France, paternal willingness to confer a child to France could mask complex negotiations with the French over movement toward autonomy on the part of black leaders in the colony. Christophe's willingness to send Ferdinand

to France following the 1802 deportation of Toussaint and his family, and at a time when the blacks were locked in anticolonial hostilities with the French, seems very curious. It may have indicated a close collaborative relationship with the French in that period, or it may have indicated, on the contrary, a tenuous relationship in which it was necessary to make a potentially sacrificial gesture of good faith. (To some degree it is also, inevitably, an index of the paradoxical mobility and hybridity of various segments of colonial society in this era; this was, after all, the period in which the future father of Alexandre Dumas, born a slave to his French aristocratic father in Saint-Domingue, was serving as a high-ranking military officer in Napoleon's army, and when the eventual President of Haiti, Alexandre Pétion, had returned from his metropolitan military training to Saint-Domingue only as a part of Leclerc's invading army.)

Arrangements for Ferdinand's travels had begun in late 1801, prior to the dramatic rift between Christophe and the French upon the arrival of Leclerc's army in Saint-Domingue in February of 1802. Discussion of the matter can be found in a manuscript copy of a letter to Christophe, contained in the ethnographer Moreau de Saint-Méry's *Historical Notes*, a sprawling collection of heteroclite archival materials. An 1814 notation at the top of the letter copy states that it was copied and returned unsealed to the Colonial Ministry before being delivered by General Leclerc to Saint-Domingue. The date on the copy is 19 Brumaire Year 10, or November 6, 1801. There is no signature or other identification of the author of the letter, so we cannot determine its origins with any certainty. The letter is unctuously flattering of Christophe's "submission" to France, of his interest in Europeans who had been "mistreated" by Christophe's superiors (presumably an allusion to the deportations of Sonthonax and Hédouville by Toussaint), and his centrality to France's efforts to bring about the "restoration" of Saint-Domingue:

> [...] you demonstrate interest in the plight of my European confreres who have been mistreated by others [...] These and other qualities that distinguish you will not be lost on my country at this important moment; I have conveyed this to distinguished representatives of the most powerful of governments, which seems to have the single ambition right now of the restoration of St. Domingue; we are counting on your help, my dear general, for the success of this enterprise; and your beloved France will not be deceived. (Copie de la lettre, 1801: p. 494–5)

The letter also establishes a strikingly personal tone, praising Christophe not just as a military officer, but also as a good father and spouse. The missive closes, "My sincere compliments to your wife, a thousand hugs to your little children; I will send information soon on the mentor who will accompany Ferdinand to France" (Copie de la letter, 1801: p.495).

In February, of course, general Leclerc would be deeply disappointed by Christophe's public statement of his allegiance to Toussaint, his refusal to permit the French to disembark, and his strategic burning of the Cap François to prevent the French from

appropriating its resources. The correspondence between Christophe and Leclerc reproduced in Prince Sanders' 1818 *Haytian Papers* documents this phase of Christophe's relationship with the French. Leclerc wrote from his ship in the harbor;

> I learn with indignation, Citizen General, that you refuse to receive the French squadron, and the French army that I command, under the pretext that you have received no orders from the Governer-General.
>
> France has concluded a peace with England, and its governments sends to St. Domingo, forces capable of subduing the rebels; at least if any are to be found in St. Domingo. As to you, General, I confess it will grieve me to account you among them. (Letter from Leclerc to Christophe, 1969: p. 21.)

Christophe answered, with the same lucid distrust of colonial rhetoric and intentions that was documented in numerous journalistic accounts of the events, "The very mention of rebellion is an argument for our resistance" (Letter from Christophe to Leclerc, 1969, p. 25). This eloquent repartee demonstrated Christophe's understanding that Leclerc's usage of the term "rebellion" inherently implied an authority in relation to which the blacks' autonomy could only register as transgression.

Over the course of the following months, Leclerc had become confident, rightly or wrongly, in his success in "detaching" Christophe and Dessalines and their troops from Toussaint. He wrote to Napoleon on 6 June 1802 that he had "mastered the mind of Dessalines," a comment which, in light of later events, would appear to be both over confident and lacking in insight into the black leaders' abilities to engage in political maneuvering parallel to the French use of a rhetoric of hospitality in mid-invasion (Letter from Leclerc to Napoleon, 1802: p. 161–2). In the days leading up to his arrest and deportation of Toussaint, Leclerc asserted that if he should fail to capture Toussaint, he would simply have him arrested by Dessalines and Christophe (Roussier, 1937: p. 162).

Leclerc's view of the submission of the black generals to his authority, no matter how dubious when framed on the continuum of both Dessalines' and Christophe's inspired rejections of French authority, often have been taken at face value in colonial historiography. A typical example of this tendency to conflate Leclerc's interpretation with historical reality can be found in Charles W. Mossell's (1896), *Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Hero of Saint Domingo*, where the author trenchantly reflected:

> A traitor is always a traitor. After betraying Toussaint L'Ouverture, Christophe betrayed Leclerc as soon as the opportunity presented itself, and finally, under the influence of a treacherous spirit, took his own life. (Mossell, 1896: p. 271)

It is essential to consider the stresses that the black generals of Saint-Domingue were under to protect not only their political autonomy, but also their basic freedom, at virtually all moments of the Haitian Revolution. Their statements, contextualizing with prescience the fine line they had to walk at all times, are well documented by contemporary witnesses. One such statement by Christophe was transcribed by

Pamphile de Lacroix. Christophe, who considered Pamphile to be a trustworthy source because of his republican military (rather than colonial) credentials, felt that he could speak to him frankly:

> The revolt is gathering force because defiance is at its highest point. If you had the same epidermis as us, you would perhaps not share my confidence in sending my only son Ferdinand to general Boudet, to be raised in France. (de Lacroix, 1819: p. 226)

Christophe effectively points out that if Pamphile were black, he would be justified in viewing Christophe as foolhardy in sending his son to Paris; an implicit admission that, he himself, as a black leader, had doubts about the outcome of the arrangement. Beyond this statement, we also know that in September of 1802, Leclerc was discussing a plan to deport Henry Christophe himself to France. On 16 September, a disgruntled Leclerc wrote to Napoleon;

> Christophe, to make up for the blunder of "uniting with the blacks," mistreated them so severely that they detest him, and I am going to send him off to you without the slightest fear that his departure will trigger an insurrection. I was not happy with him yesterday. (Roussier, 1937, 230)

Was the departure of Ferdinand Christophe partly a security against this threatened deportation of Henry Christophe himself? This would appear to be contradicted by a statement by Leclerc in a letter to Napoleon of 26 September. After stating that he lacked the strength to chase away the various black generals, and that he could only "maintain" them, he notes that Christophe inspired slightly more confidence in him than Dessalines, and that "I am sending his oldest son, whom he wants educated, to France" (Roussier, 1937, 246). There are no subsequent contextualizations of Henry Christophe or Ferdinand's departures to France by Leclerc; his last letter to Napoleon was dated 7 October 1802, and he died of yellow fever three weeks later. One can at the very least conclude from the above statements, however, that the sending of Ferdinand to France was fraught with tensions over his father's basic political and personal autonomy. It is against this complex backdrop that the ostensibly consensual transfer by Christophe of his son Ferdinand to Paris occurred in late September of 1802. The fact that Leclerc sent the child within the timeframe he mentioned to Napoleon is confirmed in a later attestation from the Division of General Security (*Division de sûreté générale*) to the Ministry of the Interior in 1805:

> Mr. Lambert, ordered to appear before the Police Prefecture, declared that in the month of frimaire, Year 11 (September, 1802), his relative the abbot Collin, who resided at that time in the Cap Français, had sent him the son of Christophe, who was at that point ten years old, accompanied by the negress Marie. (The "negress Marie" was the French-educated sister of Henry Christophe's wife Mary Louise, Servant, 1805: p. 232)

It is after the first year of Ferdinand Christophe's education in France at the Collège de Justice on rue de la Harpe, that his story took a dark turn, leading to his internment in a state orphanage, La Pitié, and his eventual death there. This fatal detour from the consensual educational plan has not been addressed in any detail in biographies of Henry Christophe. The story did eventually unfold, however, in a handwritten transcription of a verbal testimonial by a former slave from Saint-Domingue, Praxelles, in papers belonging to Moreau de St.-Méry. Like the fragments of the memoirs of Toussaint Louverture that he had written out from memory and hidden in his headscarf to preserve his story, this mediated document is a kidnapping narrative that emblematizes the larger role of kidnapping in the African diaspora's entrance into the textual and print cultures of modernity.

Either Moreau de St.-Méry himself or an assistant transcribed Praxelles' statement in Paris in 1814, some years after the conclusion of the events in question. Praxelles, the wife of Charle Magne (a man whose name evokes the trend among slave owners of naming slaves for mythological or grand historical characters, in this instance after Charlemagne, crowned Emperor in 800), was a godmother to one of Henry Christophe's daughters. She was also linked to Henry Christophe's wife's sister Mademoiselle Marie, who served as Ferdinand's unofficial guardian in Paris, by a social bond between the family of her previous owners and the previous owners of Mademoiselle Marie. Praxelles' narrative pieces together an intricate fabric of acts of witnessing in a Parisian community that included numerous freed slaves interrelated by their relationships (sometimes biological and sometimes legal and social) to white colonial families and to each other; these complex overlaid relationships are represented partly through the affiliations of previous ownership, and partly through the codes of racial categories and African ethnic origins. Sisters and brothers identified in the narrative are clearly often half-siblings, contextualized separately. The document offers many traces of the variable social economic status of non-whites in Saint-Domingue and Paris, from the neighborhood of "Petite Guinée" or little Africa in Le Cap, to the alignment of Henry Christophe's sister-in-law with a certain Bishop Murielle in allegedly helping to persuade Christophe to send his son to Paris. The document gives a fragmentary but fascinating glimpse at the lives of free blacks from Saint-Domingue in Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Praxelles' testimonial recounts that shortly after the arrival in Paris of Ferdinand with Marie-Louise Christophe's sister Mademoiselle Marie, they were brought by their governmental contact, Lambert, to visit the Consul himself, Napoleon Bonaparte, in the Tuileries. After Bonaparte questions Mademoiselle Marie at length, Lambert has a private interview with the Consul. The next day, Lambert explains to Marie that the child will be brought to a school some distance from Paris. She gives her consent on the condition that she accompany him, but wakes the next morning to find Ferdinand gone, which upsets her deeply: he has not departed, he has disappeared. She protests with great emotion, and is subsequently interned in the notorious asylum of La Salpêtrière.

The details of what had happened to Ferdinand and Marie after their vanishing is then pieced together by this cast of witnesses: Praxelles; an elderly female street sweeper, race not specified; a Madame de St.-Joseph, the sister superior who orchestrates sewing jobs for inhabitants of La Salpêtrière, including Mademoiselle Marie; and a female companion of Madame de St.-Joseph. One day, Madame de St.-Joseph and her friend see a young man standing guard at the entrance to the state orphanage La Pitié next to the Jardin des Plantes, and they instantly recognize him as Christophe's son. He joyfully confirms his identity, "Yes, it's me," and is promptly knocked over by blows from a supervisor. After this, indirect narration representing hearsay takes over, as no one previously identified in the document directly sees Christophe again, and yet information trickles out. Ferdinand, we learn, is known to have resisted being trained as a cobbler, insisting instead on his right to an education, and asserting his father's relationship with Napoleon. His continued insistence that his father was not a brigand who was massacring the whites of Saint-Domingue, but a friend of Bonaparte, led to the repeated beatings from which he eventually died. Mademoiselle Marie, according to this narrative, died soon after. Lambert, the French middleman, had in the meantime enriched himself with the small fortune sent to Paris with his son by Henry Christophe.

What follows is a transcription (with minor updating of spelling and punctuation) and translation of Praxelles' narrative in its entirety:

[Henry] Christophe is a Creole negro or *griffe* from the island of St. Kitts. He was brought by his English master to Cap Français in Saint-Domingue. This master was the longtime owner of the Café de la Couronne on Espagnole Street where Christopher worked.

After the burning of the Cap, Christophe, now free, wanted to marry the woman who is today his wife. She is the daughter of a rich and highly esteemed free black who lived in the Cap in Petite Guinée [Little Africa] in the neighborhood of the Café de la Couronne. This father, named Codary, turned down Christophe, who only was able to take his wife after her father's death.

This woman had a sister who had belonged, like the rest of the family, to a white family from the Maurin neighborhood who gave them their freedom.

This white family, having returned to France, brought with them Bonaire, the brother of Madame Christophe, and also Bonaire's sister, who in France was known as Mademoiselle Marie.

Mademoiselle Marie was raised in a convent in Paris with some young ladies from the family of her former master.

In Paris, Bonaire married Cécile, the negro daughter of Flore, Madame Bouroust's Arada negress. Cécile was the sister of Adelaide who was also a daughter of Flore, but a mulatta.

Bonaire and Mademoiselle Marie went back to Saint-Domingue when General Leclerc arrived there. Together with Bishop Murielle they convinced Christophe to send his son, who was about ten years old, to be raised in Paris.

Christophe entrusted the care of his son to his sister-in-law Mademoiselle Marie, and Bishop Murielle gave him a letter of recommendation for a Monsieur Lambert who was his best friend and who would take care of them.

Mademoiselle Marie and her young nephew Christophe arrived at the home of Monsieur Lambert who was then a clerk of Monsieur de la Marinière, a justice of the peace at the Porte St. Honoré.

The new arrivals came laden with gold, jewels, and merchandise that Christophe had given them in abundance.

Only a few days later, Lambert took the child and Mademoiselle Marie to the Bonaparte residence in the Tuileries, where Bonaparte received them very well and questioned Mademoiselle Marie at length.

When the child and his aunt had left Bonaparte, Lambert went in to see Bonaparte, and then they all went back together to Lambert's.

The next day, Lambert told Mademoiselle that Bonaparte wanted Christophe's son to be raised sixty leagues outside of Paris. The aunt said that she would follow her nephew there, but the next day the child had left. Upon awakening, Mademoiselle could find no trace of him, and was deeply upset.

Lambert answered that he had wanted to avoid a painful farewell and that as for Mademoiselle Marie, he was going to send her to an establishment in Paris where she would enjoy every advantage she could wish for.

And in fact, shortly afterward he had her get into a carriage, had a packet of belongings prepared for her, and escorted her to La Salpêtrière.

Mademoiselle Marie had known a woman named Praxelles, the wife of Charle Magne, firstly because Praxelles was the godmother of one of Christophe's daughters and secondly because Praxelles was linked to Bonaire's wife through the relationship between the Baroness Bouroust and the la Barre family, [the family of] Praxelles' former mistress. Praxelles had visited Mademoiselle Marie and her nephew upon their arrival in Paris; she was therefore extremely surprised to have no more word of them and sought in vain to have news of them.

Long afterward, an old female street sweeper from the neighborhood came to see her and told her that Mademoiselle Marie was in La Salpêtrière. She told Praxelles that she would only be able to see her with great ingenuity, and that she should feign to bring sewing work to Madame de St.-Joseph, the mother superior.

Praxelles followed these instructions and visited Madame de St.-Joseph where she found Mademoiselle Marie, who, when she recognized her, collapsed and dissolved in tears, telling her that she was shut up in this place and could not go out or confer with anyone.

Later, Madame de St.-Joseph and a female companion were walking in the Jardin des Plantes when they saw a young man standing guard at the gate of La Pitié. Because of what Mademoiselle Marie had told them about Christophe's son, they went over to him, crying out, "Here is the son of Christophe." The young man joyfully said "Yes it's me." But in that same moment a man who was at the gate of La Pitié gave Christophe two powerful blows that made made Christophe drop his rifle, and fall over, after which it was necessary for him to retreat inside.

It was impossible to catch a glimpse of him from this time forward, but it is known that they set him to learn the trade of shoe making, required him to take it up. Christophe continually refused, saying that his father had sent him to France to get a fine education, not to be a cobbler. They responded the same way they had the day Madame de St.-Joseph saw him, telling him that he was a little brigand, the son of a

bigger brigand who was massacring all the whites in Saint-Domingue; the young ado-
lescent responded in his turn that his father was not a brigand, but a friend of Bonaparte.

This response, and his obstinate refusal to become a cobbler, were the reasons that
Christophe was beaten so much that he developed several abscesses, of which he died.

As to Mademoiselle Marie, overwhelmed with grief and regrets, she died at La
Salpêtrière soon after her nephew.

Upon her death, Lambert had some old rags, an old silver goblet and pot, and six
piastres gourdes brought to the hospice, saying that this was all she had had left.

As for himself, he did not delay in buying a lovely house on the Champs Elysées,
which he furnished richly. He also bought a lovely property and he displayed everywhere
a level of luxury which he more than likely owed to the deaths of the little Christophe
and Mademoiselle Marie.

This was recounted to me by Praxelles herself, Monday the twenty-fourth of October, 1814.
(Praxelles narrative, 1814: p, 89–93)

Praxelles' narrative contains some details that are inaccurate; notably, the chronol-
ogy of Ferdinand and Marie's respective internments, which occurred not a few days
after their arrival in the fall of 1802, but a year later. As Servant's article documents,
official correspondence cited the admission to La Pitié of Ferdinand Christophe, by
order of the Minister of the Marines and of the Colonies and of the Minister of the
Interior (in other words, as orchestrated through the French government at its highest
ranks), on 23 December 1803, not 1802. It also errs in the chronology of Mademoiselle
Marie's death, which Praxelles attributes to heartbreak following the news of the
death of Ferdinand. In reality, Ferdinand, aged twelve, was still alive and a prisoner
of La Pitié on 8 July 1805, when Mademoiselle Marie died in La Salpêtrière. The
actual date of the death of Ferdinand Christophe is not currently known. Praxelles'
testimonial also departs from other records in terms of some names; Lambert would
state the name of the clergyman who assisted in arranging Ferdinand's voyage to
Paris as the abbot Collin, whereas Praxelles cites a bishop Maurielle. Most biogra-
phers of Christophe cite his wife's maiden name as Coidavic, whereas Praxelles lists
Codary.

And yet: Praxelles' mediated narrative is the single known historical account of a
shocking episode that is confirmed in the essential details of Christophe's aborted
schooling, and his involuntary removal by order of the French government, to a state
orphanage where he was kept captive, despite the presence in both Paris and Saint-
Domingue of relatives willing, and able, to take care of him. Praxelles was also correct
in the basics of her story of the forced admission to La Salpêtrière of Henry Christophe's
sister-in-law Marie; Servant in 1913 noted that historical records of La Salpêtrière do
confirm the admission (n. 130, fol. 15 r.) and death (n. 29, fol. 15 v.) there of
Mademoiselle Marie. What Praxelles apparently did not know was that the French
government had documented – and denied – charges made by Ferdinand that Lambert
had appropriated his and Mademoiselle Marie's funds and belongings after the death
of Mademoiselle Marie, precisely along the lines of the allegations in Praxelles' story
(although it is clear that Praxelles' account of Lambert's profit is exaggerated).[6]

Ironically, in an exact parallel to the case of the Louverture children and the contentions by French police that they needed to keep Isaac and Placide in Paris despite their father's request for their return because of the threat that they might be kidnapped back to Saint-Domingue, officials in Paris responded to Ferdinand's accusations by focusing on an alleged plot to kidnap Ferdinand out of the orphanage and back to his parents. When they inquired of Lambert about his use of the funds mentioned by Ferdinand, they simultaneously requested that Lambert take care to prevent the kidnapping of Ferdinand: "he should furthermore take all necessary precautions to prevent this kidnapping" (Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of the General Police, 1913: p. 228–9). The alleged plot was explained in an explanatory note sent to the police prefect:

> We are informed that an American captain had taken on the responsibility a while ago of kidnapping the young Ferdinand and sending him to the United States and thence to Saint-Domingue, but that this captain, noticing that he had aroused suspicion, had left precipitously without carrying out his plan. This last piece of information coincides perfectly with the declaration of the negress Marie. ("Letter from the Minister of the Interior to the Minister of the General Police, 1913: p. 228–9)

In this account, the detail that Mademoiselle Marie had provided a statement about an alleged kidnapping is both tantalizing and chilling; it demonstrates that she had, from inside La Salpêtrière, remained in touch with international dealings concerning her nephew, and also that she had been interrogated about her knowledge. Henry Christophe was no doubt the first President and King in the Western hemisphere to rule without ever breathing a public word about the abduction and death of his heir at the hands of another Western government.

Kidnapped Narratives

How do documents such as the mediated testimonial of Praxelles represent Haiti as a different kind of "creole pioneer," articulating a different kind of new nationalism – revolutionary-era black postcolonial nationalism – in which the imagining of communities does not conform to the model established by Benedict Anderson? In effect: here nation is to novel as kidnapping is to mediated and disguised witnessing. These are liminal texts. The narrative by Praxelles, unpublished for one hundred years (and then only published in the most obscure of sources), was told by a witness for posterity, transcribed by a secretary or ethnographer, and represented the historical knowledge of people whose social existence could be effectively erased when struggles for autonomy created "race" conflicts, labeled at the time in terms of "brigands" and "massacres." The proclamation by Toussaint is one of many texts that show his distinctive strategic brilliance, melding the conciliatory and the subversive to outmaneuver his opponents; these mediated texts were disseminated extraordinarily broadly

through journalism, and yet have not been credited to Toussaint as the political "writings" of a major figure on the revolutionary world political stage.

Kidnapped narratives of the African diaspora in the revolutionary era do not take the form of novels, and they are often textual rather than print culture: its documents lurk in archives, newspapers, records, and even quotations in other works, in the various forms of fragments, edited popular oral literature, and mediated political proclamations and correspondence. Its messages were sometimes, as in the memoirs of Toussaint, precisely kidnapped: contained and isolated. At other times, as in the proclamations and correspondence of Toussaint and Dessalines, they were a Western print culture sensation. They are a corpus that must be researched outside of the framework of the novelistic masterpiece of national literatures, or even of the slave narrative shaped and cultivated by abolitionist "printmen," despite abundant overlap with that genre. This diasporan literature by those whose common descent involves kidnapping gives us a new point of entry to exploration of the nation, as not just an imagined community beyond face-to-face interaction, but as an imagined community with unimagined participants, who were subject to the lawless silencing of their voices and public existence, but who nevertheless persevered in self-representation. Kidnapped narratives represent one part of the answer to Laurent Dubois' provocative question of how we might "write an intellectual history of the enslaved" (Dubois, 2006: p. 3).

Notes

1 The metaphor of the "tree of liberty" harkened back to the celebration in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue of the anniversary of the French abolition of slavery around a large tree, "l'Arbre de la Liberté" (Roume 1). There are many accounts of the scene in which this quote was produced, including the following narrative by Pamphile de Lacroix: "He addressed these memorable words to the division chief Savary, commander of the vessel: 'In overthrowing me, they have only knocked over in Saint-Domingue the trunk of the tree of the liberty of the blacks; it will grow back by the roots, for they are deep and numerous'" (203).

2 Journalistic accounts vary slightly in the wording of the tree of peace quote. In fact, Aristide first quoted Toussaint Louverture and than adapted that quote. His statement was translated simultaneously into English by an intermediary whose voice obscures Aristide's French speech in the audio transcript. For the translated transcript of the address, see "Aristide Details Last Moments in Haiti."

3 A photograph of Aristide's actual letter is available in "Aristide's Resignation Letter" (http://edition.cnn.com).

4 This and all other translations from French are my own unless otherwise indicated.

5 These texts are anthologized in Northrup's *The Atlantic Slave Trade*.

6 Letters on these matters, dated July 5, August 3, and August 9 1805, are in CHAN F7 6461.

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Counterpoint and Double Critique in Edward Said and Abdelkebir Khatibi: A Transcolonial Comparison

Françoise Lionnet

La chair de la phrase, la carène des mots rudes, inéffaçables, raclant le temps comme une herse sous les chênes.
    [The flesh of the sentence, the hull of rough words, indelible, scraping off time like a plow under the oak trees.] (Assia Djebar, 1995: p. 119)

Tenter d'ouvrir la recherche au Maghreb à des questions silencieuses, refoulées par l'ordre théologique et celui du scientisme.
    [To open up research in the Maghreb to the silent questions repressed by religious and academic regimes.] (Abdelkebir Khatibi, 1983: p. 41)

Humanism […] must excavate the silence, the world of memory, of itinerant, barely surviving groups, the places of exclusion and invisibility. (Edward Said, 2004: p. 81)

The Palestinian-born and US-educated literary critic and memoirist Edward Said died in New York on 25 September 2003; the Moroccan philosopher, literary author, and Sorbonne-educated sociologist Abdelkebir Khatibi, in Rabat on 16 March 2009. Born in the 1930s, they came of age in the waning shadow of British and French imperialisms in the Mashriq and the Maghreb, respectively. They will be remembered for their formidable theoretical critiques of the colonial condition, and for their brilliant use of intellectual tools honed at the heart of the very hegemonic traditions their work seeks to destabilize. Both wrote influential texts about the "Orient" and the "Occident" as discursive historical formations; both were committed to the political practice of exposing domination in its myriad manifestations, including being active in the defense of the Palestinian cause against oppressive Zionism; and both advocated

in favor of "secular" forms of criticism independent of partisan institutional, religious, political or cultural (self-)censorship.

They were the last public intellectuals associated with the great humanist causes of the twentieth century, and their untimely deaths – Said at the age of sixty-seven, Khatibi at seventy-one – marks the demise of an era during which subjects from the former colonial "peripheries" first became prominent in the articulation of alternative cultural and social agendas for politics and for education. Their interventions strengthened the role of the humanities in society. They opened up research to broader, more inclusive perspectives. But the controversies laced with respectful admiration that their work generated during their lifetimes should now compel an overdue comparative examination of their respective contributions to decolonizing and postcolonial criticism. My goal in this chapter is to suggest paths along which this comparison can proceed if we are to assess the place and role of the lesser-known but no less productive Khatibi for a critical approach that takes as its point of departure the commitment they both share to a relational, polyphonic, and contrapuntal – rather than merely binary and oppositional – understanding of identity, culture, and literature.

Even if the emergence of Anglophone postcolonial studies is associated with the publication of Said's *Orientalism* (1978), a book considered by many to be the founding event of the field, it may be equally – if not more – accurate to propose that the founding episteme or actual condition of possibility of postcolonial theory in general (in the US, Britain or any other Anglophone area) is the Algerian War of National Liberation (1954–62). That war inspired the writings in which Frantz Fanon transposes the local boundaries of the Algerian cause into a global vernacular of independence, thus opening the way for postcolonial theory by articulating the terms of the struggle against dominant colonial ideologies while also fighting against facile nationalist or racialized rhetoric. Fanon shows the pitfalls of nativism, that "empty, fragile shell" of national consciousness which leads colonized intellectuals up a blind alley and "into a dead end" (Fanon, 2004: pp. 97, 152). It is as heir to the critically mobile, Algerian-identified, and Martinican-born thinker that Said develops, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) his own contrapuntal method as "antidote to reductive nationalism and uncritical dogma" (Said, 1993: p. 43) and that he translates the Palestinian question into a global discourse of emancipation, as Fanon had done for the Algerian cause.

The same critical self-awareness about discursive agency, mobility, and power that informs both Fanon's and Said's work is at the core of the Moroccan Khatibi's creative and theoretical elaborations in the 1970s and 80s. But within the politics of location of postcolonial theory, the multilingual Maghreb as a geographic and intellectual entity remains largely "off" in comparison to the Anglophone regions that have provided the bulk of those theories through the writings of Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft *et al.* – in addition to the inaugural texts of Said. Khatibi deserves to figure in that constellation of oft-cited luminaries, and the translations that are now underway will help further disseminate his œuvre. In considering Khatibi's relative obscurity, one cannot help but wonder, as Said remarks à propos of

an altogether different lacuna, if it is "the result of ignorance, convenience, or deliberate ideological omission?" (Said, 1983: p. 144). Perhaps all of the above – compounded by the very problem of translatability that is a constant theme of Khatibi's writings and a recurring structural issue for theory or philosophy in general (Cassin, 2004; McCumber, 2009). Michel Foucault describes the crucial responsibility and "real political task" of the thinker in society as that of criticizing "the workings of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent […] in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them" (Foucault, 1974: p. 171). To take this concern seriously means to look at the institutional embeddedness of discourses of liberation that can fall short of their stated goals, and to unmask their shortcomings, as I shall do here.

It is only through a sustained comparison of Said's and Khatibi's critical terrains and abiding interest in institutions that we can eventually do justice to the Moroccan as a forerunner of postcolonial theory. By bringing their lives and theoretical work into conversation and confrontation, I address the divergent conditions of production and the genealogies of concepts associated with each of them. I want to show the continued importance and relevance of the Maghreb to the idea of the postcolonial and to the academic practices it subtends. I pay attention only to one such practice, and thus cannot give proper consideration to the vast secondary literature on Khatibi's creative output or to the important critical reactions to Said's œuvre. I focus only on the Saidean practice of the counterpoint or contrapuntal mode of analysis, and I link it to the "double critique" advocated by Khatibi in his eponymous essay, first written as two separate parts in 1970 and 1974, sections of which were translated into English in 1985. I conclude with a brief consideration of the etymology of the word "counterpoint" and its gendered implications.

Missed Opportunities, Split Selves, and Transcolonial Critique

Said and Khatibi do not seem ever to have met, and neither acknowledges the other in his writings, although Said brushes off Khatibi in a 1998 interview with Stephen Sheehi to which I will return below. There are uncanny similarities as well as telling differences in the two scholars' parallel trajectories from Arabophone backgrounds in the Mashriq and the Maghreb, across two European linguistic and humanistic traditions, and on to distinguished academic careers. We will never be able to look forward to a debate between the two of them, and that is all the more regrettable since such a debate could have helped to refine and complicate extant theoretical approaches to Orientalism and to comparative postcolonial studies.

Both Said and Khatibi had strong personal and professional investments in their shared contemporary contexts, namely the dynamics of Middle Eastern politics on the one hand, and twentieth-century French poststructuralist thought on the other. But if their works emerge in response to the same geopolitical and intellectual formations,

they were nonetheless from vastly different worlds. As products of dissimilar social and academic milieus, each with its distinct economies of prestige and educational conventions, they made professional and ideological choices that determined their reach and respective levels of international distinction. Said was a global theorist, trained by and teaching at the most elite private US universities, with a 1964 doctorate in English literature from Harvard. Khatibi by contrast spent his whole professional career in Morocco after obtaining a doctorate in sociology at the Sorbonne in 1965. He was the product of both Morocco's and France's public university systems, and after graduating, spent little time in France. He visited the US a handful of times, at the invitation of literary critics and specialists of his work. He barely understood any English. Said was fluent in French.

They were loyal to divergent strands of poststructuralist philosophy, but despite this disconnect, apparently due to what we might now term the narcissism and tyranny of small differences, their work gives evidence of similar preoccupations and deep-seated affinities. Their signature concepts, anchored in their individual circumstances as subjects of empire, continue to echo the experiences of multitudes "out of place," to borrow the phrase that Said uses for the title of his memoir, in the geographies of postcolonial modernities and globalized economies. As "border intellectuals" and "decolonial thinkers" (Mignolo, 2000), they recognized and valued the fluidity of identity, and their personal writings unfold these perspectives along parallel pathways. As Said explains in the poignant concluding paragraph of the 1999 memoir;

> I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents, like the themes of one's life, flow along during the waking hours, and at their best, they require no reconciling. No harmonizing. They are "off" and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme. (Said, 1999: p. 295)

He makes these remarks in relation to his chronic sleeplessness and what he terms the state of "shadowy half-consciousness" followed by "invigorating" wakefulness that enable him to appreciate these contrapuntal variations fashioned out of all the "dissonances" of his life, his exiles, and his memories.

Khatibi too writes about his polyphonic or multilingual identity and defies the metaphysics of origin and authenticity in his first poetic self-portrait, *La mémoire tatouée: autobiographie d'un décolonisé* [Tattooed Memory: Autobiography of a Decolonized Man]: "*Certes, Occident, je me scinde, mais mon identité est une infinité de jeux, de roses de sable*" (Khatibi, 1971: p. 187) [Indeed, Occident, I am a split self, but my identity is an infinity of games, of desert flowers]. The theme recurs in "Pensée-autre" (Khatibi, 1983b), an important essay that defines his method. Here his emphasis is on the "dawning" of a dissident global thought that is anti-hegemonic, and that indexes the

potential for conceiving of community differently. "Pensée-autre" is a type of thinking that emerges as a result of being in the presence of an acknowledged difference that is simultaneously recognized as irreducibly other, a difference, in other words, that cannot be reduced to the same within a universalist dialectical framework. It indexes openness to others, a way of imagining a community of strangers or a "we" located in the "*marge en éveil*" [wakeful margin] where concrete others accompany him within a "vital economy of thinking-otherwise, of thinking (with) the other" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 17). We might say, echoing Said, that in this wakeful interval, "no harmonizing" is required.

In his literary-theoretical text *Amour bilingue* (1983a) [*Love in Two Languages* 1990], Khatibi fleshes out the sense of wakeful dreaming that is a source of insight beyond (rational) understanding:

> Perhaps that is the illusion of these fugitive dreams, something so speedy and upsetting that even naming them cannot tear them from the night […] Marvelous thought, vigil of the unsaid […] which kept him awake in the midst of sleep. (Khatibi, 1983a/1990: p. 15/9)

The state of being in-between is carried through thematically thanks to his focus on hybridity, androgyny, and bilingualism, and structurally, due to the generic ambiguity of the *récit* as the narrator articulates his experience of proximity with, as well as distance from, the human community of allophones and strangers.

Throughout his career, Khatibi sustains his interest in the way identity is always interwoven with difference, and he keeps searching for the discursive modes that can best enable productive dialogue among differently situated voices (De Toro, 2008; Gaertner, 2002). His 2005 essay on the role of the intellectual in the era of globalization, "L'Intellectuel et le mondialisme," puts it thus:

> I belong to a magnificent country, a marginal one […] To it, I owe my birth, my name, my first identity, my history, but not the story of my freedom of thought, the freedom to invent a space and a dialogical relation with any being that approaches me. I am changed as a result of my contact with beneficent strangers […] As a believer in globalization, alternative globalization, I journey with an active constellation of researchers, thinkers, and artists with whom I share affinities. (Khatibi, 2008: p. 323)

Unlike Said, Khatibi had the privilege of belonging to his country of origin and being rooted in its "magnificent" geography. But they both share a commitment to "freedom of thought" beyond territorial loyalty, and embrace the feeling of having layers of distinct yet interwoven traditions to rejoice in.

Both thinkers, however, were committed to the social and political critiques of those same traditions, whether western or Islamic, whenever and wherever the traditions translate into rigid sclerotic categories of self and society. They developed theories of reading and resistance that engaged vertically with European paradigms of literature and philosophy while pressing into the service of their own longings and

struggles the very strategies and critical tools that their western education had provided to them as "Oriental" subjects. But this vertical interest may well have blocked other possibilities of identification between them, and they never engage directly with each other's writings. They are simultaneously of the west and external to its systems of thought, they are exquisitely aware of their liminal status, but they do not seek to dialogue, join forces or develop joint approaches to the same ontological questions that preoccupy, inspire, and compel them as marginal or "minor" subjects of discourse.

They are conscious that their interstitial location gives them another sort of privilege, that of the insider-outsider. As Khatibi remarks, "Europe [...] is a question that unhinges the core of our being," and "the Occident lives within us neither as absolute and devastating exteriority, nor as eternal mastery, but truly as [...] a cluster of differences" (Khatibi, 1983b: pp. 11–12). For Said too, the goal in *Orientalism,* following Antonio Gramsci's advice, is "to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals" (Said, 1978: p. 25). Both believe in the inseparability of the diverse civilizational strands that come together to deepen their educational experiences, and they are committed to the constitutive reciprocities and fundamental mixities of those experiences. In *La Mémoire tatouée,* Khatibi specifies: "the Occident is part of me, a part that I can only deny insofar as I resist all the Occidents and all the Orients that oppress and disenchant me" [*tous les orients et les occidents qui me désenchantent*] (Khatibi, 1979: p. 118). Determined to denounce all varieties of oppression, he remains vigilant about the possible forms of cooptation and complicity that might come from either European or Arabic contexts. He refuses the "essentializing tactics of Islamic theological discourse" (Wolf, 1994: p. 67) as much as he resists distorting colonialist and Orientalist ideologies. In this, I contend, he has the same overall ethical goals and humanistic priorities that Said continually stresses, especially in the later writings. But, as I will show in the third part of this chapter, Khatibi's method of double critique is the philosophical equivalent of a material practice best described by a sewing or stitching metaphor used in the arts of weaving or quilting, whereas in his readings of the canon, Said, by his own avowal, pursues a musical metaphor grounded in western high culture. To read the two thinkers together is to see more clearly the limits of Said's approach as well as the as-yet-unexplored potential of a more comprehensive critical analysis of the counterpoint based in Khatibi's approach to it.

In light of the more compelling similarities just outlined, what can my own contrapuntal juxtaposition of their different historical and intellectual backgrounds hope to achieve? What do those differences illuminate with regard to the practices of late-twentieth century postcolonial studies and its impact on the sociology of knowledge? To deal with such questions, I propose to use a horizontal or lateral "minor transnational" (Lionnet and Shih, 2005) analysis that will highlight the originality and insights of each thinker within a "transcolonial critique of power" (Lionnet and Shih, 2005: p. 17) that can better foreground their overlapping interests as well as the very

real linguistic, personal, and intellectual disconnect between them. Shu-mei Shih and I have pointed out that as postcolonial critics we generally tend to "study the center and the margin but rarely examine the relationships among different margins" (Lionnet and Shih, 2005: p. 2). This means that we are liable to neglect the potential for "transcolonial solidarities" and to miss the opportunities that transversal and rhizomatic networks of minority subjects and intellectual agents together provide for the pursuit of common goals and political projects (Lionnet and Shih, 2005: p. 22).

Although Khatibi might, and Said certainly would, balk at being described as a minority subject because of a common tendency to associate the term "minority" with separatist identity politics and political oppositionality, I want to insist here on their formative experiences as colonial subjects with tangibly marginal statuses vis-à-vis the dominant American and European ideologies of assimilation or acculturation that both grew up under and that both began to critique early in their careers, with the professed goal of achieving what Said later termed *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004). They have helped transform the modern university into the kind of institution that they could rightfully claim as their own, and it is precisely because they hailed from the margins, like Jacques Derrida, Jacques Rancière, Hélène Cixous, Assia Djebar, Maryse Condé or Edouard Glissant, that they succeeded in opening up research to new understandings of a more inclusive universalism, the modalities of which have yet to be fully worked out. Appearing a few years apart, and in different languages, their major texts prepared the ground for the subsequent development of Anglophone postcolonialism as well as Francophone studies, domains of research that are now well-established in the US academy.

The Politics of Knowledge, Gender, and Translatability

Said's *Orientalism* was first translated into French in 1980, *Culture and Imperialism*, in 2000, and *Out of Place* in 2002. Said's numerous political essays often appeared in French in *Le Monde diplomatique*. After his magisterial critique of the discourse of Orientalism, he expanded his focus from the Middle East to a more general argument about the modern west and its former colonies in *Culture and Imperialism*. These paradigm-shifting books are widely available and have been translated into dozens of languages, whereas Khatibi's best known essays, "Pensée-autre," "Double critique" and "L'orientalisme désorienté" [Disoriented/ing Orientalism], published between 1970 and 1982 and later collected in *Maghreb Pluriel* (1983) have long remained out of print. Only "Double Criticism: The Decolonization of Arab Sociology" is available in English in a 1985 publication of the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University where Khatibi participated in a 1982 colloquium. Khatibi's entire œuvre of more than thirty titles has now been collected in a three-volume edition published in Paris in 2008. His most controversial book, *Vomito Blanco: Le sionisme et la conscience malheureuse* (1974), also out of print in France, was re-issued in *Paradoxes du sionisme* published by a small press in Rabat in 1989. If the Moroccan

sociologist had the opportunity to peruse those of his Palestinian-American colleague's foundational works that were translated during his lifetime, he did not comment on them nor did he leave behind critiques that might have shed light on his views concerning the literature professor, reluctant guru of postcolonial studies, and international advocate for Palestinians.

Said openly shared his views on his contemporaries. He had met most of the famous French intellectuals of his day. In 1979, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir invited him, on behalf of the journal *Les Temps modernes,* to participate in a seminar on peace in the Middle East held in Michel Foucault's Paris apartment. Sartre's and Beauvoir's support for Israel infuriated him, as it had Khatibi a few years earlier. Said later published his recollections of these encounters (2000) and paints a rather negative portrait of all those attending, making in passing unpleasant remarks about the dress and demeanor of Beauvoir, "in her turban, lecturing anyone who would listen." His tone echoes the one adopted by Khatibi who, in *Vomito blanco*, bemoans both Sartre's and Beauvoir's accusations against the Palestinians, but brushes *her* views aside with a contemptuous *"celle-ci radote de plus en plus"* (Khatibi, 1974: p. 53) [she is becoming more and more senile]. Cheap shots from two intellectuals who did not need to belittle the author of the influential *The Second Sex* (1949) and *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947). Said's and Khatibi's misgivings about the French left, in general, seem to have needed to crystallize around the figure of the woman most associated with it in the 1970s, thus rendering them unable to recognize the extent to which her existentialist ethics of emancipation is in fact a search for a non-universalizing common cause. Beauvoir's philosophical articulation of the basic social nature of humans and their desire for *collective* freedom, demarcates her from Sartre's much more solipsistic or nihilist existentialist ethics, and makes her the political kin of engaged thinkers from Fanon to Khatibi and Said (Ruhe, 1998). This too is another missed *transcolonial* opportunity to elaborate, debate, and "[think] through an existential ethics of coalition" as I have argued elsewhere (Lionnet, 2006: p. 106).

By 1979, multiple and contradictory versions of French poststructuralist thought were beginning to have a strong influence on the history and evolution of American criticism, and Said often acknowledges his debt to Michel Foucault (Said, 1978, 1983) while keeping his distance from Jacques Derrida (Said, 1976), whom Khatibi, on the other hand, deeply admired, although as Ronnie Scharfman has pointed out, his considerations of linguistic belonging are "even more radical than Derrida's" (Scharfman, 2002: p. 193). But the non-metropolitan Francophone world that was just beginning to have a crucial effect on French literary studies during that time did not seem to elicit Said's interest. The field of *francophonie* was invisible to him, beyond the basic texts of Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and Fanon that began to appear in English in the l960s, animating a process of political and psychic decolonization that had a direct impact on the US Civil Rights movement, thus bringing lasting transformations to American and ethnic studies programs (Lionnet and Shih, 2011).

As a literary critic, Said's specialization was nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and European fiction. He was very negative toward what he erroneously

understood to be the goal of ethnic or women's studies: "Nothing seems less interesting than the narcissistic self-study that today passes in many places for identity politics, or ethnic studies," he asserts in "Between Worlds" (1998). He seems to have grown much more impatient after an initially superficial gesture of benevolence in *Culture and Imperialism* toward the critics who try "to connect experiences across the imperial divide" and whose "work should be seen as sharing important concerns with minority or 'suppressed' voices within the metropolis itself: feminists, African American writers, intellectuals, artists, among others" (Said, 1993: p. 54). He rarely interrogates the constitutive role of gender in racial colonial politics, and Elleke Boehmer notes the "add-on, enumerative aspect" (Boehmer, 2009: p. 129) of his diffident inclusions. For Susan Fraiman, the "problematic status of women and the feminine in Said's text" is compounded by the fact that it is Jane Austen who is "made to bear, more than any other single figure, the symbolic burden of empire," and who, as primary representative of the flaws of European culture, achieves iconic status vis-à-vis "the marked masculinity of the resistance cultures [Said] puts forth in counterpoint" (Fraiman, 2003: pp. 52, 49). Given the stereotypical feminization of Orientals in European discourse, this overturning of the cliché by means of a contrapuntal feminization of European culture is revealing, for Fraiman, of a defensive move on Said's part about the feminine as an experiential category (Fraiman, 2003: p: 173).

In his 1998 interview with Jacqueline Rose, Said freely admits that as a critic, the reading experiences that he "feel[s] comfortable with and ha[s] written about mostly, are those defined and shaped by men" (Rose, 1998: p. 88), and he recognizes that as a teacher, he has implicitly contributed to upholding the Eurocentric curricular status quo in his English department. In "Between Worlds," he also states:

> For the forty years that I have been teaching I have never taught anything other than the Western canon, and certainly nothing about the Middle East. I've long had the ambition of giving a course on modern Arabic literature, but I haven't got around to it, and for at least thirty years I've been planning a seminar on Vico and Ibn Khaldun, the great fourteenth-century historiographer and philosopher of history. But my sense of identity as a teacher of Western literature has excluded this other aspect of my activity so far as the classroom is concerned. (Said, 1998)

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said makes several references to Césaire and Fanon, but only passing ones to Memmi, and he grants a single sentence, in a footnote, to Assia Djebar. Is he dismissive of the Maghreb because he is taking his cues from what was then a very Paris-centered field of critical practices in literary studies, in French and American academic circles alike? Or is it because the historically feminized Maghreb of nineteenth-century Orientalist paintings and travel narratives is a topic he could not "feel comfortable with," as he confesses above?

Paradoxically, his *Orientalism* provides an eloquent critique of the European modes of representation that construct identities, subjects, and disciplines in ways that

conform to colonial ideologies and thus deform cultural realities (Said, 1978: p. 273). We might thus have expected its author to be more generous toward contemporary North African writers. But the twentieth-century Maghreb as an area of cultural and intellectual production seems to have remained as distant for him as US "ethnic studies." He is more interested in how European travelers and writers invest the Orient with layers of distorting meanings that historians and ethnographers reproduce in their fieldwork and research. Despite the undeniable stature of Khatibi as a writer and a scholar equally admired by Roland Barthes (1979) and Jacques Derrida (1995), the eminent Moroccan represents for Said one of those blind spots or areas of disavowal that prevents the Anglophone critic from doing justice to the work of a fellow scholar with whom he obviously shares a passionate commitment to secularism and critique.

Mary Ellen Wolf has done a brief analysis of what she sees as Khatibi's and Said's divergent views on the debate between two major figures of French Orientalism, namely, the sociologist Jacques Berque and the historian Louis Massignon. The French scholars are the objects of stinging criticism from Khatibi in "L'orientalisme désorienté." He blames their disciplinary practices and institutional centrality – as colleagues in the Collège de France – for the "'structural solidarity' between the multiple facets of imperialism and the development of the social sciences" that served to disseminate politically usable knowledge about North Africa, as Wolf puts it (Wolf, 1994: p. 62). Khatibi understood that beyond their individual scholarly differences, they both belonged to the same guild, the prestigious Collège, and protected institutional goals above all. In *Orientalism*, Said on the other hand, defends Berque's and Massignon's speculative brilliance against the more empirical Anglo-American school of Orientalist area studies that he associates with H. A. R. Gibb (Said, 1978: pp. 53, 266), although he does note, like Khatibi, that for Massignon, "the will to knowledge over the Orient and on its behalf" (Said, 1978: p. 272) is very strong and ultimately constitutes a series of "deformations" and misrepresentations (Said, 1978: p. 273) that are then distributed across many disciplines. There are thus more areas of commonality than disagreement between Khatibi and Said, with their parallel critiques of the politics of knowledge and their desire to endorse inclusive, more global, perspectives in research and teaching.

Their deconstruction of the west's myth of the Orient has had a significant impact on the social sciences: Khatibi in his discipline of qualitative sociology, Said in history, anthropology, and area studies. But it is primarily in postcolonial and Francophone studies that their work has been most productive of new insights, beyond their own respective blind spots. If a systematic comparative evaluation of the two thinkers has never been undertaken, it is in large part because of the separate linguistic silos into which the intellectually overlapping fields of postcolonial and Francophone criticism tend to fall. An increasing number of books are now being published, in English and in French on both sides of the Atlantic and of the English Channel, on the intersections of the two fields. This recent surge demonstrates a lively interest in their intertwined agendas, and by putting postcolonial and

Francophone theories in direct dialogue, scholars are showing the many ways in which lateral or transversal conversations need to take place in order to enable research that does justice to the non-Anglophone originators of anti-, de-, or post-colonial thinking. Recent titles include *Postcolonial Theory and Francophone Literary Studies* (Donadey and Murdoch, 2005), *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* and *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (Forsdick and Murphy), *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension* (Majumdar, 2007), and in French, *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (Moura, 2007) as well as *La Situation postcoloniale: Les* postcolonial studies *dans le débat français* (Smouts, 2007). Comparative work is thus becoming ever more urgent in order to formulate analytical frameworks that can take into account the significant contributions of Francophone and Arabophone North African scholars and artists to an array of critical practices that are synonymous with *Anglophone* postcolonial studies.

As is often the case in the history of reception of theoretical concepts, when ideas travel, their actual origins may no longer be clear, nor does the issue matter particularly. Once ideas are adopted in a metropolitan center or western academy, they become associated with the intellectual priorities and research programs of those centers. Where ideas first emerged and whether they emerged simultaneously in different sites as a result of conditions specific to particular locales may thus become irrelevant. What matters more is how and why specific concepts resonate within certain socio-cultural and pedagogical formations, and what kind of innovative and productive critical work these concepts actually enable in the exogenous contexts where they are adopted and eventually take root (Said, 1983; Clifford, 1989). But it bears repeating that the contributions of an array of *Francophone* thinkers to the same educational and critical zeitgeist that enabled poststructuralist ideas to travel and to flourish in the US academy is less known, despite the centrality to postcolonial debates of Césaire and Fanon as figures of anti-colonial critique and black diaspora studies, on the one hand, and of the Algerian-born Derrida as critic of both logo-centrism and ethnocentrism, on the other. Arguably, it is as a result of their American detour that these initially "peripheral" authors from the Caribbean and North Africa were able to become part of an intellectual constellation that can now "return" to the French academy under the guise of "postcolonial studies"– Smouts' *Les* postco-lonial studies *dans le débat français* being the most recent example of this political *recovery* of both French and Francophone thought. Smouts' edited volume is a pub-lication of Sciences Po Presses, the academic press of the famed Paris School of Political Science. This suggests that the *débat français* on the matter is increasingly influential within the social sciences rather than the humanities, unlike the situation in the US where empirical and quantitative research dominates the social sciences' agendas. The danger in this French mode of recuperation, as Smouts herself points out (Smouts, 2007: p. 29), is that only those thinkers vetted by the North American scholars and publishers who teach and translate them actually become part of the recovered constellation that (re-)enters the French pedagogical system and its research agendas. Whereas Pascale Casanova, in her francocentric view of the "World Republic

of Letters," may have argued that what is valued is what is translated, and what is translated is perforce regarded as valuable, I am suggesting instead that the measure of value or the survival – even in France – of Francophone writing now depends primarily on its life or *afterlife* (in Walter Benjamin's sense) in North America or the Anglophone world.

Important contributors to the history of decolonial thinking, like Khatibi, who stay "home" remain virtually invisible in the western public sphere and have far less symbolic capital than their counterparts who circulate through translation. Khatibi, however, rightfully belongs with Memmi, Derrida or Djebar among the Francophone North Africans who have left an indelible mark on the same zeitgeist. Furthermore, his work's similarities with, if not direct influence on Said's may well have contributed to the Moroccan's relative obscurity until now, because the kind of epistemological deconstructive critique that Khatibi advocated in French was upstaged by a seemingly more historico-political strand present in Said's similar work in English, while his interest in gender and sexuality, androgyny and desire may have been trumped by what Fraimen sees as "Said's investment in superordinate masculinity" (Fraiman, 2003: p. 173). The fortunes of each body of work thus provide a useful case in point regarding the global politics of language, sex, and interpretation as well as an illustration of the significant impact of these politics on the geographies of reception of parallel intellectual currents. The economy of prestige that attaches to an intellectual depends heavily on his or her linguistic centrality and location on a map of academic merit that can only absorb a few "marginal" ones at a time without risk of putting into crisis its own structures of legitimation. Because to many of his American disciples Said appears to insist on history and social contexts more than Khatibi does, given the latter's intellectual affiliation and loyalty to Derrida, the more overtly political usefulness of Said's text has invited some American critics to denounce what they see as Khatibi's primary investment in purely textual interpretation (Woodhull, 1993). But as Nasrin Qader has conclusively argued, "Khatibi's *pensée-autre* and his *double critique* are always political" (Qader, 2009: p. 186).

Even a cursory reading of his Palestinian manifesto, *Vomito blanco* gives ample evidence of Khatibi's deep commitment to concrete transformative strategies of thought. His denunciation of the "saintly trilogy" that governs Middle Eastern issues, "namely Zionism, the Arab reaction, and imperialism" (Khatibi, 1974: p. 114) is articulated in the name of a rigorous critique of the unhappy consciousness and of the will to power that inhabits all systematic philosophies, making them unable to accommodate irreducible otherness. He engages philosophically and politically with the European dialectical tradition – Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre – and he wrestles with the materiality of writing. Doing so allows him to scrape away those layers of the past that block the ability to "think otherwise" and to envision other truths. In short, he wrestles with what Djebar, in my first epigraph, terms the "flesh" and the "hull" of language.

Khatibi's and Said's parallel itineraries, and the fact that they ignore each other, invite the speculation that rather than any personal ideological divergences, Said's misunderstanding or negligence with regard to the Maghreb may well be rooted in the long imperial history of conflicting Anglophone and Francophone spheres of political and cultural influence in relation to the Arab civilizations of the Maghreb and the Mashriq. Despite his interest in modern French history and culture and his admiration for the humanist tradition he associates with speculative thinking, Said's angle of vision was very much that of an elite Anglo intellectual with surprisingly restrictive views regarding who or what mattered and what should be considered "central" in history and theory. Within such a view, the Maghreb would indeed remain a distant Francophone zone of no consequence, and so presumably could Khatibi.

In the Sheehi interview mentioned above, Said makes the only mention in print of Khatibi that I have been able to find, but it is only to brush him aside as insignificant. Speaking with Stephen Sheehi for the Los Angeles-based magazine *Al-Jadid: A Review and Record of Arab Culture and Arts*, and in response to the interviewer's remark that Said's criticism of Albert Camus in *Culture and Imperialism* resonates with "Khatibi's searing critique of Sartre" in *Vomito Blanco,* Said makes a surprising statement: "France is still very pro-Zionist […] there has never been any important Arab presence culturally in France," and he adds:

> Khatibi is a nice guy but peripheral. He is perceived as a kind of Moroccan equivalent of Derrida. But he doesn't have the force or the presence or the place or the location inside French culture that Sartre or Foucault do or had. (Sheehi, 1998)

If Khatibi remains a "peripheral" figure in France and especially in the English-speaking world today, it is primarily as a result of non-translation. That he did not have "the force or the presence or the place or the location inside French culture that Sartre or Foucault do or had" is obvious; he was not French, not an insider, and not a member of that segment of the Parisian intelligentsia to which Sartre, Derrida, and Foucault certainly belonged even if the latter two shot to fame in large part because of the reception given their work in the United States: they were global theorists, much like Said himself. The academic and cultural politics of knowledge and prestige, as Said well knew, tends to marginalize those intellectuals whose educational or professional trajectories remain outside of the spheres of value of western metropolitan centers. It is thus surprising that Said should comment on the status of a scholar located in Rabat without acknowledging the social and political conditions of that marginality, implying instead that there are intrinsic rather than extrinsic reasons for its quasi invisibility in an Anglophone context. What I want to suggest instead is that Khatibi's lack of centrality is a legacy of colonial structures of distinction rather than an index of the weakness of his thought, a careful reading of which enables a greater appreciation of his original contributions to the analysis of power, knowledge, and freedom, as I will now explain.

Double Critique, Counterpoint, and the "Return to Philology"

Khatibi's case study of the Maghreb in the second part of "Double critique" targets different schools of social theory, in the west and the non-west, from the precolonial (the fourteenth-century philosopher Ibn Khaldun) to the colonial (Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim) and the contemporary (Ernest Gellner). He foregrounds each system's logic in order to expose its heuristic limitations, and thus cautions fellow Arab scholars against absorbing essentializing ideologies from either side. While conceding the brilliance and uniqueness of Ibn Khaldun (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 81), he is especially severe in denouncing the epistemological illusions generated by the khaldunian theory of cyclical time and its entrapment in a "*utopie de l'origine*" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 71) that fuels contemporary fundamentalisms. He also bemoans the theoretical abstractions that ensnare Marxists and functionalists alike, and he exposes each school's interpretive errors, its insufficient embeddedness in the concrete social, and in local historical forms of group organization that tend to be extremely fluid in the Maghreb (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 91). His two-way critique of disciplinary genealogies points to institutional contradictions and limitations, and to the chronic neglect of an "enormous stock" of local archives by even the most serious western anthropologists who prefer to "reinterpret the Kabyle system" simply by building upon previously published western research to the point of reaching what he terms "*un délire méthodologique*" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 102) at the expense of local knowledge.

His examples all support his claim, in the first part of the essay, that western arrogance and self-sufficiency block the ability to *hear* the other. He bemoans the "archeology of silence" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 50) that continues to muzzle subaltern societies, explaining that "*Même quand elles parlent, elles ne sont pas entendues dans leur différence*" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 50) [Even when they speak, they remain unheard in their difference from the West (Khatibi, 1985: p. 11)]. His insights, in 1970, already herald Gayatri Spivak's now classic formulation "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak, 1988), while also anticipating responses to her work regarding the need for the dominant to learn to "listen." Khatibi offers his double critique as a means of breaking through the methodological dead-ends of religious and academic regimes that limit the representation of subjects and issues repressed by theology and science combined. Like Djebar, who speaks of the "blanks" of memory (Djebar, 1995), and of the gradual closing of the minds subsequent to the murder of writers and journalists in the wake of fundamentalist violence in Algeria in the 1990s, Khatibi addresses the double bind of internal as well as external domination that silences dissent. That is why, for him:

> La double critique consiste à opposer à l'epistémé occidentale son dehors impensé tout en radicalisant la marge, non seulement dans une pensée en arabe, mais dans une pensée autre qui parle en langues, se mettant à l'écoute de toute parole – d'où qu'elle vienne. (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 63)

To engage in double critique is to oppose the western episteme to its own untheorized outside and to radicalize its margins not just by means of *Arabic thought* (or *thought formulated in Arabic*), but by thinking otherwise, by engaging in thought that is *heterophonic* and *heteroglossic*, that listens to any speech or voice – wherever it may be coming from.

His practice stands against metaphysics and takes into account the multilingual social networks that serve as relays in the process of democratic globalization as well as the multidirectional histories and memories that encourage dialogue with all the other knowledge producers of the planet (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 60).

For Khatibi, multilingual means not just the encounter between, say, Arabic and French, but also the dialogism between written and vernacular Arabic or between Arabic and Amazigh or Berber. He theorizes "thinking otherwise" or "thinking with others" as the double movement back and forth among agents of discourse who may each be pursuing different priorities but who can mobilize the radical potential of open exchange and turn it into a crucial critique of (il)legitimate power. This is an active process that does not just aim, like deconstruction, to produce the *internal* undoing of a given ideology. Rather, it requires a conceptualization of the other as a concrete discursive presence, not an otherness that is always already "*à venir*" (as in certain forms of Derridean deconstruction), but as a presence that generates the transformation of the same, and that resists essentialization, nostalgia or the longing for a distinct origin and authenticity. As he insists, this involves a "*tâche immense* [...] *mais inévitable pour toute pensée-autre qui* se déclare sur un autre lieu que *l'Occident dans son tout*" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 53 my emphasis) [huge task [...] but an indispensable one for another kind of thinking, the one that *announces that it hails from an alternate location* or *claims to stand on a different ground outside* of the west as a whole (Khatibi, 1985: p. 13 tr. mod., my emphasis)]. He underscores the *exterior* that serves as critical lever precisely because it cannot become just an *integral* part of the existing ideological system.

In "Double critique," Khatibi (1983b) offers a practical answer to the central epistemological problem confronting all colonized groups. His analysis aims at foregrounding what has remained silent and unformulated because of the way intellectual genealogies have predetermined the course of research in the social sciences. It is only through a rigorous archeology (in the Foucauldian sense) of the discourses animating precolonial as well as colonial hierarchies that one can begin to think "thoughts of the impossible" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 61), of the not-yet-articulated, of the elsewhere, and of its other languages. The issue remains for him "*a question of language*" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 61) precisely because politics always plays out on a multiplicity of levels, of which language is a primary one. Said would no doubt concur with this emphasis on language and its historicity, given his own late "return to philology" as "the royal road to humanistic understanding in the widest and best sense of the phrase" (Said, 2004: p. xvii). For both, language, history, and memory are the conditions of possibility of politics, rather than the obverse.

Khatibi's gesture toward a knowable and attainable future has a quasi utopian dimension congruent with his belief that openness to heterogeneity, heteroglossia, and heterophony – or to thinking with and in other languages as well as other voices – holds a promise and is "*le signe d'un advenir dans un monde à transformer*" [the sign of a future yet to come, of a future becoming in a world in need of change] (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 63). It is this unquiet desire for transformation that flags the fundamentally political nature of his project, and that gives him a distinct affinity with Jacques Rancière, another Maghreb-born philosopher of his generation. As Rancière notes in *Le partage du sensible: esthétique et politique* (Rancière, 2000), one of the meanings of utopia is its ability to denote through words and images, through the fictions of art and politics, the reconfiguration of "the territory of the visible, the thinkable, and the possible" into disparate sites or disjunct heterotopias (Rancière, 2000: p. 65). Khatibi's "Double critique" locates these heterotopias in the "wakeful margin" (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 17) where a *better* future – an *eu-topia* – can begin to dawn, through the practice, in the present, of this emancipatory "*pensée-autre*" that confronts oppressive knowledges and institutions with their "own untheorized outside" or with what remains other or unassimilable within their epistemic structures (Khatibi, 1983b: p. 63). Is it possible, then, to relate this anti-metaphysical, anti-foundational notion of double critique to Said's contrapuntal literary approach rooted in his love of and extensive expertise in classical music and in what he considers its ability to bring humans together? What are the stakes of Said's version of humanism, and what does it leave out?

The "outside" that interests Khatibi, I would suggest, is precisely the exteriority that Said's own rhetoric implicitly points to – with his enumeration of "minority or suppressed voices" (Said, 1993: p. 54), as we saw earlier – but ultimately cannot theorize because his conceptualization of humanism does not allow for residual or irreducible difference as such, or for a difference that cannot speak its (subaltern) name. That is because, in accordance with his affiliation with Giambattista Vico, as he first explains in *Beginnings* (Said, 1985: p. 350), Said prefers to prioritize a common humanity or identical human origin for each group or culture. Comparison seems possible only because of this humanist prerequisite. In *Culture and Imperialism*, he makes clear that for him:

> Quite various practices can be read and understood together since they belong to *comparable* fields of human experience […] That is, we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them coexisting and interacting with others. (Said, 1993: p. 32, my emphasis)

He has to proceed "on the assumption that whereas the whole of culture is a disjunct one, many important sectors of it can be apprehended as working *contrapuntally* together" (Said, 1993: p. 195). This position accords both with his sense that only

humanism can provide "the energy to resist" (Said, 2004: p. 10) injustice and with his ideal notion of concordance or harmony made concrete by the metaphor of the musical counterpoint.

Said's appreciation, as a pianist himself, of the Canadian Glenn Gould's contrapuntal musical practice and performance (Said, 2008) drives his thinking. Music provides a model for articulating a correlation between the European canon, its main themes and colonial complicities, and the postcolonial texts that emerge in response to the traditions of imperial literature, and that therefore constitute variations on those themes (Said, 1993: p. 18). Literary compositions become the verbal equivalent of western musical forms composed according to strict principles of "counterpoint," with one or more parts added independently of the melody but according to specific rules of harmony. Said describes the result of this compositional counterpoint as a "polyphony" in which there is "concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, *not from* a rigorous melodic or formal principle *outside* the work" (Said, 1993: p. 51, my emphasis). This view of the literary as an all-embracing humanistic activity confirms his statement at the end of *Musical Elaborations* (Said, 1991) that the pleasures of music "are premised upon letting go" and relinquishing control, and that the musical performance is:

> A mode of thinking through or thinking with the *integral* variety of human cultural practices, generously, non-coercively, and, yes, in a utopian cast, if by utopian we mean worldly, possible, attainable, knowable. (Said, 1992: p. 105, my emphasis)

But my point is that this wished-for overall or "integral" perspective can still leave out what I would term, after Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, some of "the lower frequencies" (Ellison, 1952: p. 439) of human experience, those expressed at a different pitch or uttered in the registers and idioms that still remain, for Khatibi, as we have seen, untranslated or even untranslatable, because they might hail "*from an alternate location or* [...] *stand on a different ground outside* of the west as a whole" (Khatibi, 1985: p. 13).

Using the work of Assia Djebar, Mildred Mortimer has explained how the author of *Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalcade* puts into motion a Saidian contrapuntal critique of the silences and deformations of colonial historiography, elaborating a creative critique that ends up being much more encompassing than Said's theoretical one. Mortimer argues that Djebar extends Said's insights about cultural disjunctures by actively including Arab women's voices or what I would describe as the unthought and unrepresented "outside" of *both* imperial and postcolonial ideologies: thus, in the short story "La femme en morceaux," [The woman in pieces] Djebar foregrounds voices that provide an internal – Arab – critique of Arab violence, but from an alternate location, gendered, within the same tradition. For Alison Rice too, what Djebar does in *Loin de Médine* [Far from Medina] is to place "at a counterpoint the written accounts of male historians and the oral versions of women" (Rice, 2006: p. 103) in order to provide a full account of the silenced aspects of early Islamic history. It seems

to me, then, that what Djebar provides is not, in Said's words, "an organized interplay" that creates harmony among internally constituted themes and issues (of either European or Islamic history). Rather, Djebar makes visible a *counter*point that brings to the surface moments of unresolvable conflicts within the existing politico-religious structures of the same tradition, but that also *point to* an outside that exceeds the boundaries of that tradition. Surprisingly, Mortimer does not cite Khatibi and his double critique; but as my analysis has, I hope, made clear, his plurality of (self-)critical positions and his direct engagement with notions of the feminine (however abstract) are more in tune with Djebar's own concrete practice than is Said's contrapuntal method which remains located, like his critique of Orientalism, "within the confining matrix of the epistemology [he] strives to subvert" as Ali Behdad argues (Behdad, 1994: p. 5).

Therein I believe lies the principal difference between Khatibi and Said: for although Said is interested in how "a particular type of research and knowledge begins to build up" allowing for the study of culture "as contrapuntal ensembles" of hybrid identities (Said, 1993: p. 52), ultimately he can only address their common ground or translatability, whereas Khatibi wants to allow for an as-yet-untought exteriority beyond the "archeology of silence" that represses *other* languages, genders, and peoples in their unheard difference. For Said, what is translatable is that which is discernible within the overall arrangements of literary and musical high culture as the site of a historic face-off between the imperial west and those who resist its claims in their "disparities and discrepancies" (Said, 1993: p. 114) which must eventually come to order and harmony, as in the musical interplay or counterpoint of the concert performance.

But harmony – or consensus – may not be attainable or desirable, and there are other meanings and uses of the word counterpoint. Taking my cues from Said's own call for the return to "a philological attention to language" (Said, 2004: p. 58), and for "a detailed, patient scrutiny of and lifelong attentiveness to the words and rhetorics by which language is used by human beings who exist in history" (Said, 2004: p. 61), I would like to conclude with a brief discussion of one of those other meanings of "counterpoint." It is crucial to a proper understanding of Khatibi's double critique, and it gestures toward Said's more ambivalent and poignant creative insights in the conclusion to his memoir, where he suggests, contrary to his own theory, that "the flowing currents" of one's life "require no reconciling. No harmonizing" (Said, 1999: p. 295).

I mentioned earlier that the metaphor that best illustrates Khatibi's method is one that derives etymologically from sewing and weaving. He was fascinated by the weavers of Morocco and specifically refers to what Brinkley Messick terms the "subordinate discourse" of weaving (Messick, 1987: p. 5). For Khatibi, the feminine process of "weaving silence" is an alternate mode of knowing (Khatibi, 1993a: p. 5). As I see it here, his double critique requires a strategy that mirrors the practice of "weaving" with its constant back-and-forth to link and delink different objects as well

as different analytics. This motion is directed forward and back toward what precedes it so as to overlap with it, envelop it, and then point toward its exterior so as to move beyond it. That is why I understand his method as the philosophical or dialectical equivalent of a simple material process best described by the metaphor of the backstitch used in sewing, quilting or weaving, and referring to stitches that overlap, bind together, and then cross over beyond the boundary established by the first stitch. It is this simple movement that can carry a thread back and forth, interminably if necessary, that is called in Old French *contrepoincter* or *coutrepoincter* (to quilt, to work the backstitch), from the verb *coutre* (to sew). It is thus this age-old gendered activity, which has inspired feminist critics to relate it to writing and textuality, that allows me now to "stitch together" as it were both Khatibi's and Said's critical methods under the combined meanings and etymological thickness of the "counterpoint" and its gendered subtexts, and to suggest that such a move, or what we can now truly term the "contrapuntal double critique," is a means of theorizing comparison as an open, interminable, and always future-oriented practice that aims to include, but not necessarily to "harmonize," the extant heterotopias of the discipline.

[All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.]

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How French Studies Became Transnational; Or Postcolonialism as Comparatism

David Murphy

Introduction

The field of postcolonial studies emerged from within Departments of English Literature (across the English-speaking world) in the late 1980s: its corpus of texts spanned the five continents and it signaled the culmination of a progressive de-centering of English literary studies within the academy that had already begun several decades previously. On one level, this emerging postcolonial field seemed inherently comparative for it constituted the sort of transnational literary sphere that has long been central to dominant conceptions of comparative literature. As the renowned comparatist Claudio Guillén states: "[c]omparative literature [...] is usually understood to consist of a certain tendency or branch of literary investigation that involves the systematic study of supranational assemblages" (Guillén, 1993: p. 3). However, Anglophone postcolonial critique "failed" other key tests of the classical model of comparative literature: firstly, despite its transnational nature it was resolutely monolingual and was throughout its period of initial development and subsequent consolidation often perceived as a uniquely Anglophone phenomenon that had little interest in other languages or other imperial contexts; and, secondly, postcolonialism has often been seen as insufficiently "literary," its political-historical framework deemed to be unconducive to the close textual readings central to classic configurations of comparative literature.

What then of Europe's other transnational languages that have developed a "global presence" through imperial conquest? How has the study of literature been organized across and within these new transnational literary spaces? Alongside the development

of an Anglophone postcolonial field of literary production, scholars of French-, Spanish- and Portuguese-language literatures had simultaneously developed their own frameworks for analysis and interpretation that sought to take account of the increasingly transnational dimension of their fields: Francophone, Hispanophone and Lusophone literatures were inherently transnational categories but they too remained, for the most part, monolingual, and they rarely conceived of themselves (at least not explicitly) as comparative projects.

Over the past decade, however, there have been persistent efforts to trace the comparative dimensions of postcolonial studies and these other transnational groupings as fields of inquiry. These efforts have taken the form both of a desire to compare across (former) empires and to conceive of transnational spaces such as *Francophonie* as inherently comparative in themselves. In this chapter, I will focus on the case of French/Francophone studies, with which I am most familiar, in order to trace the emergence of comparative work that is transnational and/or multilingual. Key to this process has been the exploration of the interface between postcolonial studies and Francophone literatures, which has been the subject of a series of significant publications (see Britton and Syrotinski, 2001; Forsdick and Murphy, 2003, 2009; Murdoch and Donadey, 2005). Rather than viewing Anglophone postcolonial studies and Francophone studies as hermetically sealed fields of inquiry with little or nothing to say to each other (the hitherto dominant view), these works have illustrated that they are in fact intimately and inextricably interrelated. In essence, then, this chapter will seek to explore how in the hands of a growing number of scholars Francophone studies has become a form of postcolonial comparatism that seeks to develop comparisons across cultures and across languages.

Transnational French Studies: Beyond National Literature?

If we are to understand how Francophone studies became comparative, it is necessary to understand the circumstances in which French studies became a transnational field of inquiry in the first place. (My understanding of this process is of course colored by my institutional location within the British university system but the general process I am examining – if not the precise historical details, which necessarily differ widely from one context to another – holds broadly true, I would argue, for the study of "French" in most English-speaking contexts.) This is a crucial argument, for comparative literature's objective of study has – as was illustrated by the quote from Claudio Guillén at the beginning of this chapter – largely been perceived within a transnational framework that is often defiantly multilingual: in some of the more rancorous debates opposing comparatists and "national" literary scholars, the former can seek to assert their more wide-ranging perspective, liberated from the narrow-minded concerns of the national literary tradition, and willing to engage in a truly cosmopolitan fashion with more than one language. But what happens, as is now the case, when literature in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese becomes transnational? Does

the monolingual but transnational body of literature not equally lend itself to comparative approaches? Such debates are not new but they have been given increased urgency over recent years. How, then, did French studies become transnational and what are the consequences of this development?

In order to address this question, it is necessary to distinguish between the situation in France itself and that which has pertained in (most) English-speaking critical contexts. If we begin with France, one cannot help but remark upon the extreme polarization that has marked many of the debates on these issues. For example, in their polemical manifesto, "*Pour une littérature-monde en français*" (2007), Michel Le Bris, Jean Rouaud and forty-two other signatories critique the process of exclusion that is, in their view, inherent within the category of Francophone literature. In essence, they proclaim that French literature has been designated as the norm while the term "Francophone" gathers together the writing of former colonial peoples and those writers from other national and linguistic backgrounds who have for whatever reason chosen to write in French. Instead of the current hierarchical division between French and Francophone, the *littérature-monde* writers call for a radical de-centering of our understanding of what is meant by "French literature," which they argue should no longer be focused on the French nation. In essence, the signatories of the manifesto decry the way in which France continues to position itself as the norm in terms of literary production, relegating the "Francophone" to a marginalized and inherently inferior position. The concept of a *littérature-monde* and the accompanying critique of Francophone studies have been highly contested from a wide range of perspectives: from the ardent defense of representatives of an institutionalized "*Francophonie*" to those working in the Anglophone academy who argue that the epithet "Francophone" has in fact opened up the study of French-language literatures in ways denied by the manifesto (see Thomas, 2010). At the risk of generalization, I would argue that debates surrounding the manifesto have tended to reveal a split between French-language critics wary of the text's de-centralizing arguments and Anglophone critics who think that the text does not go far enough in its attempt to "decolonize" literature in French. This is not to claim homogeneous positions for "Anglophone" or "Francophone" critics: on the contrary, both "sides" are in fact incredibly heterogeneous. What emerges though is a shared "French" sense that a convincing case for a decentered "French studies" is difficult to achieve (or, for some, is wholly undesirable), whereas many Anglophone critics argue that a truly decentering argument is urgent and necessary.

The gap in thinking on this issue between Anglophone and Francophone criticism is revelatory of a wider divergence in critical approaches that has shaped the development of transnational French studies in different linguistic and geographical contexts. Scholars of French-language literature traditionally turned to colleagues in France for critical models with which to engage with texts; however, in the case of "Francophone literature," the critical divergences discussed above have often led to incompatible methodological and institutional frameworks. In France, Francophone literature has, despite the best efforts of some outstanding scholars, remained on the

margins of scholarly debates about "High Literature," and has until recently enjoyed marginal success in the commercial sphere. The success of non-French authors in the autumn prize-giving season of 2006 (cited by the authors of the *littérature-monde* manifesto as marking a "Copernican revolution"), as well as in subsequent years, has signaled a commercial and "critical" breakthrough for Francophone literature, which is beginning to lose some of its peripheral status. As Lydie Moudileno convincingly argues (Moudileno, 2010), what is most innovative about the *littérature-monde* manifesto is that it manages to position non-white French authors at the center of literary debates from which they had almost entirely been excluded by a Parisian literary elite.

What might explain the lack of willingness to abandon a nation-centered model of literature in French that has been very strong in France (and, as we shall see below, has influenced scholarship in other non-French contexts)? The French critic Daniel Delas has explored the importance of French Literature within the French education system, arguing that "*la grande littérature*" [great literature] is increasingly seen as a vital expression of the specific "*génie*" [genius] of French culture, and thus as a key component of the national heritage. As French Republican identity – built on the notion of universalism – is increasingly challenged by the demands of multiculturalism and the process of globalization, it is possible that Literature has acquired what we might call a transcendental role as guarantor of a certain idea of "Frenchness" (a notion that is reinforced by the conception of the teacher of literature as absolutely apolitical). Within this framework, the Francophone has generally been seen as external to the French, and comparative approaches have been limited to analysis of how Francophone literature has been inspired by French models.

What then of the development of a transnational French studies in Britain? From their creation in the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century, French departments in Britain saw themselves primarily as guardians of "*les belles lettres*" [high literary culture]. Professors of French were for the most part French nationals who saw their role as presenting the glories of "French civilization" to an educated British elite. However, over time, and increasingly from the 1960s, French Departments began to hire native English speakers and also to give a greater place in the curriculum to non-literary subjects: linguistics, history, sociology, cinema, women's studies, that is, what we might broadly call a Cultural Studies approach. It is in this context that Francophone studies – generally understood as the study of literature from France's former colonies – emerged in the 1970s, and it has since the late 1980s been open to the currents of thought that came to be known as postcolonial theory, which were becoming increasingly common in English Literature Departments. Consequently, the rise of Francophone studies can be viewed as part of a revolution/evolution in the structure and organization of French studies: in the early twenty-first century, the epithets "French" or "French studies" broadly describe an academic subject but they do not define a specific disciplinary, or even a set of, disciplinary approaches: indeed, we might most accurately classify "French/French studies" as an interdisciplinary subject.

Despite this transformation of French studies in Anglophone academic contexts, it is acknowledged (whether approvingly or disapprovingly) by many scholars that metropolitan French culture remains the "center" of French studies in a way that one can no longer imagine for the academic fields of "English," "Spanish" or "Portuguese." This situation is intricately bound up in the very different historical-demographic evolutions of these "world languages." For the former imperial powers of Britain, Portugal and Spain are all dwarfed in size (if not always economically and politically) by their former colonies; there are far more native speakers of English, Spanish and Portuguese in the United States, Latin America and Brazil respectively than in their former metropolitan centers, while France, even by the most optimistic estimates of the official institutions of *La Francophonie*, is home to between one-third and one-half of the world's French speakers. This continued centrality of metropolitan France to conceptions of Frenchness and "ownership" of the French language constitutes a significant problem for the emergence of a genuinely transnational French studies. For the historical and demographic realities of language evolution are often used to reinforce a sense of French exceptionalism in which the "genius" of the French language is intimately linked to the French nation. These ideas are not limited to French conceptions of their own national identity, for they have also had great resonance with many scholars of French outside of France itself: the influential US critic Lawrence Kritzman (2003) claims that he and other US scholars of French are subjugated to "a *certain idea of France*" that has helped to shape their conception of the field of French studies as inevitably focused on the culture of France (see also Petrey, 2003).

The anxiety over the precise object of study of French departments is evident in the ambiguity of the departmental designations that have emerged in recent times. In some instances, the terms "French" and "French studies" have taken on an expanded transnational connotation while in other contexts, "French and Francophone" have been deployed to reinforce the curricular changes that have taken place. But on closer inspection just how genuinely transnational and potentially comparative are these changes? Are there not still a lot of departments for which "French" and "French studies" continue in fact to mean metropolitan France? Does the label "French and Francophone studies" truly denote equality or does the conjunction "and" merely signify a "colorful" addition to the curriculum? Is there not still a relatively widespread belief that France is the core of what French departments do, and the advent of Francophone studies, while enriching, has no impact whatsoever on the understanding of France and its culture? Some French departments have been genuinely transformed by the emergence of Francophone studies but many others have either been untouched by this process or have opted to go down the route of what Karen Gould terms the "Francophone hire," a single colleague burdened with the teaching of all non-French aspects of the curriculum (Gould, 2003: p. 26). Consequently, despite the growing significance of Francophone studies research over more than two decades, there has remained a feeling amongst many scholars that a monolithic nation-based conception of French studies remains the norm in the field.

It was in this context that a number of independently conceived, but intellectually connected, projects on both sides of the Atlantic sought to examine the possibility that sustained engagement with Anglophone postcolonial theory might offer a more solid critical basis upon which to build firmer foundations for a genuinely transnational, and thus comparative, French studies. Such a move entails its own critical "problems" (e.g. potentially assuming the fundamental sameness of all "postcolonial" writing; lack of attention to literariness of the text) but I would like to focus on the specific motivations behind the development of a loosely defined field of "Francophone Postcolonial studies," which are succinctly defined by Charles Forsdick:

> The persistent assertion of Francophone Postcolonial Studies as a field of enquiry in its own right reflects a constructively critical strategy emerging from dissatisfaction with both the *monolingual* emphases of postcolonial criticism […] and the *monocultural*, essentially metropolitan biases of French Studies. (Forsdick, 2003: p. 36)

Underlining the limitations of the two existing fields of postcolonial studies and French studies, Forsdick signals the possibility of a dual comparative approach that allows for comparisons to be made across both languages and cultures. If the emergence of Francophone studies is truly to create a transnational French studies, it must develop greater comparative awareness of the impact of post/colonial phenomena both in the metropolitan centers and in the former colonial peripheries. Equally, to escape the flattening, homogenizing tendencies of a monolingual postcolonial studies, a comparative engagement with other empires and other languages is absolutely necessary.

These are the two avenues of research that will be examined in the sections that follow. I will begin by focusing on the development of transnational and comparative understandings of French Studies as a field of inquiry, and in particular, on the ways in which a Francophone postcolonialism has inflected the nature of work on this area: as has already been indicated in this section, this will necessarily involve a keen comparative awareness of the different institutional and critical contexts at work in different university systems. I will then move on to explore the comparative potential of postcolonial studies more generally, identifying some of the groundwork that has already been carried out in this area.

Transnational French Studies and Comparatism

As was argued above, literary studies in France developed its own specific framework for the study of "Francophone literature." What critical models did a French-language Francophone studies thus manage to establish? Some outstanding critical work analyzed literature from specific areas of the so-called Francophone world, attempting to situate this material within its cultural context, and largely deploying the methods of "classical" French literary criticism: see, for example, the writings of Charles Bonn

(on North Africa), Bernard Mouralis (on sub-Saharan Africa) and Daniel-Henri Pageaux (on the Caribbean). Early attempts to develop frameworks within which to analyze Francophone literatures as a whole sought, in essence, to define an aesthetic of biculturalism. Francophone, in this understanding, grouped together the work of all those writing in French either whose first language was not French or who possessed another cultural heritage through their family backgrounds (see Combe, 1995; Beniamino, 1999). This quite clearly constituted a comparatist approach (i.e. what exactly is it that defines an often geographically disparate literary production?), although it rarely announced itself as such. Tracing the bicultural nature of the writing of a Samuel Beckett or a Driss Chraïbi was a significant critical endeavor that explored the ways in which French was being remade by authors of different linguistic and cultural origins. There was a clear urge in such work to give greater autonomy to Francophone writing, which was seen to have its own internal logic and which did not depend on a one-way street of influence from metropolitan French writing.

Nonetheless, in attempting to identify a specific and meaningful, collective identity based on a shared biculturalism, which was deemed to be given expression in literature, these critical undertakings could not escape from the exclusionary logic that underpins dominant critical and popular conceptions of "Francophone" as a term: for the term "Francophone," despite various attempts to widen its meaning to encompass all speakers of French, has, in effect, come to mean "not French." The deeply problematic nature of the process of inclusion and exclusion related to the categories of French and Francophone can be explored through two key examples. Firstly, white, Euro-American authors – e.g. Milan Kundera, Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Nancy Huston – have, despite the efforts of some critics to categorize them as "Francophone," generally been assimilated relatively easily into "French literature." On the contrary, a series of ethnic minority writers often born in France or in its overseas territories have seen themselves "relegated" to the status of Francophone: see, for example, writers from the DOMs-TOMs (*départements d'outre-mer* and *territoires d'outre-mer* [French Overseas Departments and Territories]) such as Aimé Césaire and Patrick Chamoiseau, or writers of "immigrant origin," in particular *beur* authors such as Azouz Begag or *banlieue* authors such as Faïza Guène. It was in this context of "French" and "Francophone" as irreconcilable others that postcolonial studies began to assert itself as a way out of this impasse, and it had a radical comparative impulse at its heart.

The marriage of the Francophone and the postcolonial was far from obvious, however. One of the main stumbling blocks initially preventing a sustained comparative engagement with postcolonialism by scholars of Francophone material was the perception that the postcolonial was a purely "Anglo-Saxon" (to adopt the homogenizing and frankly misleading term often used in France to refer to the English-speaking world) concept that had little to contribute to our understanding of other post/colonial contexts. As was acknowledged at the beginning of this chapter, postcolonial studies emerged from English Literature departments and it has largely developed as a subfield of English literary studies. This has led to many critiques, amongst which Harish

Trivedi's stinging rebuke over a decade ago that "the postcolonial has ears only for English" is perhaps the most infamous (Trivedi, 1999: p. 272). However, the situation has evolved rapidly since Trivedi made this criticism, and, equally, I would argue, that despite the fundamental perceptiveness of his comments, the assumption that postcolonial studies is somehow inherently Anglophone fails to acknowledge the latent but underdeveloped comparatism present in canonical texts of Anglophone postcolonial criticism. For example, on the opening page of *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, 1989), a key foundational text of postcolonial studies, the authors claim that:

> This book is concerned with writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain, though much of what it deals with is of interest and relevance to countries colonized by other European powers, such as France, Portugal and Spain. (Ashcroft, *et al.*, 1989: p. 1)

This brief sentence captures an ambiguity that has marked the development of post-colonial studies since its inception: although the field sets out to analyze a worldwide phenomenon – the opening line of the book states that "[m]ore than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" – it simultaneously closed off research into other colonial contexts, and more widely it has neglected works not written in English (as Trivedi argues) (Ashcroft, *et al.*, 1989: p. 1).

The work of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin is not being singled out here for particular criticism; indeed, the claims they make were present in most other works in the field from that period. They are merely symptomatic of a wider monolingualism that has marked postcolonial studies since its inception, a monolingualism that is mirrored in the parallel field of Francophone studies. Indeed, one could just as easily cite the lack of engagement with postcolonial theory by scholars of Francophone material as one of the main stumbling blocks preventing the development of a transcolonial comparatism. What is most significant here for the purposes of my argument is that two transnational groupings (postcolonial studies and Francophone studies) remained resolutely monolingual in focus and little inclined to develop comparative approaches even within their "single language zone:" why has it been so hard for the transnational literary field to assert a comparative dimension to its work?

When French-language scholars began to engage seriously with postcolonialism, it was significant that critics with a background in comparatism took the lead. The work of Jean-Marc Moura and Jacqueline Bardolph explicitly sought to trace the ways in which Anglophone postcolonial studies might inform the study of French-language material. Bardolph's short book sought to tease out a comparative understanding of literature from primarily Anglophone and Francophone postcolonial contexts, working through a range of case studies, while Moura's groundbreaking volume sought in effect to "translate" postcolonialism for a French-language readership, positioning its key concepts within a more "scientific" framework than is the case in the sometimes rather

speculative body of Anglophone postcolonial work. The postcolonial debate in France remains contested, particularly within the context of the complex memory debates that have formed the core of public discussion of postcolonial issues but it does now have a clear place within a range of public and academic debates.

As was indicated above, simultaneous efforts to explore this same ground were occurring in French and Francophone studies departments in English-speaking countries. The emergence of a field called Francophone postcolonial studies was more easily achieved in Anglophone contexts, for the participants were not caught up in debates on the significance of the national literature, nor were they subjected to the specific institutional pressures of their French counterparts. Nonetheless, divisions and divergences remain, sometimes resulting in outright hostility, as is illustrated by Richard Serrano's polemically titled *Against the Postcolonial* (Serrano, 2005). For some, the pull of a traditional, nation-based model of French studies remains strong; and while some scholars actively situate themselves as part of a Francophone postcolonial field, others have remained willing to work within the parameters of a revised French and Francophone studies that they had fought so long to have accepted, particularly in North America.

The development of a Francophone postcolonial field has managed to achieve two key interconnected aims: by shifting away from the exclusionary logic that underpinned previous conceptions of the Francophone, the field has now opened up the possibility of examining "French" and "Francophone" within the same framework. As engagement with colonialism and its aftermath is the guiding principle of the field, we now find discussion of metropolitan French authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Marguerite Duras alongside work by "non-French" authors within Francophone postcolonial criticism: at long last, within literary critical circles, it is being acknowledged that colonialism is not something that simply happened overseas. The type of contrapuntal reading promoted by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (Said, 1993) in which texts from the metropolitan "center" are read against texts on similar themes from the colonial "periphery" has now become central to the Francophone postcolonial project: this comparative questioning of the canon had rarely been possible in previous conceptions of Francophone studies which had attempted rigorously to keep French and Francophone separate.

However, a shared focus on colonialism and its aftermath must not entail a flattening approach that views all postcolonial texts as expressions of the same realities. Increased attention to the linguistic, cultural and historical specificities opens up the possibility of more informed comparisons with Anglophone postcolonialism – as we shall see in the next section – but it also reveals the necessity of looking at the Francophone itself in a comparative light: it is not because Canada, Senegal and Algeria were all colonized by France that they share the same identity and history. Equally, attention is increasingly being paid to the pre-Second World War period, as scholars delve back to the foundations of France's Republican imperialism and begin to compare it to the earlier waves of colonial conquest undertaken by the monarchies of the *ancien régime*. Most "postcolonial" scholars remain specialists in one geographical

area or historical period but there is now a far greater sense of the need to understand colonialism within a comparative frame: not least because it was colonialism that brought the colonized together – as in the Negritude movement in 1930s Paris – and the need to understand, and combat, colonialism as a system while paying attention to specific post/colonial contexts marked anti-colonial critique throughout the twentieth century.

Towards a Multilingual Postcolonial Comparatism

The recent promotion of a comparatist dimension in postcolonial criticism is thus both welcome and in many ways overdue, for the commonly accepted foundational text of postcolonialism, Edward Said's, *Orientalism* (1978), was itself the work of a comparatist heavily influenced by French-language material. Although often cited as a member of the "Holy Trinity" of postcolonial studies (alongside Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak), Said always enjoyed an ambiguous relationship to postcolonial thought, refusing to accept it as a comprehensive designation of his work. The profound questioning of literature and the humanities inaugurated by Said in *Orientalism* and further developed in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) thus can be seen to have emerged from a comparatist tradition.

Susan Bassnett and many of the contributors to the 1993 Bernheimer report reasserted this comparative dimension of postcolonial studies; however, it is only in the past decade that we have seen postcolonial projects emerge that have been explicitly comparative in focus, and as is noted by several contributors to the 2004 Saussy report, critical activity in the field of Francophone postcolonial studies has played a central (if by no means unique) role in this process. To cite just one example, the emergence of Francophone postcolonial research has led to much greater awareness of the ways in which key French-language theorists of decolonization – Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi – as well as philosophers associated with deconstruction and poststructuralism – Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser – have been deployed, often in a highly decontextualized fashion within Anglophone postcolonial theory. This produced a certain type of critical interpretation of such figures, which then became prevalent in postcolonial critique; equally, the rapid canonization and anthologization of these figures led to the exclusion of other voices (e.g. Jean-Paul Sartre and Ho Chi Minh who are actively "rediscovered" in Forsdick and Murphy, 2009). This linguistic and contextual awareness is central to the conception of a revised comparative literature proposed by Spivak in *Death of a Discipline*, although she (wrongly in my view) denies this critical insight to postcolonial studies, instead promoting Area Studies as the necessary contextual counterbalance to Comparative Literature's close reading. Rarely has Francophone postcolonial criticism sought solely to promote the sometimes dubious value of reading in the original. For, as the Anglophone postcolonial critic John McLeod has convincingly argued, what postcolonial studies demonstrates is the highly productive nature of Said's conception of

"traveling theory," that is the ability of ideas/concepts to move from their original intellectual and cultural contexts and to be adapted for use in often very different contexts indeed; this process may alter the original meaning of the concept but for McLeod (and before him Said) what is more significant is how productive the shift from one context to another can be.

McLeod has emerged as a key voice within Anglophone postcolonial studies calling for greater awareness of the comparative nature of the field. In the introduction to his groundbreaking *Companion to Postcolonial Literatures*, which examines the British, French, Portuguese and Spanish empires, McLeod argues that "[t]he field's center of gravity is shifting, so that postcolonial studies is now generally more alert to the *different European empires*, and their legacies" (McLeod, 2007: p. 11; emphasis in original). McLeod persuasively argues that postcolonial studies has largely evolved as a "hinged concept," which seeks to explore the complex connections between the colonial period and its aftermath, between the colonizer and the colonized, and between the material facts of colonialism and its modes of representation: and the next phase in tracing the "hinged" nature of the postcolonial will involve explorations of the relationships between the different European imperial projects and their various aftermaths (McLeod, 2007: p. 5–10). McLeod's example illustrates that a growing number of scholars of English-language material are increasingly aware of the need to engage with other colonial trajectories (see also Poddar, *et al.*, 2008). Far from the image of Francophone postcolonial studies constituting the wholesale importation of ideas from various Anglophone spheres, there is now clear evidence that scholars of English-language material are keen to open their field to other contexts.

Although the gradual emergence of a comparative postcolonial studies is a welcome development, it should be acknowledged that it constitutes only a partial response to Trivedi's admonishment (cited above) that "the postcolonial has ears only for English" (Trivedi, 1999: p. 272); for, Trivedi had in mind in this statement the lack of engagement by postcolonial studies with material written in non-European languages, a point that is also central to Spivak's critique of Comparative Literature in *Death of a Discipline*. Promoting the study of material in Dutch, French, and Spanish – yet more European and former colonial languages – at the expense of widely used "indigenous" languages perpetuates the focus on certain types of cultural production only. Trivedi's position acts as a welcome reminder that we must avoid premature self-congratulation at recent developments in the field; a more comprehensively comparative and interdisciplinary postcolonial field will require yet further evolution and engagement across disciplinary boundaries. As I wrote with Charles Forsdick at the outset of our own attempts to define the significance of the Francophone postcolonial project:

> Postcolonial Studies must be truly comparative if it is to develop, opening itself up to, among others, French, Dutch, Spanish, Belgian, Portuguese, Japanese, Turkish experiences. We must look beyond certain triumphalist discourses of a globalized, Anglophone uniformity in order to understand better the complexity and diversity – linguistic, cultural, political – of the world in which we live. As the rhetoric of empire seems

increasingly to occupy a prominent place in public discourse, the urgency of such a project becomes ever more apparent. (Forsdick and Murphy *Francophone* 14)

The development of Francophone postcolonial studies is not the culmination of a project but rather the beginning of a new phase in that project. Much of the comparative postcolonial material (e.g. McLeod, 2004; Poddar, *et al*., 2008) that has been published in recent times lays out the groundwork for comparison rather than engaging itself in comparison. It is through collaborative projects spanning different linguistic fields and different geographical areas, as well as through the emergence of young scholars trained in a range of languages and post/colonial contexts, that a fully-fledged postcolonial comparatism will finally emerge.

The idea that a mode of literary comparatism should be predicated on a shared experience of colonialism is one that will continue to meet with great resistance. However, the intention is not, and has never been, to impose postcolonialism as the sole framework capable of permitting analysis of the literary production of the former metropolitan centers and the former colonial peripheries within the same comparative field. In the recent rush to promote various conceptions of World Literature (of which the *littérature-monde* project is one of the most important French-language manifestations), we are witnessing important, utopian calls for a genuinely post-imperial order in which all Literature can be treated as one: and such an approach seems far removed from the often highly political claims of the postcolonial field. But, as many critics have argued, calls for a truly inclusive World Literature must develop a comparative approach to literary systems, one that is fully aware of the constraints governing which texts make it into the classroom in the first place. Postcolonial studies has helped to make space for certain forms of literary production in the former colonial languages: it must now play its part in opening a space for "indigenous" languages. Whether the field of research that enables such work to be carried out will continue to be termed "postcolonial studies" is beside the point: what is important is the survival of the type of work that postcolonial studies has inspired. For over five centuries, Europe set about colonizing vast regions of the earth, and literature went hand in hand with this project: that comparative literary studies should find space to consider this major historical and cultural phenomenon is a critical (and, for many, moral) necessity and not some passing fad.

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26
Towards a Planetary Reading of Postcolonial and American Imaginative Eco-Graphies

Sangeeta Ray

The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition. (Hannah Arendt, 1958)

In this article, I turn to "planet-thought"[1] as a way to bring together postcolonial ecocriticism and the transnationalization of the study of American literature in order to critically engage with the comparative possibilities enabled by both. The two fields of study have broadened their horizons by paying attention to old and new forms of cross-cultural, international, transnational, cosmopolitan and diasporic remapping of spaces and peoples and by highlighting their mutual claims to a planetary discourse. By staging an encounter between the two and their relation to the embattled field of comparative literary studies, I hope to read productively the "friction" generated by such encounters.[2] I want to underline and adopt the task Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing assigns herself in her ethnographic analysis of global connections in relationship to forest preservation in Indonesia:

> … how do encounters across difference exceed their disciplined boundaries to make new forms of politics possible. … a politics-in-friction." (Tsing, 2004: p. 14)

In order to get to not just the politics but to an aesthetics–in-friction, I turn, very briefly at the end of the article to two South Asian works of fiction, Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and the last three linked stories (what I call a novella) of Jhumpa Lahiri's collection, *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) to gesture toward the comparative potential of a postcolonial ecocritical remapping of American literature.

An emphasis on environmentality, the "union of environment and Foucauldian governmentality … that takes seriously the conceptual building blocks of power/

knowledges, institutions and subjectivities" (Agrawal, 2005: p. 8) can enable a complex staging and reading of what I call "imaginative eco-graphy." Rather than rely on terms already available in the field of ecocriticism and environmental studies such as ecological thought, ecomimesis, and ecopoetics, the coinage of such a term allows for the rearticulation with a difference of Edward Said's brilliant formulation, "imaginative geography," to capture the "practices by which human beings give shape and meaning to the planet they inhabit by delimiting it. …" (Arac, 2007: p. 26). Jonathan Arac's particular substitution of the word "planet" for "world" in describing Said's term is deliberate and not just because it is the lead essay in a book edited by Americanist, Wai Chee Dimock and leading American environmental scholar Lawrence Buell, and titled *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*.[3] The title of the anthology is both intriguing and provocative in the manner in which it wants to keep the two terms in circulation and in relationship to a reimagining and repositioning of American literature as world literature. While the emphasis of the essays is not particularly or even necessarily on a ecocritical deployment of the term environment, they are in a general sense all about the relationship of a field to fields both local and global, natural and historical, national and planetary. In fact, Dimock's introduction to the collection proposes that after the collapse of the World Trade Center and Hurricane Katrina, the nation cannot function even as a point of departure for the study of an entity decidedly called American literature.

> The nation seems to have come literally 'unbundled' before our eyes. … the nation is revealed to be what it is: an epiphenomenon, literally a superficial construct, a set of erasable lines on the face of the earth. It is no match for that grounded entity called the planet which can wipe out those lines at a moment's notice …" (Dimock, 2007: p. 1).[4]

The power of the planet is harnessed to help shape a collection that extends the imaginative worlding of America to the far flung corners of hitherto unimagined territories, a move that simultaneously provincializes the US and "modularizes" the world into smaller units, "able to stand provisionally and able to do analytic work, but not self contained. …" (Dimock, 2007: p. 3).[5] Giving up claims to territorial sovereignty, Dimock wonders what landscape would emerge and what "would American literature look like when traced through these redrawn and realigned entities"(Dimock, 2007: p. 3).

To return to "Global and Babel: Language and Planet in American Literature," an essay that offers an ambitious plan to rethink US literary studies, area studies and comparative literature in terms of the garnering of a certain street competence in another language, Arac, after his description of Said's concept, turns to key figures in American studies who were committed to similar practices and analysis. The figures and their "fields" as presented by Arac are as follows: Frederick Jackson Turner's *frontier*, Perry Miller's *errand into the wilderness* and Henry Nash Smith's *virgin land*.[6] The emphasis on the environment and the use of familiar environmental tropes to describe the mode of imaginative geography governing the work of significant Americanists

is what allows Arac to mobilize the use of the term planet. That is to say in trying to recast American literature in the mode of world literature one has to shift our orientation towards the planet rather than the world or the globe. While such reorientations enable a critical eschewing of the pitfalls inherent in a word like "globalization" as well as thinking about worlds and their places in the world, one should also pause and reflect on how the uses of environmental tropes to proffer alternative geographies and histories can end up erasing the environment as environment. The shuttling between planet and world cannot happen at the expense of the environment. Thus, while Arendt is correct when she writes that the earth is the quintessence of the human condition, in terms of our growing and increasingly urgent engagements with the environment, we should actually rewrite Arendt today to say that the planetarity is the quintessence of the earth's condition. Perhaps my coinage of the term "ecography" is an attempt to keep the planet alive in literary representations of the environment.

Postcolonial literature on the other hand does not have to imagine itself as world literature – its status as world literature is in many ways shaped by the calamities of colonialism, imperialism, nationalisms, capitalism, globalization and transnationalism. The diasporic, metropolitan existence of many of the most recognizable of postcolonial writers, Anglophone, francophone and hispanophone, makes for the circulation of literature categorized as postcolonial necessary for all reimaginings of a hitherto Eurocentric "old world" notion of world literature. Pascale Casanova's idea of a "world literary space" as that which governs the place of individual literary texts within a global configuration argues for the significance of one's vantage point when looking at such a space and resonates with postcolonial reformulations of the category of world literature. Casanova, ultimately, is more interested in a Bourdieuian, market driven model of production of a world republic of letters with the added element or critical hope that her model would lead to an internationalization of literary criticism that would take into account the embeddedness of literary histories within a global literary market place. Thus the world republic of letters can seem to participate in discourses about the nature of comparative literature in the age of globalization without losing sight of the significance of key spaces (like Paris) for the advancement and circulation of literary knowledge. Since Casanova is not bounded by disciplinary practices such as that of comparative literature, the argument for broadening one's horizons in terms of literatures in many languages (major and minor, central and peripheral) allows her to bypass the question of the "impossibility" of defining the limit of comparative literature as a discipline.[7] David Ferris defines this impossibility as "indiscipline," arguing that what troubles comparative literature and haunts report after report on the status of the discipline is nothing other than the inability to define itself or rather the perpetual need to redefine itself leading one from "the 'standard' of Levin; the absence of definition in both Meltzl and Wellek; [to]more recently, the extensive knowledge of the world; and finally impossibility" (Ferris, 2006: p. 94). I choose Ferris' essay for his particular engagement with Spivak's demand for a new comparative literature attuned to the call of the planet. Spivak's invocation to be planetary

allows for a greater attention to the modulations within the "species of alterity," more subtle and differentiated than that found in discourses of globalization. It leads us to an engagement with the other that is both ideologically and philosophically different from Casanova's, focused as the latter is on thinking about the interrelatedness of the textural, linguistic and literary autonomy of texts, such as Beckett's, to the shenanigans of unequal trade and the circulation of literary value. Casanova's intellectual interest and broadly comparative focus on the intricate relationship between words and worlds allows her to critique the less nuanced and more positive appearances of the equalizing nature of the forces of globalization and echoes Gayatri Spivak's contention that "globalization, despite its name, remains a restricted economy" (Ferris, 2006: p. 90). For Spivak the attraction for a "new" comparative literature (the discipline is dead; long live the discipline) determined however tenuously by the call of the planet in all its linguistic alterity lies precisely in the seduction of the impossible: "The planet is here, as perhaps always, a catachresis … Its alterity, determining experience, is mysterious and discontinuous – an experience of the impossible" (Spivak, 2003: p. 102). Of course even as one critically engages with the trope of planetarity one must heed Ferris' cautionary words about the turn to a planetarity "whose future is staked on comparison [that] can be read as the gesture toward an impossibility in which the promise of alterity is always made. But can Europe, the world, or even the planet ever lay claim to such a promise without subjecting alterity, making it a subject of analogy, giving it the voice of impossibility, essentializing impossibility to authorize comparison?" (Ferris, 2006: p. 93–4).

In many ways, as many comparative scholars have argued, the putative death of the discipline echoes the repeated obituaries announcing the death of the humanities even as, as Haun Saussy notes that "comparative teaching and reading take institutional form in an ever lengthening list of places, through departments and programs that may or may not wear the label of comparative literature (they may be configured as humanities programs, interdisciplinary groups, interdepartmental committees and collaborative research groups)" (Saussy, 2006: p. 5). Postcolonial studies is one such site for the study of comparative literature, comparative both in terms of content and methodology. Postcolonial studies is inherently comparative. Or, if I were to qualify the sentence, I would restate it to say that Postcolonial studies could be said to be inherently comparative in content and methodology. Of course the institutionalization of postcolonial studies in places like the US, UK and Australia, with its Anglophone emphasis, often ends up erasing its comparative dimensions by increasingly rendering and consuming texts in translation. Thus a course on postcolonial literature (no matter what its precise thematic and theoretical departure may be) taught in an English department can start with Aimé Cesaire's poetical and polemical *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land) as an exemplary literary account of the occupation of an island and his *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Discourse on Colonialism) as an unfailingly uncompromising theoretical engagement with colonialism and imperialism without actually engaging how francophone postcolonial studies resonates and differs from an Anglophone centered postcolonial studies that would

start with Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In the same course one could juxtapose Caribbean writers George Lamming, Jamaica Kincaid, Andrea Levy, Simone Schwartz-Bart, Maryse Condé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Alejo Carpentier alongside readings by Édouard Glissant, Benitez Rojo, Shalini Puri, and Belinda Edmondson without actually stopping to take stock of the vagaries of translations, circulations and adaptations as one moves from and between English and English translations of French and Spanish. But one could and should, and in the best of cases one does, attempt to highlight the impossibilities of a neat and tidy comparative trafficking in ideas enabled precisely by the possibilities of translation. Only then can we reposition postcoloniality in terms of the planet, and recognize that a planetary postcoloniality repeats with a difference the gesture toward an impossibility in which the promise of alterity is always made. Thus, even as one is emboldened and captivated by the availability of various texts in translation, the emphasis on place, space and language crucial to postcolonial studies, should enable us to critically examine our relation to the world and the text as a critic. Comparative Literature on the other hand, despite its embattled status and despite the deliberate and continuous attempt by its practitioners to rethink its shape, content and value, "means the knowledge of more than one national language and literature and/or … the knowledge and application of other disciplines in and for the study of literature. …" (Tötösy de Zepetnek, 1998: p. 13; see also Arac, 2007). Comparative literature is a method in the study of literature and this incarnation of itself as a methodology is what is highlighted in its emphasis on the need for an expertise in more than one language and discipline. Postcolonial literary studies, while also casting itself as a method, fails to regularly emphasize the need for similar expertise. In this lies both its strength and weaknesses.

While this is not an article on the connections between postcolonial and comparative literary studies, I believe it's necessary when one is deploying "planet-thought" to make connections between fields that seek new modes of rethinking world literatures (see also Melas, 2007). Planetarity as it is articulated in postcolonial eco-graphies and postcolonial ecocriticism can allow one to engage simultaneously with postcolonial and comparative literary studies precisely because "planet thought opens up to embrace an inexhaustible taxonomy (Spivak, 1999: p. 46) that can help us rethink normative discourses about what constitutes eco-criticism. Planet thought echoes Glissant's idea of the "poetics of relation" which:

> Remains forever conjectural and presupposes no ideological stability … a poetics that is latent, open, multilingual in intention, directly in contact with anything possible" (Glissant. 1997: p. 32.)

Such an aesthetic does not eschew a poetics of duration but interrupts it by taking "up the relay from the poetics of the moment. … Just as Relation is not a pure abstraction to replace the old concept of the universal, it also neither implies nor authorizes any ecumenical detachment. The landscape of your word is the world's landscape. But its frontier is open" (Glissant, 1997: p. 33). With this in mind and

turning again to the same books and theorists mentioned in that imagined (real) syllabus, we could design a course on postcolonial Caribbean ecologies. This postcolonial redrawing of world literature can then be shaded in planetary colors. An emphasis on the planetary re-configuration of the proposed syllabus would also help emphasize that while postcolonial critics may not have always paid attention to such literatures in terms of their relationship to the planet, the potential has always been there to permit such an orientation. Drawing attention to issues of the environment in postcolonial representations of places, peoples and histories, unmoors the anchoring of theories of the environment and ecology to North American or European histories and realities and opens up readings of both literatures to planetary and necessarily incommensurate ecologies.

Ecocriticism directly enters postcolonial discourse through the trope of greening as in Graham Huggan's seminal essay "the Greening of Postcolonial Studies." Such need for greening implies of course the lack of attention to things green in postcolonial criticism. This is borne out in another key essay by Rob Nixon titled "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism." Nixon seeks to understand the lack of intersection between the two discourses given that "one might have expected environmentalism to be more, not less, transnational than other fields of literary inquiry" (Nixon, 2007: p. 716), by emphasizing the parochial nature of environmental studies on the one hand and the perceived irrelevance of environmental issues for postcolonial studies because of the primacy given to the "advocacy of an ethics of place" (Nixon, 2007: p. 718). However, as Elizabeth DeLoughrey has expressed in the context of the Caribbean, ecocriticism emerging and concentrating on the Caribbean, must contend with the paradox that it is "one of the most radically altered landscapes of the world" as well as "the space from which our current understandings of environmental conservation emerged" (DeLoughrey, 2007: p. 64). In other words the paucity of a transnational, comparative and planetary dimension in ecocriticism is actually linked to the failure to grasp the different and differential environmentalities that govern the relationship between nature and culture, relationships that belie the dualistic and binary thinking that govern much of western philosophical and imaginative discourses about "man" and nature. To quote DeLoughrey again;

> Postcolonial ecocriticism helps destabilize the universalist conceit of the Anglo-European human subject by examining the ways in which the anthropocentricity is constituted by a limited conception of the natural universe. One of the field's most important contributions is to foreground the human bias in historical narrative … [and one of its] most profound challenges … is to provide an alternative rendition of natural history [itself]. (DeLoughrey, 2007: p. 63–64).

This is a tall task and one that postcolonial ecocritics (activists and critics in no particular order) such as Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, Susie O'Brien, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Édouard Glissant, Ramachandra Guha, Dominic Head, George Handley, Rob Nixon, Byron Caminero-Santangelo, Wangari Maathai, Pablo Mukherjee, Graham

Huggan, Helen Tiffin, Arundhati Roy, Vandana Shiva, Ken Saro-Wiwa have taken up in different and significant ways. It is their pioneering work that has led environmental scholars, key to the field of American ecocriticism, such as Lawrence Buell and Ursula Heise, to expand their horizons in terms of environmental literary imaginations.

Unfortunately such broadening of horizons does not appear in Greg Garrad's introduction to *Ecocriticsm* in the New Critical Idiom series published by Routledge. It is as though postcolonial ecocriticism or the postcolonial environment does not exist and that planetary concerns are articulated in the traditional voices of a Wallace Steven poem and in BBC documentaries; when Garrad does reach beyond the usual he can only summon up Andrew Ross' analysis of a photograph of the earth taken by Apollo astronauts and offer a brief examination of Vandana Shiva's claims in her book *Biopiracy*. That an introduction published in 2004 can be written without any mention of someone like Ramachandra Guha and his trenchant critique of western myopia when it comes to questions of the environment seems to be more than an ecological faux pas. Buell's *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* is to be at least credited for including a variety of worlds, texts and critics and opening up the ecocritical canon as a way of addressing not just environmental crisis but a planetary literary and critical engagement with such crises. While the global and comparative sweep may lead Buell to make broad generalizations, one is also appreciative of the desire to take to heart Ramachandra Guha's directive that western ecologists pay close attention to the continuing forces of neo imperialism and to issues of poverty when we engage with questions of the environment. When it comes to the environment, orientalism seems to be very much alive and not just in the manner in which nature is feminized and othered. Guha is not a solitary voice, blowing in the wind, when it comes to the continuing erasure of the essential comparative dimension of ecocriticism and environmental studies in general. Ecofeminist, postcolonial ecocritics and indigenous communities have been there from the beginning emphasizing the varied "ecosophies," to borrow a term from Félix Guattari, that govern the relationship between human and non human ecologies.

The term ecosophy is used by Guattari to denote the ethico-political articulation between three "*ecological* registers (the environment, social relations and human subjectivity). …" (Guattari, 2000: 19–20), one that could easily be mobilized to reflect key positions adopted many a postcolonial scholar. In fact it is when one understands the turn to the environment only and always as a turn to nature that one can critique postcolonial studies for not engaging with ecocriticism. Postcolonial ecocriticism is often impatient with the tenets of a western oriented ecocriticism. While William Slaymaker is right on both counts when he notes the intense interest in black literature "in the local recapture of violated nature" (Slaymaker, 2007: p. 683) with a simultaneous "ecohesitation" (Slaymaker, 2007: p. 684) on the part of African literary and cultural critics, what one takes away from his essay is the need for an ecocriticism tuned to the pitfalls of a uniformly directed global ecological movement that seeks to green other worlds, one that could enable a more productive and "choral response

to [the] green global call" (Slaymaker, 2007: p. 691) by actually paying attention to the representations and concern for land, agriculture, forest preservation and the like that have always existed in literature from the African continent. The question is whether such environmentally oriented criticism would offer new ways to reimagine ecocriticism so that it is not just a critical discourse that moves from the center to the periphery. One way to avoid the pitfalls of a center-periphery model, is to develop ecocriticisms more attuned to imaginative eco-graphies that engage with more than one environmentality and one ecosophy, thereby enabling the mobilization of "transculturation" as key to the comparative project.

    The term transculturation was coined in the 1940s by Fernando Ortiz and was revitalized by Angel Rama in 1980 and then later by Mary Louise Pratt in 1992. For Pratt the term allows us to imagine the many ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis and counters the hegemonic overdetermination of the periphery by the imperial metropoles. In many ways Pratt's book *Imperial Eyes*, even if it never uses the word ecocriticism and environment in the ecological sense, proposes how a certain kind of ecosophy was produced and enforced about other spaces through travel writing.[8] When Pratt shows how "European travel writing interacted with enlightenment natural history to produce a eurocentered form of global or "planetary" consciousness (Pratt, 1992: p. 4), we can see how this seminal postcolonial critical work resonates with current trends in comparative ecocriticism as well as the comparative emphasis underway in the reshaping of American literature. While Pratt's use of the word planetary lacks the oppositional edge given to it today, using it as a synonym for global, her emphasis on transculturation as exemplified in her chapter on Alexander Von Humboldt, really does suggest the manner in which a planetary ecological reading can help make sense of how and why Humboldt's writings were crucial to a reinvention of the Americas for elite Europeans and the elite Spanish in south America. A further planetary movement is suggested in her postscript in the same chapter when she compares the visual depictions of Andean communities in a 1980 Peruvian *arpillera* to Humboldt's famous drawing of his ascent to Mount Chimboraza in 1803, a drawing that labels the various botanical species found at different altitudes. Pratt's critical reading of the manner in which the *arpillera* draws on and refashions the template presented in Humboldt's drawing does not reinforce a celebration of a hybridized artifactual representation. The *arpillera* retains the vertical mapping of the Andean region to depict how multiple ecologies exist in a single latitude; it also appears to privilege the kind of atemporality one finds in the early drawing that Pratt suggests aims to celebrate "plenitude, variety and detail. [It] also shares with Humboldt the use of referential written labels (in a European language) identifying *papas,* Spanish 'potatoes,' and *sierra* Spanish for 'mountains'" (Pratt, 1992: p. 142). But the "planetary" impulse in the *arpillera* is registered in the filling up of the botanical space (of the early drawing) with people and domestic animals. In other words the specific design of the drawing to name and reference individual plants is transformed to represent a living, breathing community that celebrates the multiple significations connoted by "sierra (home of the gods) and potato (the all important staple food)" (Pratt,

1992: p. 142).[9] Further complicating the *arpillera's* representational relationship to Humboldt's drawing is the commercial dimension of the artifact. Pratt addresses the vertiginous complexities raised by her juxtaposition of the two through a series of questions that a critic could ask when faced by complex ecographies that cannot be simply designated as hybrid, indigenous, and cross-cultural. The prismatic critical lens that pays attention to the multiple refractions and reflections constituted by this juxtaposition of two objects produces a "mirror dance"[10] in which the only constant is the depiction of the Andean region as a "vertical archipelago." Here is Pratt with her questions:

> Made for metropolitan consumers, does the *arpillera* presuppose the western tradition of objectified, dehistoricized landscape description? Does it propose a humanized counterversion? Does it propose a miniaturized, "folkloric" counterversion the West itself has ordered up to complement the objectified tradition?. ... [D]id Humboldt's own vertical. ... interpretation of Chimborazo have an Andean dimension? Did the Andean guides and interpreters who took him there convey to him some of their own knowledge of the ecosystem and their reverence for it?. ... What Humboldt had marveled at in the plant world, the anthropologists and agronomists of the 1960s marveled at in the socioecological world – often, as if they, too, had "discovered" it. Is the *arpillera*-maker depicting the vertical archipelago as she knows it, or as she knows the agronomists knew it, or against the way she knows the agronomists knew it? Is she reproducing a Peruvian national myth? (Pratt, 1992: p. 143)

These profound questions raised here by Pratt in 1992, are being revisited with different emphasis and different vocabularies in comparative projects whether under the rubric of postcolonial ecocriticism, hemispheric studies or in planetary models for the study of American literatures.

I would like to return to Rob Nixon's statement that postcolonial criticism has privileged an engagement with an ethics of place rather than say an ethics of environment. In many ways, as I have been stating, the two cannot be easily separated since questions of place are always imbricated with questions concerning the environment. As Guattari reminds us, the etymology of "eco" is the Greek word *oikos,* and the play between eco as home and eco as ecology can help us reorient and reexamine the many ways in which postcolonial criticism about the home and the world has always been also, even if only indirectly and tangentially, about the environment, environmentalities, and ecologies. Thus the representation of "home" in the example of Pratt's Andean "*arpillera*" is one illustration of how oikos is reimagined and what a comparative eco-graphical reading can add to how we think about an ethics of place. Ecocriticism, certainly in its western orientation (and primarily American) has as, Byron Caminero-Santangelo summarizes, sought to decenter humans in order to give nature back its subjectivity. If one privileges this definition of ecocriticism, then the argument of the belatedness of the turn to the environment in postcolonial studies makes sense. But as many critics, western and non western have argued, and what the "*arpillera*" illustrates is that "nature" itself needs to be de-naturalized in order to access

representations of the environment from and in other places (see Morton, 2007; Phillips, 2003).

Bruno Latour's notion of a politics without nature, and his polemical challenge to the "solidity of the link between political ecology and nature" (Latour, 2004: p. 9) asks us to reexamine how the concern for nature in all its guises has been introduced into political life. In order to think comparatively about other cultures and/in their environment, Latour suggests that we must let go of an environmentality or ecosophy or eco-epistemology that starts from the positing of the nature-culture divide. Thus Latour even takes issue with anthropological discourses that privilege the complexity with which certain non-western cultures have created categories that help establish

> *Correspondences* between the order of nature and the social order. Among those peoples … nothing happens in the order of the world that does not happen to humans and vice versa. (Latour, 2004: p. 44–45).

For Latour the notion of *correspondences* between nature and culture evades the possibility of grasping the lack of distinction in some cultures between the two. As he posits "to be unaware of a dichotomy is not at all the same thing as combining two sets into one – still less "getting beyond" the distinction between the two" (Latour, 2004: p. 45).[11] If one takes this as one's cue to engage postcolonial texts in terms of environmentality, then perhaps one can reject the notion of belatedness aimed at postcolonial criticism for failing to "read" literary texts from the postcolonial world in terms of its relationship to "green." In fact, green and greening itself becomes a fraught metaphor and activity that demands a more sophisticated critical self reflexivity on the part of both eco and postcolonial critics. In a crucial way by letting go of the nature-culture opposition and not just simply in terms of the argument that nature is always already a cultural construct, and embracing the Latourian notion of "collective," not as a noun that refers back to an already established unit, but a process, a "procedure for collecting associations of humans and non humans" (Latour, 2004: p. 238), one can open up the myriad ways in which one can begin to read comparatively what I am calling imaginative eco-graphies. The idea of thinking about collecting associations as a course of action, returns us to the notion of planetary and planetarity with which I began the article. Spivak urges us to inhabit planet-thought and try to be planetary subjects and planetary readers rather than global agents and global entities. Then we can at least begin to grasp that "alterity remains underived from us, it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away – and thus to think of it is already to transgress, for, in spite of our forays into what we metaphorize, differently, as outer and inner space, what is above and beyond our own reach is not continuous with us as it is not, indeed, specifically discontinuous" (Spivak, 1999: p. 46).[12]

In the final section of this article I want to engage with two imaginative ecographies both penned by writers from the South Asian diaspora. I have deliberately chosen writers who live in the US, in New York City, but who write about different

environments, places and peoples: Amitav Ghosh and Jhumpa Lahiri.[13] The first is more easily cast as a postcolonial writer, the second as a writer of the Indian diaspora, a South Asian immigrant writer, and even as an Asian American writer. Ghosh's novel, *The Hungry Tide*, has very quickly become a key text for postcolonial eco-critics. A discussion of the novel appears in Graham Huggan's essay on the greening of postcolonial studies and has a whole chapter devoted to it in a recent book titled *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English*. The attention given to this novel is obvious because it is centrally preoccupied with environmental issues – land rights, the conservation of the endangered Bengal tiger, and a scientific study of the habitus of the almost extinct Gangetic river dolphins. I want to pair this novel with the three linked stories that constitute Part Two of Lahiri's latest collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*. This collection of short stories is not directly concerned with environmental issues. The Tsunami that severs the connection between the two narrators of the novella, Kaushik and Hema, happens almost off page, read about in newspapers and watched on television. The words on the pages though recreate a landscape of the US, especially the north east, most pronounced in its representation of the snow and cold winters that harden the ground and deepen the isolation felt by Kaushik. The title of the collection, borrowed as it is from Nathaniel Hawthorne's Preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Custom House," will be primarily read as gesturing to the displacement of Lahiri's immigrant characters and their sowing of uncomfortable roots in the US. But the collection's final story takes us away from this landscape, from this new world to the old, to Rome and beyond that to Thailand and the tsunami. The introduction of these two works of fiction into a study of American literature echoes the challenges of "reconceptualizing the comparative project for an expanded geographical scope [and] … cannot be met by a single method or a single set of presuppositions" (Melas, 2007: p. 35). While Melas challenges the grounds of comparison in comparative studies through a postcolonial critique, this article has tried to open up the frontier of American literature through a postcolonial environmental critique. What happens to the landscape of American literature when we turn to these literary works? How does the depiction of the *sunderbans* as experienced by a South Asian American scientist and American readers challenge the frontier of the imaginative geography of American landscapes? Moving beyond the hemisphere to other continents, Asia and Europe, gives a new charge to the notion of an unaccustomed earth, an earth unaccustomed for and to all, making un-natural the naturalness of a national model for the study of American literature. Similarly, rethinking the landscape and environmental issues represented in Ghosh's novel as expanding the transcultural dimension of postcoloniality beyond the immediate context of the Indian subcontinent, allows us to think about different modes of geographical exchanges. Such planetary imaginings opens up both the self and other to various ecologies of living and dwelling, and can help provide the kinds of epistemic transformations that will be necessary if we are to think American literature as world literature and not just end up extending "America," once again, to encompass the world. To quote Spivak, let's think "the planet as the proper receiver and transmitter of imperatives"

(Spivak, 2003: p. 62). Or, in other words, let's think about the un-accustomed planetary possibilities of the earth to forge hitherto unexamined encounters.

While it is not the intent of the article to provide a detailed reading of the two works I mention, what I do want to suggest, however, briefly, is that deploying the trope of the unaccustomed earth as that which estranges the reader resonates with Dimocks's formulation of Arac's thesis that "foreign words embedded in American literature turn this body of material from a modular unit into part of a continuum, folded into a transnational babel" (Dimock, 2007: p. 8–9). If we substitute worlds for words then we may begin to unravel the many layers of meaning embedded in Glissant's poetic assertion about how imaginative eco-graphies open up worlds of words and the spaces in between. In the second story of Lahiri's novella, titled, "Year's End," we see Kaushik running away from the unfamiliarity of his home in Massachusetts, driving up the coast all the way to the Canadian border. As he drives past the sea and the fishing villages, the "little islands and striped lighthouses and tiny spits of land," and then farther and farther up the coast, the unfamiliarity of the landscape hits Kaushik "like no other place. ... The sky was different, without color, taut and unforgiving. But the water was the most unforgiving thing, nearly black at times, cold enough, I knew, to kill me, violent enough to break me apart. The waves were immense, battering rocky beaches without sand. ... ," its very desolation the "reason the landscape drew me, claimed me as nothing had in a long time" (Lahiri, 2008: p. 289–90).[14] But this sense of being claimed by the land is also the reason Kaushik cannot live anymore in the US. One day, at the easternmost state park of the country, on ground hardened by the snow, Kaushik buries pictures of his dead mother, and leaves the US to accidentally fall into the career of a photo journalist in places at war with itself and others – Latin America, Africa, the Middle East. Desolate landscapes that lay claims to man's romantic desire to be one with nature gives way to landscapes peopled with death squads, explosions, minefields, blood and "bodies with faces smashed and throats slit and penises hacked ... corpses ... their faces bloated, their mouths stuffed with dirt, their vacant eyes reflecting passing clouds over their heads (Lahiri, 2008: p. 205). While a small apartment in Rome affords a temporary home between travels to war-torn lands and refugee camps, Kaushik himself finds refuge behind the lens of his camera, "dependent on the material world, stealing from it, hoarding it, unwilling to let it go" (Lahiri, 2008: p. 209). The title of the concluding story that is also the conclusion of the collection, "Going Ashore," is deliberately and provocatively ironic because in deciding to move to East Asia, more precisely to Hong Kong, Kaushik, cautiously treasures the "promise, [that] for the next few years at least ... he would be still" (Lahiri, 2008: p. 208). One last short holiday in Indonesia, before settling in Hong Kong for the immediate future, in a small resort to the north of Phuket, Kaushik enters the calm, warm, and welcoming sea, and as "his feet touched the bottom ... he let go" (Lahiri, 2008: p. 331). The fact that Kaushik enters the sea the day of the tsunami only registers as an image on television being watched by Hema (his childhood friend and lover) as it rages against the Indian and Sri Lankan coast line. Hema had chosen to end her brief tryst with Kaushik in

Rome to marry Navin in India and then return to live with him in Massachusetts. As Kaushik lies on the beach in Thailand, a couple of days before his death, a death deliberately not represented unlike the deaths of many captured in Kaushik's photographs, he imagines the existence of Hema beyond the beach, beyond the "rubber trees rising thickly on the hills, [s]omewhere across the water, beyond the Andaman Sea, … the Bay of Bengal, and Calcutta. … (Lahiri, 2008: p. 325).

It is this geography of South Asia, of Calcutta, the Bay of Bengal, the Gangetic Delta, the *sunderbans,* that takes us to the *The Hungry Tide, (*Ghosh, 2004) where the US appears as a place that Piya, a cetologist and one of the main narrators in the novel, has left behind in order to research the habitat of the river dolphins. In *The Hungry Tide*, revelations about the self take place in the peripheries of the periphery through encounters with others in a mutating landscape that needs its own "language of place" (Ghosh, 2004: p. 7). The archipelago of islands that is known to the outside world as the *sunderbans* (beautiful forest) is unlike commonly-held notions of what constitutes woodlands and jungles. The adjective "beautiful" does not reflect the unruly beauty of the wild – "there are no towering, vine looped trees, no ferns, no wildflowers, no chattering monkeys or cockatoos" (Ghosh, 2004: p. 7). These are mangrove forests plunging into being during the bhata (ebb tide) – the "falling water gives birth to the forest" in an ecology where boundaries between land and water are constantly blurred and where, when the confluences of multiple channels of water meet, "the water stretches to the far edges of the landscape and the forest dwindles into a distant rumor of land, echoing back from the horizon" (Ghosh, 2004: p. 7). Such a confluence is named "mohona" by the people who inhabit this hostile terrain – a word that means "delta" but connotes, among other things, the seduction of mirages. But "human beings have [no] doubt of the terrains utter hostility to their presence, of its cunning and resourcefulness, of its determination to destroy or expel them" (Ghosh, 2004: p. 8). But the *sunderbans* is populated nonetheless and the novel's complex multi-layered ecosophy requires the kind of meticulous analysis that I cannot provide here. For the purposes of this article I want to suggest how Ghosh's novel uncannily echoes the title of Jonathan Arac's essay alluded to early on: "Global and Babel: Language and Planet in American Literature."

The novel plays with linguistic translation using English to move between German, English, Bengali and the local syncretic language. It problematizes our investment in ideas of indigenous authenticity and refuses to exoticize syncretism; lays bare the fraught and complicated measures taken in order to preserve nature and records the history of the brutal massacre of people in the interest of protected land; reveals the metropolitan scientist's improbable romanticization of the "man of nature," and shocks our sensitive environmental ethics by representing the brutal burning and killing of a tiger by the locals and the ultimate death of the "man of nature" at the hands of nature. Fokir, Piya's local guide to the habitat of the river dolphin dies protecting her from the *hungry tide* as it rises up and consumes land, humans and animals in its wake. And while the novel concludes by allowing the reader some refuge in the hope of more just forms of environmental justice, it does not allow us to escape

western (read US in the novel) capitalism's involvement in ecological sustainability. There is nothing more familiar to Fokir than the *sunderbans* and yet his death parallels the death of Kaushik as the latter is washed away by the tsunami in unfamiliar waters. "Unaccustomed earth" is what allows me to juxtapose these two works. And while Hawthorne's words, which function as an epigraph to Lahiri's collection, cherish the possibility of future generations putting down roots into "unaccustomed earth," a planetary reader may be more interested in the rhizomatic spread of those roots, emphasizing the poetics, politics and aesthetic of relation presented in the possibility of taking up the planet as the subject of a radical comparative reading project.

NOTES

1   I borrow this term from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

2   As Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing writes, "the knowledge that makes a difference in changing the world is knowledge that travels and mobilizes, shifting and creating new forces and agents of history in its path" (Tsing, 2004: p. 8).

3   The use of the planet here as elsewhere in American literary discussions, departs from the rhetoric of globalist discourse generated by the image of the "Blue Planet" as seen from outer space. But as Ursula Heise asserts, "in the context of a planet riven by the Cold war and struggles for independence, in a world that many adherents of the new social movements of the time saw as dominated by the logic of capitalist exploitation, gender and race oppression, and increasingly lethal technologies, the enormous appeal of the image lay precisely in its suggestion of a unified and balanced world" (Heise, 2008: p. 24).

4   I am not sure I necessarily agree that the nation should or could completely be dissolved as a category for analysis but for the purposes of this article I want to keep afloat the various uses of the planet to enable a productive rethinking of world literatures.

5   The two essays in *Shades of the Planet* that best illustrate this wide mapping of territory recast in the planetary model of America as world literature are those of Susan Stanford Friedman and Bhabha.

6   Of course one should not forget Donald Pease's pathbreaking essay, "New Perspectives on US Culture and Imperialism," that severely challenged the ideologies from which Turner, Miller and Nash arise. I want to thank Jonathan Arac for reminding me about this crucial piece.

7   For better or worse, Casanova's delineation of the international literary place is still tied to the Europe of the 16th century and her description of the rise and consolidation of literature very much relies on the national model derived from the Germany of the 18th century. Here I must include Spivak's wonderful comment on Casanova's reliance on the German national model for comparative literature (which she sees as understandable but unfortunate), writing "I hasten to add that I have great deal of sympathy with Professor Casanova. … I caution her simply because I have learned the hard way how dangerous it is to confuse the limits of one's knowledge with the limits of what can be known" (Spivak, 2006: p.110).

8   I want to thank Liz DeLoughrey for reminding me to revisit Pratt's work.

9   Towards the end of the article when I refer to the epigraph of Lahiri's collection of short stories, the reader is reminded again of this staple food. The epigraph is from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Custom House" and the first sentence reads: "Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be

planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn out soil' (Lahiri, 2008: p. epigraph).

10 Pratt borrows this term from Michael Taussig.

11 Byron Caminero-Santangelo asserts that the differences between western environmental discourses about conservation in Africa and environmental knowledge as grasped in Africa, is "to be understood as a political struggle over the meanings of environmental conditions and the policies and power dynamics enabled by such meanings" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2007: p. 700), and highlights the problematic privileging of beautiful nature and pristine environmental spaces.

12 Deane Curtin thinks in terms of planetarity (even though he never uses the word), and resonates with Spivak's mandate to "planet-think" and "planet-feel," arguing that " First. ... American ideas of the human relationship to nature as either the sublime or the frontier are based on a Disney-like fantasy. They are based on a historical, cultural and

economic amnesia, and they continue to affect the often tragic ways in which we interact with the rest of the world. Second, contemporary *globalization* is philosophically and economically an old phenomenon. It is colonialism dressed in new clothing. Globalization and colonialism oppress people and damage the environment through a philosophy that combines a rationale for exploiting nature with people who are defined as 'natural.'. ... Third, if we want to fully respond to colonialism and globalization ... we need an environmental ethic that connects social justice with environmental justice" (Curtin, 2005: p. 25).

13 Ghosh actually moves between Calcutta, India and New York City.

14 The irony of Kaushik's death in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean is not lost on the reader. "The Town by the Sea" (Ghosh, 2005) is a wonderful essay by Ghosh about the Tsunami of December 2004.

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Part VI

Global Connections

27

Terrestrial Humanism: Edward W. Said and the Politics of World Literature

Emily Apter

Edward W. Said's late works, *Freud and the Non-European* (2003), *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2003) and the posthumously published *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (2006) attest to humanism's persistence, both as a continuation of Leo Spitzer's exemplary investigations of "the modes of persistence of texts" and as an essential blueprint of the humanities in future iterations of world literature (Curthoys, 2007: p.156).[1] Though *Orientalism* (1978) will undoubtedly remain Said's most influential book, these later texts attest to the generative possibilities of Saidian humanism for Comparative Literature as a discipline and world literature as one of its historic subfields. A number of critical studies of Said's œuvre support this surmise. Anthony C. Alessandrini (2000) focused on the rebaptism of Said's "residual humanism" as "emergent humanism" (the former a term coined by Said himself to describe the kind of accusations typically lobbed against much of his work outside of *Orientalism*). William V. Spanos' *The Legacy of Edward W. Said* attends to the fact that Said "nowhere theorizes" the history of humanism's usage, nor exactly "what he means by it" and insists that the stakes are of the highest order, pertaining to the "global consequences for oppositional thought and politics" (Spanos, 2009: p. 4–5). For Spanos, Saidian humanism – what he calls his "historicist philology" – contains the possibility of a radically worldly poststructuralist criticism.

In a collective volume, *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, edited by Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly, Patrick Wolfe (2007) places the comparative study of settler-colonialisms within the compass of Saidian humanism, emphasizing "relationships such as those between Chinese and Tibetans, Tswana and Khoi-San,

Russians and Chetchens, or Indonesians and Papuans" as well as a "settler-colonialism that is internal to Europe, such as those imposed on the Irish, Basque or Sami peoples" (cited in Curthoys and Ganguly, 2007: p. 4). In his contribution "Edward Said's Unhoused Philological Humanism," Curthoys credits Said's exilic humanism with "enabling the adventurous intellectual to reflect on their motivations, peculiar characteristics and worldly circumstances" (Curthoys, 2007: p. 154). And Debjani Ganguly associates Saidian humanism with a vision that challenges "the three 'negative' models of human existence in the world today: nationalism, religious ethnocentrism and exclusivism derived from identitarian thought" (Ganguly, 2007: p. 177–178). Said's extra-territorial philological humanism is cast by Ganguly as translational, transnational, transtemporal and "consciously at odds with dominant political and economic registers of the 'global'" (Curthoys and Ganguly, 2007: p. 9). From this perspective translational humanism bequeaths a literary cartography calibrated to the social life of political cultures in real time. This is humanism charged with continually retranslating the cultural predicates of world literature as they fluctuate relationally; inflected by the now-ness of actuality, the contemporaneity of the event.

To understand more fully this characterization of Saidian humanism as a call to revise conventional terrestrial and territorial configurations as well as the temporal coordinates of conventional periodization (that currently favor Europe-based chronotopes and genres such as classicism, the Renaissance, Romanticism, modernism, etc), it is useful to re-consider briefly how Said himself defined humanism's compact, especially vis-à-vis some of the "strong critics" of his time. Said forged his positions confrontationally in response to two titans, Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom, both of whom, far more than Leo Spitzer or Erich Auerbach, set the terms of literary criticism and theory for his generation. I would even conjecture that Said's recourse to Spitzer and Auerbach was at least in part an effort to effect an end-run around Frye and Bloom. When Said wrote in *Freud and the Non-European* that it was Auerbach who "had the capacity to sense that a new historical era was being born, and he could tell that its lineaments and structures would be unfamiliar precisely because so much in it was neither European nor Eurocentric," he may have been erecting the figure of an anti-Eurocentric Auerbach in order to counter more proximate forms of Eurocentrism associated with Bloom and Frye (Said, 2003: p. 23).

In Said's first book, *Beginnings*, Bloom is approvingly cited in relation to Walter Jackson Bate as the namesake of a revitalized influence studies. But by the time we reach *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* Bloom has become the avatar of humanism's wrong turn. As one may recall, in 1998, the year Bloom put his imprimatur on humanism with a best-selling book *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (cementing his status as arbiter of the western canon), he was also stepping up his campaign against what he disparagingly dubbed the "School of Resentment." Resentment (*ressentiment*), is a particularly injurious word, leaving the party accused of it locked into a position of psychic defensiveness, seeking scapegoats on which to displace feelings of failure, humiliation, and inferiority. It is a word often used in pop-psychological explanations of Arab and Muslim hostility to western secular culture. For Bloom, it

also works as an exclusionary term insofar as "Resentniks" – critics who allegedly downgrade aesthetics for the sake of ideology – no longer belong to the fold of true humanists who understand that a full-value humanities (epitomized by the Shakespearean human) possesses the force of secular religion. For Said, the stakes went well beyond the condemnation of Bloom's restriction of humanism to predominantly Euro, Anglo, male authors. Bloom's "vatic trumpetings" were objectionable, to be sure, but it was his preeminent hold on Gnostic humanism together with his self-appointment as guardian of the literary that were most worthy of contestation (Said, 2003: p. 27).

Northrop Frye was a less controversial figure for Said, but he too was identified with a tradition of theological hermeneutics that impinged on Said's vision of secular criticism. In Said's estimation Frye's 1957 *Anatomy of Criticism* offered a "Blakean-Jungian synthesis of the humanistic system organized into a mini-life-world with its own seasons, cycles, rituals, heroes, social classes, and utopian pastoral as well as urban settings," which, though impressive as "the last synthesis of a world-view in the American humanities," led inexorably to a Blakean idea of the "human divine, a Judeo-Christian Eurocentric norm" (Said, 2003: p. 39–40). Where Fredric Jameson cast an approving eye on Frye's construct of "the social," deriving from Frye's myth criticism a "willingness to raise the issue of community and to draw basic, essentially social, interpretive consequences from the nature of religion as collective representation," and crediting Frye's figuralism with leading to a demystificatory reading conducive to exposing the mythological substrate of ideology, Said remained circumspect (Jameson, 1981: p. 69). Frye's unproblematized sense of the "humanistic world of agency," and insufficient attention to the politics of nationalism were major flaws, as was his obliviousness to institutions like "the monarchy, the treasury, colonial companies and land-settlement agencies" (Said, 2003: p. 40). Said placed institutional critique at the heart of humanism, for it was precisely an institution's structural hold on power and belief-systems that made it a catalyst of secular criticism.

Aamir Mufti has crucially glossed Said's notion of secular criticism as "critical secularism." In his preface to a special issue of *boundary 2*, he wrote:

> Said's use of the term *secular* involves a displacement of its usual significations. Secular criticism in Said's reckoning is, first of all, a practice of unbelief; it is directed, however, not simply at the objects of religious piety but at secular "beliefs" as well, and, at its most ambitious, at all those moments at which thought and culture become frozen, congealed, thinglike and self-enclosed. […] At no point is *secular* used in his work in simple opposition to the religious per se. Above all, his concern has been with domination through the classification and management of cultures and of human collectivities, into mutually distinct and immutable entities, be they nations, properly speaking, or civilizations or ethnicities. To the great modern system for the classification of cultures Said gave the name Orientalism and viewed the hierarchies of this system as marking the presence of a "reconstructed religious impulse, a naturalized supernaturalism." (Mufti, 2004: p. 2–3)

Mufti points up the extent to which critical secularism functions as a theoretical pragmatics, a criticism of the mutually authorizing discourses of humanism and imperialism, as well as a means of practicing worldliness.

For insight into what this worldliness entails, we do well to return to Edward and Maire Said's 1969 translation of Auerbach's 1952 essay "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," which seeded the important concept of "Welt" in Said's œuvre. In their introductory prelude to the translation, the Saids noted that Goethe used *Weltliteratur* to designate: "universal literature, or literature which expresses *Humanität*, humanity" (Auerbach, 1952: p. 39–50).[2] In reworking the term for postwar times they were clearly attuned to Auerbach's imagination of a *Weltliteratur* that was not standardized, but made to measure on a planetary scale ("auf dem ganzen Planeten") (Auerbach, 1952: p. 39). Auerbachian humanism stressed that "where earlier epochs dared to designate man's place in the universe […] our philological home is the earth. It can no longer be the nation" (Auerbach, 1969[1952]: p. 17). In calling for a "prenational" sense of *Geist* Auerbach had opened the borders to "a proper love for the world" (Auerbach, 1969[1952]: p. 17).

Welt and *Erde*, marked terms of Auerbach's mature internationalism, redound of course to the title of his 1929 book *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt*, rendered in English as *Dante, Poet of the Secular World.* Ralph Mannheim's translation of the title was consequential for Saidian humanism. "Secular," is something of a mistranslation of *irdisch*, normally defined in English as earthly, temporal, or transient. Moreover "secular" in German translates as *Weltlich*, which would produce the tautology *Weltlichen Welt* or "Dante, Poet of the Worldly World." This figure of the "worldly world" may, however, be precisely what Saidian humanism was after. It arguably works well for Saidian philology by underscoring the "earthliness" of secularism; something we see in evidence in his 2005 preface to *Mimesis* in which, following Auerbach, he stresses Dante's ability to articulate earthly paradise and human incarnation by pushing the conventions of the *sermo humilis* or low style for communicating the Christian sublime. As distinct from philosophical ascriptions of *Abgrund*, or the Heideggerian terms *Grund* and *Erdherrschaft* (tainted by a nationalist rhetoric of nation and soil*), irdisch* connotes spirit imbued with the terrestrial, the fleshly, the material, the mundane. And in the longer sequence of Untranslatables that includes *Welt, Mundus, World, Terre, Cosmos, Chôra, Globe*, and *Planetarity*, *irdisch* takes its place as crucially constitutive of what Said, in the finale of his 1979 essay "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims" characterized as political worldliness:

> Finally, (a) what role as a producer of criticism and historical knowledge does the Western intellectual play given the background of Occidental domination and oppression of the non-Occidental world; (b) what is the meaning of community given the construction and abuse of Others – women, blacks, Palestinians, etc. – and given also the sustained production of alienating technological discourses (colluded in by liberal intellectuals) in the advanced capitalist world? To this cluster of problems the critical consciousness can respond only with: the study of history, a belief in rational knowledge,

a strong sense of what *political* life is all about, a set of values grounded absolutely in human community, democracy, and faith in the future. Thus do theory and praxis become aspects of each other, when intellectual work more closely approaches political worldliness. (Said, 1979: p. 56)

One of the most difficult tasks set by this terrestrial humanism is the naming of Palestine. The vexed philology of "Palestine," and "Palestinian," much like "Jerusalem" and "Jews," triggers a syndrome associated by Mufti, with the problem of what it means "to be inside or outside a place that does not exist" (Mufti, unpublished). In "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims" Said deplored strategic efforts to confine the name "Palestine" to usage as an administrative designation valid only during the Roman Empire. "There are innumerable and ongoing references to the name in Arabic from the ninth century on, as well as in European literature from the Middle Ages to the present" he points out (Mufti, unpublished). "Epistemologically, however, the name Palestine has transmuted from a reality into a non-reality" (Said, 1979: p. 8). Said cites Moshe Dayan's chilling words:

> You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I don't blame you, because […] these geography books no longer exist […] the Arab villages are not there either. (Said, 1979: p. 8)

In an interview Daniel Barenboim confirmed how this attitude prevailed when he was growing up in Israel in the 1950s:

> We told ourselves that either the Palestinians had left because they wanted to leave, or they were encouraged to leave by other Arabs. I don't think I met a Palestinian growing up. I was a patriot. Then I remember in September 1970, when King Hussein killed a lot of Palestinians, Golda Meir saying: "Who are these Palestinian people? We are the people of Palestine." And for the first time I thought to myself, that can't be right. (Kimmelman, 2008: p. 29)

Mufti takes full account of the strange life of "the name of the non-place" of Palestine. It has become, he writes, "in the process of its disappearance a signifier that attaches itself to too many things, places and memories" (Mufti , unpublished). So too has the name for the Palestinian people, which circulates as a generic, globally-claimed moniker for dispersal and disposability, for an internationally iconic deterritorialization. *Palestinos,* Mufti reminds us, is the Cuban term for rural migrant. Functioning in this regard as a paronym (a word with shared cognates and multiple significations), it resembles the term *musulman,* a term of concentration camp argot applied to the survivor, othered by encroaching death and the most tenuous hold on bare life. The transportability of these names – "Palestinian," "Muslim," and "Jew" – reveals reservoirs of historical irony and co-implication. Taking his cue from Hannah Arendt, Mufti notes, for example, that "the Jewish question was resolved by producing a new category of refugees. Palestinian is the name of that refugee" (Mufti,

unpublished). Palestinians also inherit the dubious mantel of statelessness from the Jews. As Mufti notes, by the 50s and 60s there was a momentous "transference of the problem of statelessness from Europe to the Third World" (Mufti, unpublished). Even more recently, Mufti argues, "Palestinian" has come to signify "a figure of blocked and thwarted mobility that negates myths of large-scale mobility that structure thinking in the contemporary world." This leads to what he calls "the maddening paradox of any attempt at mobility if you come from nowhere" (Mufti, unpublished).

The story of a homeland gone missing is most strikingly rendered by Said in *After the Last Sky*, a photographic album of Palestinian lives published in 1986, for which Said wrote the text that accompanied photos by Jean Mohr. I purchased my copy of this work in a bookstore in Istanbul, and reading it there, was inspired to think about secular criticism as a distinct form of Saidian humanism that fit with cities of cultural transverse, theological complexity, *translatio imperii*, and dense archeologies of knowledge. Sensitive to the obvious parallels between Istanbul in the 1930s, a haven to displaced German and Austrian humanists, and Said's poignant writings about Palestinian diaspora, I came to understand Saidian humanism as a new foundation of the discipline of Comparative Literature; one that emphasizes exilic consciousness, the ethics of the human, textual filiation, worldliness, the critique of embedded epistemologies of Orientalism, and what I would call *negative philology* – a play on negative theology that uses the syntax of negation to designate what is no longer there. In *After the Last Sky* Palestine is named in a drum-beat of "no's" and "nots:"

> There is **no** great episode in our history that establishes imperatives for our future course, partly because our past is still ragged, discredited, and unassimilated […] We have *no* dominant theory of Palestinian culture, history, society; we can*not* rely on one central image (exodus, holocaust, long march); there is *no* completely coherent discourse adequate to us, and I doubt whether at this point, if someone could fashion such a discourse, we could be adequate for it. Miscellaneous, the spaces here and there in our midst include but *do not* comprehend the past; they represent building *without* overall purpose, around an *un*charted and only partially surveyed territory. *Without* a center. *A*tonal. (Said, 1993: p. 129, emphasis added)

Said relies, interestingly enough, on a language of "de-centering" typical of deconstruction, but he endows it with earthly and worldly valences, especially with that reference to uncharted, partially surveyed territory. It is territory that underwrites so many of his declensions and translations. *Al-dakhil*, meaning "from the interior" and a term used to refer to Israel's expansion over communities and places once Palestine is translated by Said as "people still Palestinian despite the interdictions of the Israeli presence" (Said, 1993: p. 51). After the 1967 war, he maintains, *al-dakhil* is associated with inhabitants of the occupied territories: "those from inside," those enjoying the privilege of "obduracy" (Said, 1993: p. 56). After the first and second Intifadas in 1982 and 1987, the semantic emphasis shifts slightly to designate the strange kind

of privacy that comes from living on the outside as if it were the inside; a public incognito based on using "'their' codes […] to mean something quite different" (Said, 1993: p. 52). The problem with this ambiguous zone of language is that meaning becomes perforce "evasive" and "idiosyncratic" (Said, 1993: p. 53).

> We are a people of messages and signals, of allusions and indirect expression. We seek each other out, but because our interior is always to some extent occupied and inter-rupted by others – Israelis and Arabs – we have developed a technique of speaking *through* the given, expressing things obliquely and, to my mind, so mysteriously as to puzzle even ourselves. (Said, 1993: p. 53)

Translation, as Said performs it, is always about a kind of territorial loss, be it cultural or geographic property. It deeply pains Said that the Arabic word *tabooleh* is appropri-ated in Hebrew as a word meaning "kibbutz salad" (Said, 1993: p. 135). When the Lebanese refugee camp *Ein el-Hilwé* (meaning "sweet spring"), is pronounced in Hebrew *Ein el-Khilwé* (meaning "a spring in an empty place"), language is clearly the battleground of occupation (Said, 1993: p. 136). And the heavily freighted word "diaspora" is treated as an Untranslatable, a term measuring the subtraction of a tragic Jewish heritage from contemporary usage:

> I do not like to call it a Palestinian *diaspora*: there is only an apparent symmetry between our exile and theirs. Besides the Diaspora no longer exists spiritually and culturally as it once did in Central Europe, with tragic figures like Kafka, Schoenberg, and Benjamin at its core. Today's Diaspora is represented centrally by American Zionism. (Said, 1993: p. 115)

After the Last Sky reveals just how *irdisch* Said was as a practical critic and reader of site-specificity, not only of language-use in a particular location, but also of Palestine as a land riven by partition, erasure, and architecture. Alive to the crucial role of architecture in territorial politics, Said ironically captured several images shot by Jean Mohr of a housing complex designed by the Polish-born Israeli architect Zvi Hecker in 1979: *Settlements of Ramot near Jerusalem, 1979. As the buildings neared completion, tenants were in short supply* (Figures 27.1–27.2). His commentary was more pointed:

> The attitude expressed in the construction of settlements on the West Bank is unmistak-able. Visually there is a rude interventionary power in them that, I am told, shocks even Israelis. One thinks not only of a coarse army of heedless and rough crusaders, but also – given some of the structures themselves – of a marching cancer. As for the effect on the landscape and Palestine's ecology, the offense is deep and lasting. (Said, 1993: p. 72)

I too found myself profoundly disturbed by these images of Hecker's polyhedric pods, with their menacing, military aspect, their fortress-wall massing, and windows

Figure 27.1 Ramot Housing, 1979. (Photographed by Jean Mohr in Edward Said, After the Last Sky, Palestinian Lives. London: Vintage, 1993: p. 72)

Figure 27.2 Ramot Housing Complex, 1978 (photographed by Jean Mohr in Edward Said, After the Last Sky, Palestinian Lives. London: Vintage, 1993: p. 73)

resembling surveillant periscopes or stages for sharp-shooters. But I could also see that the complex could read quite differently if it were abstracted from context. Hecker was a rather interesting figure in the history of modernism, often hailed (by Daniel Libeskind among others) as an architectural deconstructivist *avant la lettre*. He has been cast as an heir to the Viennese expressionists Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbart (who emphasized the crystalline perfection of natural geometries), a comparable figure to Moshe Safdie, whose *Habitat* megastructure was featured at the 1967 Montreal Expo (Figures 27.3), and of a piece with work by Dutch urbanists such as Aldo van Eyck (who coined the term "built homecoming" for his vision of reciprocity between cognition and environment, social patterning and built form, domestic space and city), and Piet Bloom, whose much-loved Cubic Houses in Rotterdam, built in the mid-1980s, serve as the city's mascot on numerous websites (Jaschke, 2009: p. 184). Conceived as living modules against the reigning orthodoxy of slab block housing, and drawing on the ideal of cities like villages, the Cubic Houses were situated on top of a pedestrian bridge. The concept behind the project was to create a forest, with each cube a tree. The windows opened onto the environment below, embracing the site.

Figure 27.3 Moshe Safdie's Habitat 1967 Housing Complex, Montreal. (Photography by Anthony Vidler)

Figure 27.4 Zvi Hecker, Ramot Housing II, Jerusalem, Israel, 1978–1985 (aerial view). Courtesy of Zvi Hecker.
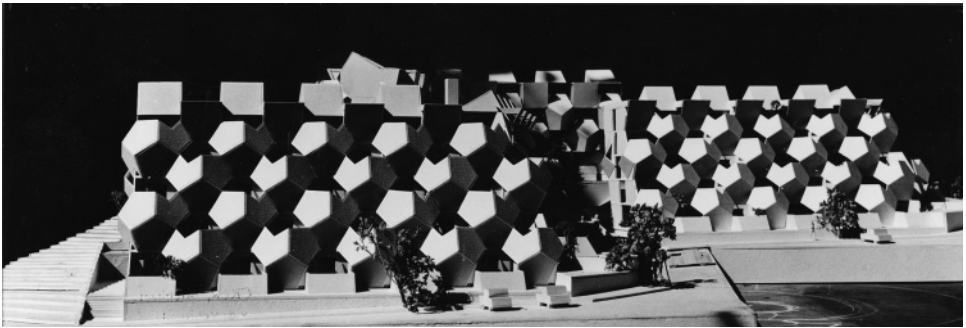
Figure 27.5 Zvi Hecker, Ramot Housing I, Jerusalem, Israel, 1972 (model). Courtesy of Zvi Hecker.

Like these Dutch proponents of configurative design, Hecker belonged to a postwar movement that looked to stones, crystals and honeycombs to furnish a formal system for housing (Figures 27.4 and 27.5). Nature provided a "systems" humanism that was intended to mitigate the relentless straight lines of international modernism. For Hecker, "dodecahedra in space-packing arrangements" sent a message of collective "individuality" and humanized material surfaces (Hecker, 1977: p. 185). In a subsequent elaboration Hecker wrote:

Toward the end of 1972, while engaged on the Ramot Housing Complex near Jerusalem, I decided to undertake a systematic investigation of the properties and potentialities of the dodecahedral form in architectural design. It was the last of the five Platonic solids (tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron) that I had considered. […] It is a polyhedron whose occurrence in nature is rare […] The length of a diagonal of its pentagonal face corresponds to the Golden Section […] used by Greek and Gothic architects, and applied by Le Corbusier.[…] It was my rather casual observation that a group of dodecahedra resembled a rough stone wall that captured my imagination […] the catalyst in the design of the Ramot Housing Complex with its landscape characterized by small hills, piles of rocks and human-made terraces. (Hecker, 1980: p. 272–273)

In discussing Ramot, Hecker seems utterly impervious to the impact of settlements on the Palestinian villages. Though he mentions, offhandedly, that he made his preliminary sketches of polyhedral form "in the first days of the Arab-Israel war of 1973, when I was in the Israeli army, far from my office," there is no acknowledgment that his architecture was basically part of a strategic plan to use settlers as battlements, or that it did violence to its surround (Hecker, 1980: p. 273). This violence is underscored by the photographic sequence in *After the Last Sky*. Mohr's camera moves beyond Hecker's housing units, zooming in on the Arab village that survives in its shadow. The caption reads: *The foreground drops away, leaving only the Arab village, its mosque and houses surrounded by fruit trees, olive trees, and stone walls* (Said, 1993: p. 74). The message is clear: if you want to find an urban form that grows naturally from the territory, if you are in search of a formal ecology expressive of humanism, then look here. In fact, the village seems to embody perfectly the humanist theoretical principles elaborated in Henri Focillon's "life of forms," advanced in his 1934 book of that title:

We must never think of forms as simply suspended in some remote, abstract zone, above the earth and above man. They mingle with life, whence they come; they translate into space certain movements of the mind. […] Whether stable or nomadic, all formal environments give birth to their own various types of social structure: styles of life, vocabularies, states of awareness. Expressed in a more general way, the life of forms gives definition to what may be termed "psychological landscapes," without which the essential genius of the environments would be opaque and elusive for all those who share in them. (Focillon, 1992: p. 60–61)

Two psychological landscapes – one militarized, the other naturalized – enter into historic face-off on the outskirts of Jerusalem in 1979. Two conflicting visions of humanism battle it out on land, assigning terrestrial concreteness to the secular concept of *irdischen Welt* cherished by Auerbach and Said alike. In his own formulations of humanism, Said grappled with the well-worn quandary: how and why did Jewish humanism – updated at midcentury to include credos of progressive avant-gardism, political community, and formalist ecology – move into compromise

formation with national territorialism, thus blinding itself to other humanisms and misrecognizing as a settlement, a land gone missing?

In posing this question, the aim is not to defer to the obvious answers: namely that humanism's universalism is particular, relative to territorial emplacement and local politics, or that one person's humanism is another person's oppression, depending on who possesses the power of franchise and property exploitation. Nor is it sufficient, simply, to point out the irony of the fact that both the Israeli settlement and the Palestinian village default to competing humanisms, each based on an ideal vision of collective habitat and participant sociality. For Said, such even-handedness would neuter the politics of humanism. There would no longer be a reason to contrive a terrestrial humanism that tracks the history of forced relocation, exile, and occupation if humanism as such were applied willy-nilly as the great equalizer in places of contested ground.

What Said seems to have been after was a genuine reckoning with Israel and Palestine's chiastic relation, based on the shared fate of a missing homeland and a common exilic ancestor, "Moses, the Egyptian." As Said argued in *Freud and the Non-European*, Freud's effort to "protectively huddle the Jews inside the sheltering realm of the European," casting them as "remnants of Mediterranean civilization," is "janglingly discordant with his show of force about Moses' Egyptian origins" (Said, 2003: p. 40). Said uses his reading of Freud to introduce the shifting category of the "non-European" as a unit that complicates the politics of culture, and with it, the practice of psychoanalytically inflected, terrestrial humanism. Who is and who is not considered European is revealed to be phantasmatically constructed as well as supremely contingent on the fragile historical circumstances of national belonging and withdrawn citizenship. Underscoring the consequences of this contingency – in the interest, perhaps, of the unconditional right of return or internationally sanctioned laws of hospitality – Said presses specific homologies: the de-Europeanization of Jews under the Nuremburg laws of Nazi Germany, the re-Europeanization of Jews as defenders of the west in the Middle East after the 1948 creation of the Jewish state in Palestine, and the de-Mediterraneanization of Arabs after 1948.

In addition to foregrounding the political stakes that accompany the classification of peoples within heritage traditions (a major concern in *Orientalism*), Said places the study of legal statutes governing citizenship and land entitlement within humanism's purview. Equally importantly, he urges the critic to remake humanism in the guise of ethical militance; thereby disrobing the congeniality of a liberal tradition that loves the world but ignores the earthly violence of distributive injustice. Finally, Said's emphasis on the word "world" in its widest ascription, prompts renewed philosophical investigations of what is *irdisch,* in the manner of late Kant, who advanced some wacky yet intriguing theories about the earth as a self-sanctioning *nomos*. Peter Fenves reminds us (drawing on Kant's *Toward Eternal Peace* as well as a number of posthumously published writings invoking the "earth-globe now") that:

> The original meaning of the Greek word *nomos* is "division," especially the division and distribution of the land for the purpose of its occupation and cultivation. [...] Insofar

as the *nomos* of the earth is more original than any particular legal order, there is no position from which it can be judged right or wrong: it is a matter of fact, not of right. [...] *Toward Eternal Peace* addresses the lawless character of this *nomos* of the earth. (Fenves, 2003: p. 168)

Fenves argues that such a *nomos*, at least in Kantian terms, engenders not a world without laws, but a motion toward concession; a place-making for "another kind of human being" that would transition the planet "from the metaphysics of nature to physics" (Fenves, 2003: p. 169). Though this sounds abstract, cosmic, even science fictional, Kant's wild speculations about "another law of the earth" (Fenves's subtitle) in his late writings exhibit the traits of "late style" that Said mined for future humanisms. Quirky thought experiments, strange geological and astrophysical projections, unpleasing stylistic admixtures of archaism and decadence, recourse to anachronism and other mechanisms of revolutionary untiming – these were among the riches discovered in "late style." Celebrating Theodor Adorno's "daring thesis [in an essay called "Alienated Masterpiece" in his *Essays on Music*] that like Kant, Beethoven was posing the question of ultimate ontology in terms of subjectivity," Said was particularly struck by Adorno's way of reading exclusion and renunciation into Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, for it enabled him to argue that what Beethoven was also renouncing was "the aim of reconciling [what Adorno termed] 'the universally human' with a concrete way of being human" (Said, 2006: p. 92). Said's openness to "concrete ways of being human" that are not foretold in the conventional humanist program of universal values strikes me as interestingly comparable to the Kantian notion of a humankind to come. This *irdisch* human may be somewhat otherworldly, but it is a kind of otherworldliness that discloses states of freedom, or heresy, or sublime justice (what Dante and Mahmoud Darwish each called Paradise).

Having conceived Said's terrestrial humanism in terms of multiple heuristics – a negative philology, a translational cartography, a contrapuntal reading of world literature, a revelation of the weaponization of humanism in situations of territorial incursion – I will conclude by emphasizing that it is above all *irdisch* in the full, if mistranslated sense of *Weltlich Welt*; "worldly world," or earthly paradise. It is tempting to draw a line of criticism that leads from late Kant to Kostas Axelos (author in 1964 of *Vers la pensée planétaire* [Toward planetary thought]), and up, perhaps, to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose anti-globalization theory of planetarity in *Death of a Discipline* has held sway in reconfiguring Comparative Literature through a renewed Area Studies. Another line would lead from Jacques Derrida (whose notion of *chôra* implies a "cosmetics" of the world that considers the globe as both earthly raiment and holding receptacle) to Jean-Luc Nancy, who poses the question in *Being Singular Plural*:

Can we think an earth and a human such that they would be only what they are – *nothing but* earth and human – and such that they would be none of the various horizons often harbored under these names, none of the "perspectives" or "views" *in view* of which

we have disfigured humans [*les hommes*] and driven them to despair? (Nancy, 2000: p. xii)

Nancy designates "Sarajevo" as the "martyr-name" of "a world that does not even manage to constitute a world; […] a world lacking in world, and lacking in the meaning of world" (Nancy xiii). Said designates "Palestine" in much the same way, but where Nancy says "Sarajevo" to signify what he describes as the world's autism, Said coaxes "Palestine" into the loquacious place of humanism's afterlife.

Notes

1 Curthoys' citation of "the modes of persistence of texts" comes from Edward Said, (1991) *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. London: Vintage, p. 149.

2 These citations are taken from Erich Auerbach, (1969) "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," trans. Edward and Maire Said, *Centennial Review*, 13, 1.

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28
Logics and Contexts of Circulation[1]

Brian T. Edwards

Shakespeare in Korea; Paul Robeson's autobiography in the Soviet Union; Aleksandr Pushkin's poetry in the American South. Classic Hollywood cinema in 1930s Shanghai; *Gone with the Wind* in 1940s Damascus; *Casablanca* in Casablanca; *Shrek* in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Tehran. *Lolita* and *The Great Gatsby* in Tehran; the *Arabian Nights* in antebellum America; Paul Bowles's fiction in post-colonial Morocco (see Im, 2008; Baldwin, 2002; Gates, 2006; Hansen, 2009; Thompson, 2010; B.T. Edwards, 2003, 2005a, 2010b; Nafisi, 2003; Nance, 2009).

What happens when texts move into new contexts, taken up by audiences beyond the imagination of their producers, emerging from radically different social and discursive spaces? Is it the *movement* or the *meanings* that readers of literature should be concerned with? Should we examine the function of the texts within their new context (*Lolita* in Tehran), how new readings of otherwise familiar texts expand our sense of the capacious meanings of the original? Should we use instead interpretations emerging from detached reading publics to disrupt the more dominant metropolitan readings of such texts, recognizing that their meanings may be unstable or contingent (*The Sheltering Sky* in Morocco)? Or should we focus on the *circulation* itself, as an index of the global flow of culture: examine the selection of which texts move and which don't, asking always about the mobility of forms? Do situations such as those I list above suggest or invoke a different mode for comparative literary studies? Is the circulation of a literary work and its "uptake" within radically disconnected literatures or publics simply another version of reception theory, or even a replay of an older understanding of literary influence?

We have long known that there are multiple communities of meaning makers, multiple identifications for all of them, and heterogeneous knowledge producers who remake the texts-in-motion. Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1967) and Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969), their differences notwithstanding, were hardly the first to propagate the idea that a text might circulate apart from the individual who created it, now reinscribed as an author function, and that such mobility was a central characteristic of literature itself. Perhaps the word "contexts" in my title mistakenly conveys the idea that locating literary meaning is merely a matter of locating or historicizing the creation and reception of a text. So let me be more precise: what happens when texts are taken up by publics that are clearly outside their address?

There are surely limits to the address that a text summons – worlds beyond the public the text calls into being, worlds that do not share that "social space" – and evidence of yet another public taking up a work is not always testimony to the elasticity of the reach of the text. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries it is increasingly likely for cultural objects to be taken up by publics outside that summoned by the text itself, whether it be Bollywood films in Kano, Nigeria, where they spurred and gave new form to a popular market literature that Brian Larkin has written about; or hip hop in Tehran or Fez (See Larkin, 1997; Asen and Needleman, 2007). In the latter case, the language of cultural imperialism is insufficient – even ahistorical, according to Ulf Hannerz – to explain the circulation of literary and cultural products once we attend to the multiple trajectories of cultural objects crossing each other's paths, homegrown popular musics and dramas alongside those from multiple metropolitan centers (Hannerz, 1992: p. 226). Globalization studies themselves have still not quite decided what to do with literary texts and settle instead on those that document or depict global movements, which dominate the list of literature of globalization (see Hassan, 2009).[2]

In referring to texts that in their transnational circulation move beyond the publics they address, I am building on Michael Warner's crucial work on publics and counterpublics. Warner writes that a public is poetic world-making: "There is no speech or performance addressed to a public that does not try to specify in advance, in countless highly condensed ways, the lifeworld of its circulation." He continues: "Its circulatory fate is the realization of that world" (Warner, 2002). Warner's essay argues that the way discourse addresses and creates its public has a particular role in the modern period: "The projection of a public is a new, creative, and distinctively modern mode of power" (Warner, 2002: p. 75). He suggests how important circulation is to this mode of power. In his sixth axiom about publics, Warner argues:

> A public seems to be self-organized by discourse, but in fact requires preexisting forms and channels of circulation. It appears to be open to indefinite strangers, but in fact selects participants by criteria of shared social space (though not necessarily territorial space), habitus, topical concerns, intergeneric references, and circulating intelligible forms (including idiolects or speech genres). (Warner, 2002: p. 75)

Discourse is not "public" in the common usage of the term, not open to all and sundry, but rather creates by selecting and addressing the public that it will reach; and that public, which is not predicted fully within the discourse even though the discourse creates its conditions of possibility, fulfills the work or text or address. Thus, the "channels of circulation" are crucial to understanding the public as a mode of power, for without them that public cannot be created or fulfilled.

Warner's work is particularly generative and central to the discussion of circulation. Yet it is worth wondering whether the types of situations I began by listing fit within its purview. The past decades have allowed for many situations within which the circulatory fate of works does more than extend, or realize, the world made by the text's reflexive circulation of discourse. That the digital revolution has much to do with this is not in itself constitutive. Warner's argument would suggest that the way to ask this question is to focus on those "channels of circulation," and that in turn the question of *form* should be central to our discussion. Not all forms flow globally in the same way or with the same range, whether because of the rapidity of digital transmission of cinema (often via pirating) or because of the difficulty of translating poetry, with all that is left behind and all that is gained. Warner points out that the key is "active uptake:" "publics are only realized through active uptake" (Warner, 2002: p. 60). This "active uptake" need not be intentional, nor even fully attentive, but it is consequential: "By coming into range you fulfill the only entry condition demanded by a public" (Warner, 2002: p. 61). Still, there seems a significant difference between, on the one hand, the programming made by Iranian diaspora in Los Angeles as it is received in Iran, which is an example of both active uptake and poetic world-making (and a political and controversial one at that), and on the other hand, the ways in which DreamWorks' computer generated film *Shrek* gets recoded by video pirates in Tehran (see B.T. Edwards, 2010b). The latter case is an example of a text which because of its recoding moves beyond the social space it imagines, and jumps publics as it were, rather than extending the reach of the first one. In so doing, these latter texts become end points of the circulatory process itself – unfungible, in economic terms, since they can no longer be translated back or continue on in their circulation – but that is a status that they embrace and explore (see Judy, 1997; B.T. Edwards, 2002). In so doing, they allow us to bring together the question of whether to focus on the movement or the meaning of the text in circulation, which is a way of recasting a debate with discussions of so-called "cultures of circulation," and ask a more generally important question to literary studies interested in globalization processes (Lee and LiPuma, 2002). Namely, how should we read texts in the context of the massively accelerated circulation of finances, peoples, technologies and ideologies that we associate with globalization? Or put more simply, how to read culture after the 1970s?

"Globalization" is an overused and frequently under-theorized term in literary studies, and its use frequently stops short a more serious conversation.[3] In employing it – and shortly substituting scholarly attention to circulation in its place – I mean to invoke the use of the term by cultural anthropologists who are sensitive both to

economic and demographic change and to the category of the imagination. Globalization thus understood is the accelerated transnational movement of capital that follows the worldwide shift away from national currencies anchored against a standard (the US dollar) in 1973, the date when the Bretton Woods currency exchange markets finally closed. To understand this change, a very brief review of Bretton Woods may help; the economic aspects of globalization are rarely considered by literary studies that invoke the term (Behdad, 2005: p. 64–65). The 1944 conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, established the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) – the latter would eventually become a component of the World Bank. The major achievement of Bretton Woods was to establish a system for the international exchange of world currencies "pegged" to one another. In the wake of the world wide depression of the 1930s, the major players at the conference – most powerful among them the US and Britain – sought to find a medium between the fixed exchange rates prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth century under the worldwide gold standard and the freely floating exchange rates that had followed. Freely floating rates had, it was argued, led to massive speculation and the devaluation of currencies that created and fueled the Great Depression. In its place, Bretton Woods established the US dollar as the international standard against which national currencies would be fixed (with the dollar guaranteed by gold, and the US willing to guarantee convertibility of the dollar to gold), with the IMF positioned as arbiter. The IMF, based in Washington, D.C., historically with a European managing director and an American as second in command (the President of the World Bank, in turn, would be American), would set exchange rates and approve occasional devaluations or revaluations of national currencies against the standard.

For a variety of reasons, including the huge amount of postwar debt in Europe, the decline of US economic hegemony as Japan and Europe recovered in the 1960s, and the rapid acceleration of inflation in the US in response to the massive costs of the Vietnam War and higher taxation to fund the "Great Society" programs of the Johnson Administration, this system did not – and arguably could not – hold. The Bretton Woods system thus broke down, with the currency exchange markets closed in February 1973. In March 1973 they reopened with currencies freely floating. Perhaps not surprisingly, in the three and a half decades since, financial speculation has increased at nearly asymptotic rates via futures and derivatives markets and global hedge funds. With the possibilities for escalated and accelerated trade unleashed by technologies that put bankers in New York and Hong Kong and elsewhere in instant communication, those markets have since 1973 run more rampant than they did before Bretton Woods. Even before the world financial crisis of 2008, scholars of globalization had noted the ways in which capital's transnational mobility had led to a new global interconnectedness – critics pointed to massive inequities and huge, if mostly invisible, social costs; while champions argued that this interconnectedness could lead to economic and social improvement for all (see Lee and LiPuma, 2002; Stiglitz, 2002; Friedman, 2000; Eichengreen, 2008; LiPuma and Lee, 2004).

A large literature on the economic, social, and cultural aspects of globalization has emerged in the past two decades (see Jameson and Miyoshi, 1998; Saussy, 2006). To be sure, there is a vigorous debate on the history and meanings of this term. Some scholars of globalization have reminded us that capital has for centuries – even millennia – moved transnationally, and have argued that it is a fiction to suggest that only in the past decades were ideas, cultural representations and individuals circulating around the globe (Frank, 1998; Arrighi, 1994). These scholars have contributed important lessons to our understanding of the transnational inspiration for much that was misread by scholars of previous decades under the category of the national (see Ho, 2006; Raj, 2007; Schaffer, *et al.*, 2009). Still, we can note that the confluence of free floating capital after 1973 with the digital revolution and improvements in transportation and communication technologies have together created a situation in which cultural contact across national divides is common, easily accessible, and ubiquitous, rather than the purview of a minority or the elite. The range of experiences possible – and for many common – puts pressure on pre-digital understandings of national identity, even while national identity is an important part of the experience of many and a major component of the lived reality of nearly all.[4]

If the economic and technological components of what we call globalization have driven the machine, "globalization" also and more broadly has come to refer to the altered ways of knowing and being in the world that emerged during this period. New cultural and social imaginaries have been formed by subjects brought into communication with formerly distant strangers via a variety of digital technologies and accelerated or enhanced transport of bodies, images, finances and ideas. Arjun Appadurai described these changes most famously in his now classic work *Modernity at Large,* wherein he outlined the variety of "-scapes" that social critics must now attend to and called for a scholarly technique for so doing. Appadurai's call for attention to the "imagination" of subjects within globalization has been massively influential in a variety of fields including, belatedly, comparative literary studies. Appadurai's work was controversial, particularly for his apparent claim that the nation was no longer a major or primary form of identification for subjects in present. Critics argued that various expressions of virulent nationalism or patriotism (from the breakdown of the Soviet Union and national uprisings in the late 1980s and 1990s to the post-9/11 American expressions of patriotism and flag waving) demonstrated Appadurai's error. Appadurai himself responded, in essays such as "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination" and the book-length essay *Fear of Small Numbers,* in which he argued that the "narcissism of minor differences" was an expression of virulent nationalism in the wake of transnational movements.

Appadurai's call for attention to the imagination resonated with readers of literature, and students and scholars of literature struggled to identify the "literature of globalization" (see Kumar, 2003; Gunn, 2001; Globalization, 2008). Others noted the ways in which literature emerging from postcolonial contexts seemed to be changing in its concerns, even while the critical paradigms had not yet caught up (see

Spivak, 1999; B.T. Edwards, 2003). A renewed critical interest in translation sometimes considered the ways in which "global" English was proliferating in ways that detached from its source (thus leaving behind postcolonial studies' traditional concern with ambivalence and close readings of literary responses to the intellectual domination of the imposed tongue and literature, see Bhabha, 1994) though rarely did it offer a reading strategy for the present conditions (for exceptions see Apter, 2001, 2006; Judy, 1997; Derrida, 1995; B.T. Edwards, 2002).

The work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has perhaps been most effective in bringing together a sensitivity to the relationship of global capital flows (the economic underpinning of globalization) to the process of close reading of literary texts (including the choice of what is read in the US academy). Many of Spivak's insights, however, have not been fully pursued. Spivak's commitment to ask continually about the (in)ability of the subaltern or Third World woman to register a voice within Western discourse stands as an important intervention in the consideration of circulation for literary studies.[5] Spivak's notable and signature ability to bring together the deconstructive, Marxist and feminist strands of literary and social theory in the service of close readings of literary works (and of works from other disciplines) has long insisted on the need to *read through* the economic and geopolitical conditions that would circumscribe anti-essentializing patterns of reading as well as efforts to challenge presumptions behind canon formation.

Spivak's engagement with and extension of the work of Jacques Derrida allows an opening for literary critics to see the relationship of a floating signifier to floating currencies, though one makes this suggestive link at some peril. For Spivak, the concern is more often that which is written out, or to use our term, does not circulate on the pathways of metropolitan capital and culture without being reduced to value, a term she has elaborated powerfully. Thus the subaltern who couldn't "speak," the subject of her most famous essay, was not, as it was commonly misread, one who could not or did not enunciate in her words and actions, but rather one whose enunciations could not register within the transnational circuits of capital, including the Western university with its imperative to reduce to determined literary value even that – especially that – which challenged its own imperative to differentiate (thus mirroring and sustaining the capitalist marketplace). That her canonical essay was so often misread, as Spivak complained (taking it out of its own circulation via eventually refusing its further reprinting in anthologies until she could revise it, as she did in her *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*), seemed to prove the point.

We might briefly turn to Spivak's reading of Marx on money and value to help us to understand the importance of circulation as problem for literary analysis. At least as far back as her difficult essay "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value" (1985), Spivak has argued that it is circulation itself that is a – or *the* – crucial component in the problem of representation. Spivak's understanding of Marx's meditations on value focus on the complex way in which the movement from use value to exchange value (in Marx's formulations in both the first volume of *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*) entails a process of representation. Marx's "money," in her subtle reading, is both a

representation of exchange value, and the negation of the use value of the commodity. In this way, "money" accretes textuality: as representation and as negation of its referent. The key for us is that this process requires or is activated by circulation itself:

> [I]n circulation as totality, or in the moment of negation in Marx's reading of money, money is seen as in a negative relation to circulation because, "cut off from all relation to (circulation) it would not be money, but merely a simple natural object." Circulation as such has the morphological (if not the "actual") power to insert Money back into *Nature,* and to *banish* it from the textuality of Value. Yet it is also circulation that *bestows* textuality upon the Money-form. Textuality as a structural description indicates the work of differentiation (both plus and minus) that opens up identity as adequation. Circulation in the following passage does precisely that with the restricted circuit of adequation within the money-form itself: "You may turn and toss an ounce of gold in any way you like, and it will never weigh ten ounces. But here in the process of circulation one ounce practically does weigh ten ounces." (Spivak, 1996: p. 119–120)

Spivak's invocation of "textuality" here is of course important to moving from her analysis of Marx's discussion of the circulation of the commodity back into the realm of comparative literature. Still, despite my analogy between money and (literary) text, we can remark that the textuality of money, as Spivak has us understand it, is not as rich or as generative in its circulation as the textuality of literature. (Spivak herself would hardly disagree. In the "Literature" chapter of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* she states: "I am working here with rather an old-fashioned binary opposition between philosophy and literature; that the first concatenates arguments and the second figures the impossible" [Spivak, 1999: p. 112]).[6] The uptake that literary texts may provoke in their circulation is more complex and active than that produced by the circulation of money. As texts move along their circulatory paths on increasingly rapid and unpredicted trajectories, the ways in which they carry along with them something from what Greg Urban will call the "cultural plane," and negate something of it, is of dual and simultaneous interest.

To make the bridge from Spivak's speculations back to the sociocultural realm, Jacques Derrida's reading of Marcel Mauss' *The Gift* may help. While this text (and Derrida's work in general) is notoriously difficult to adapt to sociocultural or historicist concerns, Derrida's *Given Time* deserves a rereading since it takes on a key argument in understanding how circulation creates a social world, and exposes at the same time its hidden paradox (see Tratner, 2003). Derrida engages Mauss' argument about gift exchange societies that create their world through the continual giving and countergiving that defines them and their limits. Derrida reads the "madness" of Mauss' language and in turn asks how it could be possible to give a gift with the knowledge that that gift would only be regiven. The gift is impossible, therefore, according to Derrida and all that is given is time (the time between gifts). Derrida's turn from Mauss to Baudelaire within the same essay underlines for students of comparative literature the value of bringing a rich understanding of sociocultural anthropology's concerns about circulation and social meaning together with a poststructuralist

sensitivity to the ever mobile circuits of literary texts. Most important though is the way Derrida's reading of the madness (*folie*) of Mauss' construction of the gift may connect a deconstructive reading practice with (a critique of) Durkheimian constructions of society as derived from circulation of gifts and symbols.

In the past decade, it is in the realm of sociocultural anthropology that the most vibrant discussions about circulation have been taking place. Most important was the groundbreaking essay by Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation." Lee and LiPuma announced the cultural shift that followed the expiration of Bretton Woods in even starker terms than had Appadurai:

> The advent of circulation-based capitalism, along with the social forms and technologies that complement it, signifies more than a shift in emphasis. It constitutes a new stage in the history of capitalism. (Lee and LiPuma, 2002: p. 210)

Lee and LiPuma provide an analysis of the forms of collective agency that emerge from within different economic stages in the history of capitalism. Their attempt is to show how the transition from gift-exchange societies (pre-market capitalism) to market capitalism to "globalization" after the demise of the gold standard and the floating of currencies creates different forms with which to imagine the relationship of the individual to the collective, and therefore different forms of social organization. For Lee and LiPuma:

> [C]irculation is a cultural process with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation, and constraint, which are created by the interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them. It is in these structured circulations that we identify cultures of circulation. (Lee and LiPuma, 2002: p. 192)

Key terms for Lee and LiPuma are "indexicality" and "performativity," words borrowed from linguistics (and in use in comparative literary studies and performance studies), which become dangerous within high finance capital; representations of the market within the world of global finance – whether indexes or pricing equations – summon up a world they are both representing and calling into being. In their 2004 book *Financial Derivatives and the Globalization of Risk*, LiPuma and Lee (the order of the authors is now reversed) take their analysis further and into the world of finance capital itself, showing the violence that is occluded by such indexes and representations of free floating capital. At stake for critics of contemporary literature is the critics' claim that analyses of contemporary "culture," particularly those that attend to "meaning and interpretation as the key problems for social and cultural analysis," are playing "catch-up to the economic processes that go beyond it" (Lee and LiPuma, 202: p. 191). This statement poses a direct challenge to those who would analyze literary and cultural production since the transition to globalization. I will suggest below that the reluctance to move away from postcolonial approaches to reading recent literature from North Africa and its diaspora represents a refusal

to take seriously the changed context elaborated by Lee and LiPuma (see also Hamid, 2007; Devji, 2005).

Other scholars working within the realm of sociocultural anthropology have contributed arguments of interest to comparative literature, and only in part because they reach toward texts for their evidence. Greg Urban's *Metaculture* is a particularly important entry. Urban's notion of metaculture – cultural products that comment on culture itself – identified the "metacultural plane" as the one on which culture itself circulates. Urban thereby offers an account of just how the cultural object reaches its public, propelled on and by this plane, which differs from Warner's more retroactive sense of the active uptake of discourse by a public ("Its circulatory fate is the realization of that world"). Of his many and diverse examples, Urban's discussion of American film reviews is notable. In his account, film reviews do more than comment on a film, but carry over something from "the cultural plane" to the reading public, partially independent from the object (the film itself). Thus because of the "intrinsic interest in the cultural object," something from the cultural plane is disseminated through metaculture in "the absence of a direct encounter with the cultural object itself" (Urban, 2001: p. 226). People reading a film review might not have seen the film, or they may not have read the book that is being reviewed in the article they are reading, but through the review, something from it is carried along. This is where Urban's idea of "newness" comes in – an important one for his book, as it is the new or the novel that propels cultural objects through the world of capital. For Urban, the "redirection of interest depends upon response, the separation of layers increases and more and more of the motion of culture itself takes place at the metacultural plane" (Urban, 2001: p. 226). As texts or cultural objects are disassociated from the metacultural discussion of them – we might think of scholarly discussions of literary texts – what is propelled through the world, what circulates, on the metacultural plane is both connected and distinct from the literary or cinematic text itself. Thus we have an account of how the metacultural plane may complicate the reception or uptake of the object, and come closer to the kinds of situations I began this chapter by listing. Culture is a riddle for Urban – his book has a photograph of the Sphinx on the cover – but its movement may be identified and discussed.

Others in the field of anthropology have developed these insights and demonstrated how to bring together the reading of a text with a sensitivity to its movement through diverse meaning-making communities. Brian Larkin's essay on Bollywood films in Hausa culture is an important achievement in this regard. As Larkin investigated a popular form of market literature in northern Nigeria, he noted the ways in which themes from Bollywood films (then popular in the cinemas of Kano, Nigeria) made available social worlds to Hausa authors that had heretofore not been present (see also Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin, 2002). Based on his reading of Hausa pamphlet-style market literature, and his fieldwork in northern Nigerian cinema theaters, Larkin provided an account of the global circulation of culture within and between non-Western sites. In the boom in *littatafan soyayya* (love stories) in Hausa culture, extremely popular and controversial in 1990s Kano, Larkin saw the creation of a

popular Hausa reading public for fiction. But this new literature borrowed from Bollywood narrative structures and patterns of negotiating tradition and modernity, within which Nigerians found patterns for situations similar to their own.

Larkin's model provided a form-sensitive reading of culture in circulation, one that negotiated both the motion and the meaning of the texts in motion and was grounded in the materiality of the infrastructure that makes circulation possible (see Larkin, 2008). Still, in anthropology, there has been anxiety about reading too much for the "meaning" of the socially propelled text. Following Lee and LiPuma's 2002 essay, Dilip Gaonkar and Elizabeth Povinelli addressed the implications of attending to circulation for the analysis of public cultural texts, events and practices and called for attention to the "dynamic transfiguration of forms across circulatory matrices" (Gaonkar and Povinelli, 2003: p. 388). They go yet further with respect to the velvet trap of interpretation, and suggest that critics resist the "temptation of reading for meaning" and instead pay greater attention to "the proliferating copresence of varied textual/cultural forms in all their mobility and mutability" (Gaonkar and Povinelli, 2003: pp. 386, 391). Thus the debate had now been cast in terms of reading for motion or reading for meaning.

To be sure, a new generation of literary critics had been discovering that there were possibilities opened up by rerouting the pathways of literary inspiration and attending as well to the travels and peregrinations of authors, many of whose movements had not been attended to when they seemed not to fit in the established national frameworks (see Gilroy, 1993; Baldwin, 2002; B.H. Edwards, 2003b; Stephens, 2005; Lazo, 2005; Goudie, 2006; and Dimock, 2006). Thus, for example, Paul Bowles' reception in the United States through his death in 1999 never got far beyond the early review he got in 1950 (Jackson, 1950), wherein the Morocco-based novelist was advised in the pages of the *New York Times Book Review* to return to "his native scene" and take up "everyday" American concerns. After September 11, 2001, the same *New York Times Book Review* (reviewing a posthumous collection of his stories – Bowles died in 1999, after more than half a century residence in Tangier), concluded that "Paul Bowles had an enviably long life, but one could have wished it lasted at least two years longer. He would, one feels, have had informed things to say about his country's recent agony. Who knows, he might even have dredged up some sympathy" (Sutherland, 2001). The *Times'* book reviewer suggests that only after September 11 could Bowles be read anew: "I received the review copy of this collection in late August {2001} and was rereading it in the second week of September. Events transformed what was in my hands." But it is a Bowles still firmly in the camp of the American, writing "stories [that] are, manifestly, written by an Occidental for Occidental readers," rather than one whose fiction might have had its own circulation into the Maghreb, as it manifestly did in the decades between the stories under consideration and the death of the expatriate author.

If what we mean by "globalization" implicates an impossibly broad fabric, it is necessary for scholars and students of literature to localize our attentions on particular texts and contexts in order to understand how such a changed or changing episteme

works on the imaginary. This critical tactic need not reject Gaonkar and Povinelli's warning about the dangerous captivation that "meaning" can pose, nor the best traditions of "close reading." Indeed, by attending in the second part of this chapter to the ways in which a trio of "Moroccan" writers are intensely caught up in questions of circulation, I hope to suggest a method for reading a literary text sensitive to both the logics and the contexts of circulation.

Thus, despite the ways in which television, digital media, and cyberculture highlight the technological changes in the environment within which subjectivities operate in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we need not only attend to new media in order to see such a shift. We may see a marked shift in cultural production more generally. Furthermore, such concerns are made visible within cultural production, sometimes in the media within which they are produced – as with the Casablanca digital pirate-artist Miloudi, whose montage VCDs from 2003–2005, half-CGI Hollywood clips, half-Moroccan *chaabi* music, seemed to create a new art form – and sometimes thematically in works created in more traditional media, such as narrative fiction and film (see B.T. Edwards, 2009 and *After the American Century*). When "older" media are chosen by artists as means of expression, we may see a cultural shift in a variety of ways, both thematically and stylistically, as well as the changed environment within which such traditional media now operate. For these reasons, it may be especially useful to examine such "vestigial forms" (cinema, novels, etc.) to understand better the shifts surrounding the choice of media itself.

Three Moroccan Texts in Circulation

What would it mean in practice to bring a concern with circulation, as I have described it, into the analysis of literary texts? Would it change our selection of texts, the kinds of texts we look at, the moments we focus on, or the relationship of those texts to their authors, reader(ship)s, and circulatory trajectories? In this coda, I would like to suggest how the concerns I have outlined above open up a combination of texts that otherwise have been under-read or misread because of prevailing approaches that still haunt literature emerging from major colonies of Europe. My case is Morocco, or rather a conjunction of texts from Morocco. This is meant only to be suggestive, and though the case is particular, I hope to raise questions that might be generally relevant to readings of literature from or intersecting with former colonies during the past four decades.

Literature set in or emerging from Morocco has tended to be read within the terrain of postcolonial approaches to literature, with an overwhelming focus on francophone Moroccan authors (to the relative exclusion of literature written in Arabic) and especial attention to those authors and texts that address the nation itself (see Hayes, 2000; B.T. Edwards, 2000).[7] Tahar Ben Jelloun, born in 1944 in Fez, Morocco, and winner of the 1987 Prix Goncourt and in 2008 named to the French Légion d'honneur by President Nicolas Sarkozy, is arguably the best known Moroccan author of the second

half of the century in both France and the US, and well known within American discussions of Maghrebi literature. Paul Bowles, born in New York and an American citizen, moved definitively to Morocco in 1947, at the age of 36, producing all of his significant literary production while based in Tangier (he died in Tangier in 1999). Mohammed Mrabet, born in 1936, has spent his entire life in Morocco, an "illiterate" Moroccan – illiterate because he cannot compose in standard, literary Arabic, though he can narrate in the unwritten Moroccan dialect of Arabic – who collaborated with Paul Bowles on more than a dozen books published first in Bowles's translations, with no apparent "original." Though he is listed as the author of thirteen books, beginning with *Love with a Few Hairs* (Mrabet, 1967), given the idiosyncrasy of his authorship, he is not generally considered a writer in Morocco. Mrabet has barely registered within comparative literary studies.

In Tahar Ben Jelloun's 2005 novel *Partir* (*Leaving Tangier*), the narrator twice makes reference to "an American writer" who came to Tangier decades earlier and exploited local Moroccans. Here is the first reference:

> The old concierge in an apartment building where an American writer and his wife lived had said it best: "That type, they want everything, men and women from the common people, young ones, healthy, preferably from the countryside, who can't read or write, serving them all day, then servicing them at night. A package deal, and between two pokes, tokes on a nicely packed pipe of kif to help the American write! Tell me your story, he says to them, I'll make a novel out of it, you'll even have your name on the cover: you won't be able to read it but no matter, you're a writer like me, except that you're an illiterate writer, that's exotic – what I mean is, unusual, my friend! That's what he tells them, without ever mentioning money, because you don't talk about that, not when you're working for a writer, after all! They aren't obliged to accept, but I know that poverty – our friend poverty – can lead us to some very sad places." (Tahar Ben Jelloun, 2009: p. 41)

The unnamed reference, which Ben Jelloun could have expected many readers to catch, was of course to Paul Bowles. Ben Jelloun, who himself has lived as an expatriate in France since 1971 (though he returns frequently to Morocco where he has a home), had returned to take up an old debate he had had with the now dead American, one that Ben Jelloun either considered unsettled or saw anew in the context of his concerns in *Leaving Tangier*. Ben Jelloun's novel casts its eye on the plight of desperate young Moroccans attempting to find their way out of Morocco, and focuses in particular on the narrative on one such Moroccan, named Azel, who is involved in an exploitative, sexual relationship with a Spanish resident of Tangier named Miguel. The novel shuttles back and forth to Europe, a place that the Moroccans aspire to or dream of, but which regards them through Orientalist stereotypes and racist prejudice. Though the concern with illegal immigration had become a common one in early twenty-first century writing about Morocco, Ben Jelloun's reference to Bowles might have seemed a throwback.[8] The reference was apparently directed in particular at the long collaboration of the American with Mohammed Mrabet, which Ben Jelloun had critiqued at

the very beginning of his own literary career in 1972. In his inaugural column for *Le Monde* (entitled "Une technique de viol" [A technique of rape]), which represented Ben Jelloun's arrival on the French literary scene, Ben Jelloun attacked Bowles for his collaborative literary projects with analphabetic Moroccans, which he called a "bastard literature." For Ben Jelloun, in 1972, Bowles' translations represented an immoral continuation of colonialist attitudes toward Morocco (the suggestion of homosexuality was implicit, though not stated, in the initial article). What does Ben Jelloun's insistence on continuing to criticize Paul Bowles, even after his death, tell us about late-twentieth and twenty-first century Moroccan literature? Or more to the point, how does circulation help us identify and ask different questions about this literary debate and about these literary texts?

At first blush, Ben Jelloun's reference to Bowles seems to be a classic postcolonial critique of the work (here, the work of translation) of an author from a metropolitan location. The contours of Paul Bowles' literary career in Morocco are fairly well known. While his literary representations of the Maghreb in his early works – such as *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), *The Delicate Prey* (1950), and *Let It Come Down* (1952) – have been criticized by Moroccan critics and Western ones alike for a distanced, exoticizing portrayal of Moroccans and Algerians, Bowles's later turn toward translation and collaborations with Moroccan authors such as Mohamed Choukri, Larbi Layachi, and most of all Mrabet are more complex affairs that evade – for the most part – the types of critiques made from within postcolonial studies (see B.T. Edwards, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Mullins, 2002). If we take Ben Jelloun's return to these older debates seriously, his continued concern with Bowles' relationship (literary and personal) with Mrabet opens up a series of questions that have been for the most part illegible within postcolonial approaches to Moroccan literature and to American literature set in the Maghreb. It is possible, of course, to understand Ben Jelloun's continued indictment of Bowles as a sort of reluctance to move on, a throwback to the engaged writer of the postcolonial period (see Polémique, 2010; TelQuel, 2006; Le Roux, 2010). Yet given our concerns here, we might understand Ben Jelloun's association of Bowles' translation projects within a novel about the inability of Moroccan subjects to "circulate" outside of Morocco, whether because of legal restrictions or because of the harsh prejudice of their Spanish and French hosts when they do make it to southern Europe, as a meditation on circulation itself.

At the heart of the Bowles-Mrabet translations was always the question of circulation. How could an illiterate author who had no access to "literary" Arabic – that is, the standard Arabic or *Fosha* of the printed Arabic novel – circulate his own vision and prose within a context within which Moroccan *darija* (the dialect) did not circulate? The irony of course is that *darija,* the natal tongue of Moroccans, means "that which circulates" from the Arabic trilateral root *da-ra-ja*. But Moroccan *darija* does not circulate outside of Morocco; it is mostly incomprehensible to Arabic speakers from other Arab countries and regions, and within Morocco it has no codified grammar, vocabulary, or spelling. Except for the occasional sports daily or cartoon or television drama, Moroccan *darija* is not a language of print or literary production.

Postcolonial debates within Moroccan letters revolved around the question of French versus (literary) Arabic. Abdelkebir Khatibi's famous 1983 novel *Amour bilingue* (Love in Two Languages) posed the Moroccan subject as caught in a bilingualism (French-Arabic) that inhibited the discovery of a unified national subject – very much the terrain of postcolonial ambivalence. Jacques Derrida's *Le monolingualisme de l'autre* [The Monolingualism of the Other], which addresses Khatibi directly, should be read in light of this question. In typical fashion, Derrida declares in that essay both that "je n'ai qu'une langue, ce n'est pas la mienne" [I only have one language; it is not mine] and that – as a result? – he was more "Maghrebian" than Khatibi (Derrida, 1995: p. 13; Derrida, 1998: p. 1; see B.T. Edwards, 2002; Apter, 2005). But Mrabet did not, could not, register within those debates. Whether or not Bowles gained in the transaction, his collaborative translations put Mrabet's novels and short stories on their path to a place beyond their composition. There was not yet the critical scene available to champion them or even to read them.

Within Morocco, until quite recently, Mrabet's work did not circulate. But that has changed, and lately Mrabet has become celebrated as a Moroccan man of letters (see *Moroccan Cultural Studies Journal*, 2006; *TelQuel*, 2006). Mrabet's tales were not, it appears, unfungible after all; once they had been translated into English, their circulation had begun. The notable rise in English language speakers in Morocco stretches from private language institutes and university departments to an emergent body of fiction and poetry by Moroccan nationals composed and published in English. This is surely the rise of "global" English in Morocco, with a decidedly different relationship to a "foreign" tongue than that of Moroccans' previous relationship to French; less anxious, more related to the perils of being left behind by the global economy. But if Moroccans might be discovering their own Anglophone tradition, a "writer" like Mrabet – who existed in English first – could have a new relevance, read backwards (see B.T. Edwards, 2006).

It is possible of course that just as Bowles did not anticipate his own works from the early part of his career circulating (back) to the Morocco where they were written, that he believed the same about Mrabet's publication by San Francisco's City Lights Books and in *Rolling Stone* magazine. In other words, Bowles may have imagined that his work with and translations of Mrabet addressed an American public, and their circulatory fate would carry them no further. But this is less certain, and the shift in Bowles' career from author of putatively Orientalist fiction in the 1940s and 1950s to his turn toward translation and away from fiction in the 1960s and 1970s suggests an awareness that had first appeared in his journalism and non-fiction in the post-independence period. It was after Moroccan independence in 1956 that Bowles began lugging around Ampex recording equipment to capture (but also circulate) disappearing Moroccan musical forms, and soon thereafter that he gave Moroccan collaborators (eventually including Mrabet) a tape recorder to use in composing their fictions (see Bowles, 1963, 1956)

We need not take a position on Ben Jelloun's engagé stance. Rather, the attention to circulation allows us to see this conjunction of texts as opening up a question about

narrative fiction (which I suggested above is a vestigial form of cultural production) now in the digital world of the twenty-first century, wherein Ben Jelloun's essays and interviews are now available on the Internet, as are journalistic accounts of diasporic Moroccans risking their bodies in illegal emigration. The expatriation of the Moroccan author, particularly in the context of an apparently engagé novel like *Partir,* has a new poignancy when virtual emigration is becoming increasingly common in Morocco among those who cannot circulate (see Graiouid, 2005). How could Ben Jelloun, writing in French, not attempt to write out Bowles' early engagement with a language of circulation – *darija* in circulation – by repeating his critique of three decades earlier? (see Orlando, 2009).

Circulation opens up new questions; it does not answer them. But to take a literary debate seriously within the changed context of the digital age, what Lee and LiPuma identified as a new stage of capitalism with a corresponding different relationship of individuals to social forms, means to ask these questions in a radically different way than we might have in 1972 when Ben Jelloun uttered similar words in an entirely different context. To take fiction seriously, fiction of the last four decades in particular, means not cutting off the contexts and the logics of circulation within which authors do and must operate.

NOTES

1 Early versions of portions of the first part of this chapter were presented at Rutgers University, UCLA, and Yale University. I am appreciative for invitations to speak and especially useful comments by Amina el-Annan, Ali Behdad, Wai Chee Dimock, Ann Fabian, Michael Warner, and members of the audiences. Dilip Gaonkar and Brian Larkin read a late draft of this chapter and offered helpful suggestions, for which I am appreciative.

2 For a compelling counterexample, see Kumar, ed. Kumar intends the title of his book to be a "provocation" (xvii) and a "heuristic device" (xviii) and several of the contributors to his collection open up the term and the literature of globalization in important ways.

3 Ali Behdad has argued that postcolonial studies arrived at discussion of the term with a notable and crippling belatedness (Behdad, 2005).

4 Dilip Gaonkar and I have recently argued that the waning of the "American Century" – itself both a logic and a context – should provoke a reconsideration of the field of American studies

which would attend to the "fragments" of America in global circulation, particularly "America" as agent of capitalist modernity. In so doing, we recast the dominant tradition of American studies scholarship as a "vernacular" tradition, and highlight "cosmopolitan" approaches that recognize and elicit the multilateralism or multilateral perspectives inherent throughout the history of the United States (B.T. Edwards and Gaonkar, 2010, see also B.T. Edwards, 2010a).

5 Spivak notes that postcolonial studies couldn't "resist mere appropriation by the dominant" and much of it was "monolingual, presentist, narcissistic, not practiced enough in close reading" (Spivak, 2003: pp. 11, 20, and 2009).

6 In a sensitive and insightful discussion of Spivak's *Critique* and the "poetic effect" of its construction, Brent Hayes Edwards suggests: "this binary betrays the accomplishment of the book, which undoes the very categories of analysis (philosophy, literature, history, culture) that supposedly structure it" (B.H. Edwards, 2003a: p. 27). He goes on to argue

that: "the form of *A Critique* tries, at least, both to 'concatenate arguments' *and* to 'figure the impossible'" (B.H. Edwards, 2003a: p. 35).

7 Though she also focuses predominantly on Francophone texts, Valérie Orlando employs a different rubric with respect to understanding Maghrebi literature by women that does not fit within the familiar terms of "postcolonial" literary studies and highlights the tensions between "nationalist" and "nomadic" in ways that seem relevant to the present argument (see Orlando, 2006, 2009).

8 Laila Lalami, a young Moroccan American writer (b. 1968), published her first book of fiction in the same year oriented around many of the same questions and locations. Although her novel is less accomplished as a literary work, it is intriguing that Lalami too makes significant reference to the late Paul Bowles in her Tangier scenes (Lalami, 2005). Lalami (and possibly Ben Jelloun, 2009) was surely influenced by an increased Moroccan attention to the plight of such refugees, which appeared frequently in the Moroccan (and European) press.

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"Worlds in Collision:" The Languages and Locations of World Literature

Charles Forsdick

The worlds of world literature are often worlds in collision. (Damrosch, 2003: p. 14)

The differences between languages are very important lines. […] We live in a society where heteroglossia is commonplace. It's a society where, if you seek to represent that society in a single language, no matter what that language is, you are in some profound way distorting the reality. (Kumar, 2007, p. 104)

The *Littérature-Monde* Manifesto: "Which Literature, Whose World?"

In March 2007, a text appeared in *Le Monde des Livres*, the weekly literary supplement to France's leading national daily newspaper, announcing the death of "Francophonia." Dismissing this category of literary production as one supported by the neo-colonial, centralizing apparatus of the French state, the manifesto announced the simultaneous emergence of "world-literature in French." The signatories of this statement attempted as such to reflect, or even engineer, a further shift in the cultural reconfigurations of the French-speaking world. They endeavored to move away from any Gallocentric imagination and projection of such a space in terms of political or diplomatic considerations (according to which intercultural communication and exchange are often grounded in asymmetrical situations of power), and to approach instead an understanding of Francophonia as a "world region held together by historical events, [by] the binding strength of joint common experiences and places of

remembrance" (Middel, 2003: p. 205). There was some surprise that the literary manifesto had been adopted as a vehicle for such a message. The importance of the form, particularly prominent in France during the period of Modernism, had progressively decreased during the twentieth century. Its provocative self-assurance as a form of intervention had appeared increasingly out of place in the more ambiguous and uncertain contexts of late twentieth-century postmodernism and postcolonialism (Caws, 2001). Emboldened, however, by the fact that five of the seven main French literary prizes in France had been awarded to "foreign-born writers," the forty-four signatories of the "Manifesto for a world-literature in French" resorted to this form of literary statement to explore the possibilities of a post-national literature written in French that would challenge the residual Gallocentrism (and accompanying center-periphery structures) they saw as implicit in terms such as "Francophone literature" (as well as in the institutional apparatus and assumptions whereby such a category was shored up).

Beyond its specific French-language context, the 2007 manifesto reflects a more general logic in contemporary approaches to literature that is summed up by Edward W. Said in his introduction to a 2001 collection of articles on "Globalizing literary study:"

> An increasing number of us feel that there is something basically unworkable or at least drastically changed about the traditional frameworks in which we study literature. (Said, 2001: p. 64)

The call for encouragement, recognition and consolidation of a "world-literature in French" is to be seen, therefore, as one of a series of often disjointed if loosely overlapping attempts to elaborate new "frameworks" of reception and interpretation of cultural artifacts in a period when globalization has not simply influenced the content of literary works, but has also shaped the way in which texts are commissioned, written, marketed, distributed, studied, read and more generally consumed (Gupta, 2009). It is important to stress, however, that the manifesto did not appear *ex nihilo*, and is closely associated with an earlier literary grouping in France, focused on but not restricted to travel writing, the aims of which were articulated in a 1992 collection of essays, *Pour une littérature voyageuse* [For a traveling literature]. Dominated by a guild of European Francophone authors (all male, and predominantly, but not exclusively, French) with a stake in questions of the literary representation of mobility in its various forms, this previous movement perpetuated certain assumptions about travel literature whilst catering for a manifest *fin-de-siècle* appetite for the travelogue in France (Forsdick, 2005). The "Etonnants voyageurs" [Astonishing travelers] festival was launched in Saint-Malo in 1989, and this annual event has become the core of a series of smaller associated gatherings in sites as varied as Bamako, Montana and Port-au-Prince. It is through the institution of the festival and its cross-cultural iterations that the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* movement has evolved towards a notion of "world-literature in French." The inaugural focus on travel writing was rapidly

expanded to gesture towards a more general *"littérature qui dise le monde"* [literature that recounts the world], a corpus produced not only in metropolitan France, but also by postcolonial authors and writers from other language traditions translated into French. The definition of such a neo-realist project was persistently hazy, and depended more on negative than positive categorization. The movement rejected, for instance, the legacies of structuralism and the New Novel, and claimed an ancestry linked more to the early twentieth-century (colonial) adventure story. The assemblage of authors grouped under the "traveling literature" banner were thus characterized by a marked eclecticism that ultimately betokened not so much a riotously radical literary diversity as a series of illogical incompatibilities disguised by a vague rhetoric of unity paired with more concrete marketing strategies.

In the light of such definitional uncertainty, the move in 2007 from a *"littérature qui dise le monde"* to a *littérature-monde* was a subtle yet strategic one, reflecting a shift of emphasis away from relatively abstract representational practices (i.e. a focus on the material world as an object of literary attention) towards a more culturally politicized engagement with the globalized frames, patterns and structures according to which an emergent "world-literature" operates and within which it is produced. Despite the criticism of the manifesto by official representatives of Francophonia (Diouf, 2007), its cultural politics remains ultimately ambiguous. In failing to acknowledge the flaws in the globalized systems of literary production, dissemination and validation (evident not least in the continued Gallocentrism, and even Paris-centrism, of the French-language literary marketplace), the manifesto risks not least perpetuating the asymmetries it purports to expose. This is evident in the foregrounding of literary prize culture, an area in which non-metropolitan authors have been highly visible in recent years, not least since the Goncourt Prize was awarded to Tahar Ben Jelloun in 1987 and Patrick Chamoiseau in 1992. Far from being a reflection of a new openness, it might even be argued that the prize system – and the editorial practices it supports – in fact reflects conservatism and centralization in French-language literary production and its domination by French publishers. At the same time, as Graham Huggan (2001) has demonstrated, the validation by a former colonial culture of postcolonial literature can reveal a "marketing of the margins" that conceals a postcolonial exoticism. A further blind spot of the manifesto relates, however, to language, and the potentially oxymoronic juxtaposition in its title of "world-literature" and "in French." French is a world language, the future status of which will undoubtedly be played out not in France but in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chaudenson, 2003). Yet given the vagaries of colonial expansion, cultural contact and language policy, the boundaries of the Francosphere are not those of the globe, and any world literature that restricts itself to a single language (even, perhaps especially, to English) will only ever be partial – and will risk operating according to a process of "worlding" (Gayatri Spivak's term to describe the universalization of the particular as a means of wielding [neo-]colonial power), ignoring accordingly what Edward W. Said dubbed the fundamental "wordiness" of the literary text.

The shift in *littérature-monde* towards monolingual emphases is striking. The imaginary library of *littérature voyageuse*, contained in a bibliography included in the movement's 1992 "manifesto," admitted works translated into French, and as a result included a range of authors, Anglophone, Hispanophone and speakers of other prominent languages, from Europe and the Americas (from Herta Müller to Wilfred Thesiger, from Werner Herzog to V.S. Naipaul). "World-literature in French" maintains language, however, (i.e. production in French) as one of the key criteria for inclusion. This does not necessarily restrict its corpus to texts written in the French-speaking world, and its signatories include prominent "allophones," such as Dai Sijie, whose migration towards French-language culture has been accompanied by the choices inherent in parallel processes of linguistic switching and is part of the creation of what has been called "overseas Chinese literature" (Leung, 2006). The privileging of "in French" – a tag that is significantly missing from the collection of essays published by the manifesto signatories in May 2007 (Le Bris and Rouaud, 2007) – nevertheless generates a partiality and selectivity that shapes in very specific ways the understanding of the "monde" in *littérature-monde* (Cavaillé, 2007). Large areas of the globe – where French is not widely spoken, or whose inhabitants have not elected to write in the language – are inevitably absent, most notably Australasia and South America. At the same time, there is an implicit reassertion of the dominance of French in the multi-lingual zones of the Francosphere, with production in French privileged over that in pre-colonial languages (e.g. Wolof in Senegal, or Tahitian in Polynesia) or over that in post-contact languages (such as the francophone Creoles of the Caribbean and Indian Ocean). In addition, key bi-cultural works such as those of Edwidge Danticat – written in English, yet belonging firmly through their subject matter and intertexts to the French-speaking world – are themselves denied access.

Translatability and the Question of Context

David Damrosch, interrogating the Anglophone tradition of "world literature," has posed the pertinent question: "Which literature, whose world?," abbreviating the two key areas of inquiry to be addressed by the student of this literary phenomenon: i.e. is it possible to understand "literature" globally, encompassing the unwieldy variety of discourses, genres and forms that such a label encompasses? and also, to what extent does the concept of world literature depend on, perpetuate or even construct a set of assumptions about the boundaries (geographical, conceptual and epistemological) of the world it either purports to represent or in which it is seen to circulate (Damrosch, 2003: p. 1)? In responding to Damrosch's question from the initial perspective of *littérature-monde*, this chapter focuses on two principal areas: on the one hand, it questions the universality or at the very least translatability of "world literature," *littérature-monde* and *Weltliteratur* as interrelated categories, considering the need to explore the historical, geographical and cultural specificity of these labels; on the other, it

studies the relationship of world literature and world languages, reflecting in particular on whether an adherence to monolingualism is an appropriate characteristic of such a purportedly global literary phenomenon.[1]

The *littérature-monde* manifesto locates itself firmly in a post-national space, challenging the idea that literature serves exclusively or even primarily as a vehicle for national identity and presenting a firm uncoupling of the literary text from its "exclusive pact with the nation" (Pour une *"littérature-monde"* en français [Toward a "World-Literature" in French] 2007: p. 56). As Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler have suggested, however, such post-nationalism may be seen as prematurely celebratory, serving the purposes of an exoticizing hybridity that erodes the firm, distinctive cultural identity essential to many post-independence, post-colonial nation-states for their cultural self-expression. The erosion of national boundaries in the sphere of literary production may serve a utopian project of encouraging transnational solidarity and exchange; yet at the same time, it can be deployed to disguise, in processes of cultural imperialism, the residual asymmetries embedded in neo-colonial structures of politics, economics and international power. The concept of world literature as a post-national literature is not, however, new. Almost two centuries before the publication of the *littérature-monde* manifesto, in January 1827, Goethe wrote along similar lines to his interlocutor, the young Johann Peter Eckermann: "National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature [*Weltliteratur*] is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (cited Damrosch, 2003: p. 1). Two decades later, in a very different text, Marx and Engels themselves adopted the notion of *Weltliteratur* and harnessed it to world revolutionary aspirations: "National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature" (cited Damrosch, 2003: p. xiii).

From the Communist Manifesto to the *littérature-monde* manifesto, there is a considerable historical, geographical and political distance. Yet, although the context of production of these interventions has changed so radically, there are inevitably continuities between the differing concepts of world literature with which they engage, not least in terms of the extent to which they interrogate the relationship between literature and the shifting frames within which it is produced and read. Given the specificity of the circumstances of their emergence, and the clear historical, cultural and linguistic singularities they reveal, it would however be dangerous to assume any clear synonymy between the three terms *Weltliteratur*, "world literature" and *littérature-monde*. As the extensive recent literature on world literature has revealed, terminological uncertainty persists, and taxonomic anxiety surrounding these designations seems increasingly to characterize the field. It is striking that the anthological rationale for many earlier volumes on world literature, the canonical understanding of which was implicit in the "great books" selected for inclusion in such collections, has been replaced by a sustained reflection on the institutional history of world literature, on the relationship between this concept and comparative literature, as well as on the assumptions and blind spots on which the concept is based.

It is therefore essential to stress that, far from being universal designations, the various terms used to describe world literature have emerged in specific niches, have often served different purposes, and have been ascribed to very different bodies of texts. This is as true of *Weltliteratur* in the 1820s as it is of *littérature-monde* in the first decade of the twenty-first century. World literature is not, therefore, a stable phenomenon, but might be seen instead as a "traveling" concept, itself translated between historical moments and thus to be understood in the contexts in which it is deployed. In considering the genealogy of "world literature," there are clear continuities and discontinuities, and associations are often subliminal or refracted. It is unlikely, for instance, that the authors of the *littérature-monde* manifesto aimed to engage directly with the cognate concepts listed above, either with the *Weltliteratur* of nineteenth-century Germany or the "world literature" of the contemporary Anglophone academy, not least because the term *littérature-monde* seems to allude to a set of other hyphenated terms relating to networks and systems to be discussed below. These concepts circle together, nevertheless, a central phenomenon, that of a literature detached from its local or national context of production and granted global pretensions. The parallel processes of their contextualization and comparison can yield insights into literary production or reception in globalized frames, whether those frames are seen as international, internationalist, transnational or post-national. The next section of the chapter explores the distinctiveness of these terms, whilst at the same time underlining their interconnections.

Weltliteratur, "World Literature," *Littérature-Monde*: Traveling Concepts

Although Goethe is customarily credited with coining the term *Weltliteratur* and developing the concept with which this is associated, it was originally elaborated in parallel by Herder several decades earlier in his own reflections on the boundaries and meanings of national cultures, and his associated exploration of the links between the universal and the individual (Menges, 2009). However, as Goethe himself emerged (especially in the eyes of his disciple Eckermann) as a world literary figure, with an interest in writers of transnational proportions but also seeking to develop such proportions himself, he sketched out – in the conversations with Eckermann cited above – his aspiration for "a common world literature transcending national limits" (cited Prendergast, 2008: p. 100). Goethe's first use of the expression in 1827 was in response to debates about the discussion of the French version of his play *Torquato Tasso*, and more particularly about the claim in certain parts of the French press that the translation was preferable to the German original (Pizer, 2007: p. 10). Exploring this process of coining, Christopher Prendergast situates Goethe's *Weltliteratur* firmly in the context in which it emerged, presenting it as "a kind of grand cosmopolitan gathering of (some of) the literatures of the world to engage in what an influential commentator on Goethe [Fritz Stich] calls 'an international conversation'" (Prendergast, 2008:

p. 100). Goethe's concept clearly reflects the changing circumstances of early nineteenth-century Europe, and in particular the sense of a globally connected modernity with strong cultural repercussions. For Prendergast, despite the usefulness of *Weltliteratur* as an initial point of reference, he sees the concept as firmly situated in cultural and historical terms, and tending towards the Eurocentric, conflating "Europe" and "the world" (Goethe refers to "European, in other words, World Literature") in ways that are surprising given Goethe's interest in non-European literatures (especially Persian and Chinese).

Goethe acknowledges, for instance, the importance and longevity of Chinese literature, but repeatedly returns to European literature (and its Greek and Roman foundations) as his key points of reference. What is equally striking about Goethe's concept is its emphasis on international, as opposed to transnational, connections. In the same way as comparative literature depends on national (or some other form of) distinctiveness to provide clear grounds for comparison, so the participants in the imaginary exchanges that constitute *Weltliteratur* themselves belong to clearly defined national literary traditions, with German culture retaining a privileged place in such processes. John Pizer underlines this notion in seeing Goethe as an advocate of "mutually fruitful dialogue among discrete national literatures," but there is nevertheless clear evidence of a simultaneous, and at the time highly innovative, gesturing towards a broader literary world to which the provincial writer, eschewing mediation through national literature, might turn (Pizer, 2007: p. 6). It is this element that has led David Damrosch to discover in Goethe premonitions of more recent phenomena, such as strategic advantage of the "minor," "peripheral" and often "postcolonial" writer, freed to a greater or lesser extent from the weight of inherited tradition and able to engage more inventively with a range of literary references. At the same time, there is an anxiety about emerging forms of transnational literary production, primarily popular, that pose a clear challenge to the aesthetic tradition that Goethe himself represents. Developing his work from such foundations, Damrosch is eager, for example, to distinguish between a dynamic, diverse and even unstable notion of world literature and what may be seen as a borderless, bland, leveled "global literature," with the latter often dismissed in its contemporary manifestations as the "airport novel" (Damrosch, 2003: p. 25).

In the light of this changed context, and the contemporary processes of globalization with which it is closely associated, "world literature" as it is currently formulated and studied in the Anglophone academy is a distinctive phenomenon:

> To celebrate global literature today as a new and expanded form of Goethe's *Weltliteratur* ignores the fact that literature as a medium of cultural production no longer occupies the privileged place it once held in Goethe's day. (Huyssen, 2005: p. 10)

The *Weltliteratur* Goethe describes nevertheless provides a clear model for the "world literature" currently popular in Anglophone academia. There are indeed reasons to argue that this earlier concept – and the perceived erosion of national

barriers on which it was based – were in fact prematurely celebratory given the rise of nationalism that dominated later nineteenth-century Europe. Indeed, unlike Marx and Engels, for whom world literature seemed to be part of a soon to be realized internationalist project, Goethe presented *Weltliteratur* as an aspiration or ideal. The tension inherent in these divergent understandings persists, and there are clear discrepancies between approaches that present world literature as an historically evolving literary phenomenon that already exists, as a set of reading practices whose object will only ever be imagined or virtual, or as a transnational ideal that will eventually deliver some form of utopian library.

   In the Anglophone academy, the recent re-emergence of "world literature" is closely associated with two critical projects, postcolonial studies and comparative literature, the relationship between which has been at best ambiguous and at worst antagonistic. Although postcolonialism in fact has overtly comparatist roots, these have only rarely been acknowledged (Forsdick, 2001), and the potential of an inclusively conceived world literature to affect a triangulation between the two terms is yet to be fully realized. Although now distant from the context of Herder and Goethe, contemporary debates about world literature in the Anglophone academy have tended instead – as the discussion in the previous paragraph makes clear – to reference their antecedents in nineteenth-century Europe, not least because contemporary developments in technology, national identity and the circulation of culture and literature constitute in many ways a further development of the context on which Goethe based his own reflections. This is evident in a key text such as David Damrosch's *What is World Literature?*, the opening chapter of which ("Goethe Coins a Phrase") focuses closely on the genealogy of the term and its conceptual antecedents. Damrosch's title reflects the interrogative nature of his project as he endeavors to navigate the semantic complexities of the key term of his title, complexities that were perhaps first addressed directly by René Wellek who – in the 1949 *Theory of Literature*, co-authored with Austin Warren – expressed clear dissatisfaction with the polysemic instability of the term "world literature," already used variously to designate an emerging, globalized literary corpus, the totality of world literary production, or, as a specific subset of that all-embracing version, "the great treasure-house of the classics, such as Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Goethe, whose reputation has spread all over the world and has lasted a considerable time" (Wellek and Warren, 1949: p. 49).

   John Pizer presents an additional, fourth meaning, to refer to world literature as a specific academic discipline. In the Anglophone context, world literature has its own set of critical and pedagogical precedents, emerging in its modern form after the end of the Second World War as returning troops enrolling for degree programs sought greater knowledge about the cultures they had encountered whilst overseas (Pizer, 2007: p. 7). The definition of world literature – as well as the body of texts it represents – has, however, remained both uncertain and unstable, with regular controversies emerging around the content of anthologies (Lawall, 2009), and an increasing unease with the very concept itself, associated by Gayatri Spivak with "American pedagogical imperialism, monolingualism and authoritarianism" (Pizer, 2007: p. 8). As such

analyses suggest, there is a clear risk that a globalized literary studies might replicate earlier forms of (cultural) imperialism, and other scholars have as a result advocated a more politically committed approach to the economics of what Amitava Kumar (2001) provocatively dubs "world bank literature."

Two key elements in these debates remain language and power. John Docker, in one of the early statements of the postcolonialization of English literary studies, claimed that: "The challenge of post-colonial literature is that by exposing and attacking anglocentric assumptions directly it can replace 'English literature' with 'world literature in English'" (Docker, 1978: p. 30). In the French-speaking world, such replacement – actively promoted by the "world-literature in French" manifesto – will remain little more than an aspiration as long as Paris retains its hegemony as the center of the francophone publishing world (Combe, 2010: p. 244). Montreal has achieved a certain autonomy in the Francophone publishing industry, without of course rivaling Paris, but this is not the case with other potential centers such as Brussels or Geneva. In the now nearly four decades since Docker's claim, however, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Dublin, New Delhi and a number of other capitals have continued to expand their influence in Anglophone publishing, making "world literature in English" a more easily imaginable, and for some actually existing, phenomenon, undeniably international but at the same time reflected in competing residual national systems of cultural production and consumption. Responding in part to this context, David Damrosch does not focus on the vagaries of canon-construction and the often disabling inclusions and exclusions on which this depends; instead, he offers an enabling definition of world literature as a system, as "a mode of circulation and reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike" (Damrosch, 2003: p. 5). For Damrosch, it is the circulation of works "beyond their culture of origin" that is important, and he does not distinguish at any length between translation and dissemination in the original language. His focus is thus on the ways texts travel, and on the ways in which such traveling transforms them. Consequently, his concept is posited not so much on the production in English that a category such as "world literature *in English*" assumes, as on an openness to translation into English. Returning to his key question of scope, "whose world?," Damrosch thus refuses the potential exclusions of monolingualism, but inevitably poses the questions of selective inclusion inherent in the political and economic questions of translation, as well as in more philosophical issues of translatability.

By insisting on production "in French," *littérature-monde* itself reveals a different and complex maneuver of simultaneous inclusion (of a wider French-speaking world) and exclusion (of literary production outside that particular language). In this way, imagining and defining "world-literature in French" may be seen clearly as a "world-making activity" (Cheah, 2008), an activity whose totalizing and utopian ambitions are reflected in the fact that *littérature-monde*, like the "Francophonia" it purports to replace, is perceived as decidedly singular (Combe, 2010: p. 232). At the same time, whereas Damrosch and other Anglophone scholars of world literature are open to an

understanding of the concept that at least accepts and adapts meanings of the terms from outside the English-speaking world, the genealogy of "world-literature in French" is not made explicit in the manifesto in which the term is foregrounded, and depends on some careful contextualization that reveals it as a predominantly francophone phenomenon. In line with the stance of anti-intellectualism that characterizes their public positioning, Michel Le Bris and his collaborators do not appear – as has already been suggested – to have engaged for instance with academic debates regarding world literature. As a result, Pascale Casanova's "world republic of letters" seems to have had a more significant impact on the other side of the Atlantic than in France itself, not least perhaps because the residual patterns of power identified by such a concept sit uncomfortably with apolitical blind spots of a *littérature-monde* that privileges creativity to the detriment of any consideration of production and circulation.

There are similarities, however, in these differing conceptions of world literature, not least in the emphasis on systems. For whereas *littérature-monde* might appear to proceed according to strategies of exclusion and inclusion, rejecting what are presented as certain forms of literary naval-gazing and embracing the production of the manifesto's signatories and their associates, there is nevertheless a clear structural rationale underpinning the project. The hyphen in *littérature-monde* suggests an allusion to the alternative globalization described by Edouard Glissant in his concept of the "Tout-monde" (Combe, 2010), and it is thus possible to perceive a shift at the heart of the French concept that presents a potential further stage at least in Prendergast's challenge to "enter, delimit and define the object of study known as world literature" (Prendergast, 2001: p. 102). The hyphen even suggests a more general connection to world-systems theory, as developed by scholars such as Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein (Apter, 2009; Beecroft, 2008), that evokes the ways in which *littérature-monde* might be seen to include the bases of its own critique and, by alluding to structures of production, dissemination and reception, suggest the ways in which "[p]eripheral production is only of value once recognized by the center" (Beecroft, 2008: p. 89). By drawing on a Glissantian notion of systemic interconnectedness, *littérature-monde* nevertheless draws together the literary production of former colonial center and former colonial periphery into a single if uneven field, challenging ghettoization of non-metropolitan literatures and undermining claims of asymmetry or binarism seen in a certain critique of the field:

> "World literature" is a quaint and problematic term because it represents not so much the "world," as a particular part of it: in effect, it reiterates the binary of the West and rest. (Menon, 2010: p. 224–25)

At the same time, however, whereas such an intellectual genealogy might be thought to encourage careful historicization, the concept of *littérature-monde* is marked by its apparent presentism, a characteristic it might be seen to share with *Weltliteratur* in that concept's initial, early nineteenth-century manifestations in Goethe and Marx. Unlike "world literature" associated with Damrosch and others, the concept draws

almost exclusively on contemporary literary examples and responds to a contemporary context, with the result that any sense of a genealogy – relating it not least to earlier "francophone" texts from former French colonial cultures – is absent (Sall and Kesteloot, 2007). The manifesto even gives the impression that *littérature-monde* emerged *ex nihilo* from late twentieth-century literary movements, especially those associated with travel writing, and it is a project still currently under development. The risk of seeing globalization in such a way as exclusively postmodern is that connections of current patterns of cultural interconnection with earlier historical processes are eclipsed. As Roland Robertson (1992) makes clear, actively countering theorists who see the phenomenon as exclusively modernist, globalization may be seen to predate modernity, to have evolved through several stages, and to have reached at the present a particular moment of uncertainty. Paul Jay sums up the implications of such an approach for students of world literature:

> Globalization can certainly help us map the future of literary studies, but it also provides an important way to rethink our approach to the study of literature across a range of historical periods. (Jay, 2001: p. 36)

World Literature, Language and Globalization: A Concept "at Once Realized and Destroyed?"

The apparent presentism of *littérature-monde* – or, at the very least, its failure to acknowledge precedents and earlier manifestations in the French-speaking world – is potentially illuminated by Erich Auerbach's post-war reflections on world literature in "Philology and *Weltliteratur*," an essay in which the issue of language, multilingualism and the entropic levelling of cultural diversity in the later twentieth century play a key role. Auerbach's 1952 essay is perhaps best known in its translation by Marie and Edward Said, which appeared in the *Centennial Review* in 1969. In it, the author explores the fortunes of Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* in the context of a world "growing smaller and losing its diversity" (Auerbach, 1969: p. 2). Setting out the implications for literature of a process of cultural standardization (and in particular the drift towards English as a *lingua franca*), Auerbach claims:

> Man will have to accustom himself to existence in a standardized world, to a single literary culture, only a few literary languages, and perhaps even a single literary language. And herewith the notion of *Weltliteratur* would be at once realized and destroyed. (Auerbach, 1969: p. 3)

This response is a characteristically humanist one, dependent on a Goethean understanding of his subject matter that – in Said's introductory terms – is seen to "transcend national literatures without, at the same time, destroying their individualities" (Said, 2001: p. 1). A number of scholars (Bové, 1986; Lindenberger, 2004) have

explored the legacies of such an approach in the work of Said himself, not least the way in which the *Ansatzpunkt* proposed by Auerbach serves as a detail or hook that allows the contemporary critic, overwhelmed with discourses and objects of knowledge, to find a way to study the literary text. Equally striking, however, is Auerbach's premise that globalization – and the linguistic standardization seen to accompany this – constitutes at once the realization and potential destruction of world literature.

This observation – in the context of the immediate aftermath of World War II in which it was made – does not emerge from a postcolonial sensitivity to cultural imperialism and the marginalization of "minority" (although often national) languages. Dependent on a traditional comparatist commitment to multilingualism, it nevertheless highlights the tendency that has emerged more recently in discussions of world literature towards various forms of monolingualism. What all three inter-related case studies in terminologicial enquiry foreground is the peripheral attention often paid to language in discussions of world literature. Although linguistic assumptions are implicit in *Weltliteratur* and "World Literature," they become explicit, however, in other recent developments such as *littérature-monde en français* and "world literature in English," the latter of which serves as an often ambiguous category deployed to badge traditional comparative literature programs or to market disparately related publications. At issue here is the ambivalent preposition "in," whose flexibility covers both questions of production and translation, i.e. texts originally written in French or English, or those that have migrated into those languages through translation. In the former case, the terminology of "world literature in …" may betoken an unease with the language of postcolonialism, yet reflect at the same time an attempt to provincialize or relativize the former colonial centers of production (France and Britain) in order to posit a wider Francosphere or Anglosphere as the globalized sites of literary production. With the historical emergence of North American, Australasian, Indian and Caribbean literatures in English, such an expansion is evident, and the process has been accompanied in certain cases – as has been suggested above – by a proliferation of centers of production and a rebalancing of spheres of influence and power.

There are thus two models of a monolingual world literature, the first of which is nevertheless open, through translation, to works from other language traditions (with scholars such as David Damrosch highlighting what is gained through translation), the second of which involves the linguistic exclusivity inherent in *littérature-monde*. It is often assumed that such monolingualism will inevitably be Anglophone:

> The risk of world literature becoming world literature in English could be seen as immanent, particularly in those educational systems in which anthologies play a big role, and American and English publishers dominate the textbook market. The dominance of English could be seen as a threat to the literary experience and the diversity of language. Something is changed, and often lost, when read in translation. Yet, the range

of literatures also needs a common language in order to be truly diverse when it comes to experiencing literature that otherwise would be available only to specialists, since only few, if any, master more than a handful of languages. (Thomsen, 2008: p. 10)

Such an approach articulates the balance between the extremes of idealism and realism (or even cynicism), i.e. between, on the one hand, an understanding of world literature that permits linguistic diversity and unfettered exchange, and on the other, the reality of the literary marketplace, in terms of what is translated, purchased and taught.

Selection based on translation risks submitting a literary category, such as "world literature," to primarily economic and ideological concerns. Although the culture of translation in countries without major world languages tends to be varied and relatively rich, it is evident that major publishers in the United States will only produce translations of works from languages other than English if they fulfill a series of criteria linked to marketability, acceptability to a domestic readership, and even adherence to a perception of the culture in question that reflects what Graham Huggan dubs the "postcolonial exotic." The persistence of multilingual conceptions of world literature are a reminder of the importance of Modern Languages as a distinctive field and of reading in the original as an ideal of Comparative Literature. The fact that students of literature are often at best bi- or tri-lingual nevertheless underlines the importance of translation – and of a critical translation studies that is ready to critique the "general tendency, both in teaching and publications, to elide the status of translated texts as translated, to treat them as texts originally written in the translating language" (Venuti, 1998: p. 89). The question of translation and language remains unresolved in, for instance, Jonathan Culler's "Comparative Literature, at Last," where the critic claims that the progressive transformation in the Anglophone world of "national literature departments" into "departments of national cultural studies" will leave the way open for literatures in languages other than English to be studied under the aegis of comparative literature (Culler, 2006: p. 240). "As opposed to the other departments of the humanities," Culler continues, "comparative literature would have as its central responsibility the study of literature, which could be approached in the most diverse ways" (Culler 2006: p. 241). With his emphasis on a general and even alinguistic poetics, the question of language specificity appears to be largely ignored (Harrison, 2007).

The re-emergence of world literature as a credible category of inquiry has implications, therefore, for reading and translation practices, whether these are generalist or specialist, within or outside the academy. Returning to the opening focus – through Said's comments – on the inadequacy of the contemporary frames within which we approach literature, this chapter concludes with a consideration of the evolving "aesthetic ideology of literary studies, one that can be traced to the linkage among nation, race and literature forged in nineteenth-century Europe," that is an approach persistently informed by a "broadly nationalist ideal" (Jay, 2001: p. 32–3). World literature – along with cognate projects such as postcolonialism – is one of a series of phenomena

that have both challenged and provincialized the old, once dominant paradigms of nation-states as part of a wider response to the pressures, challenges and opportunities of globalization. The aim in this chapter has been to investigate the complex construction of world literature, both as a potentially critical category and as reflection of actual processes of creation and reception. Central to its analysis has been the idea that to select a corpus of texts and to federate their diversity under the umbrella of "world literature" is – to borrow again the terms of Pheng Cheah – a "world-making activity." World literature depends on a series of variables, primarily cultural ("which literature?") and geographical (i.e. "whose world?"). In foregrounding publication and print dissemination (and accordingly downgrading orature and other forms transmitted by non-textual means), it is possible that certain understandings of world literature are always already selectively ethnocentric. This chapter has sought to highlight a further assumption or blind spot which readers and advocates of world literature often appear deliberately or unwittingly to underplay, that of language. Whether world literature is a recuperative, even colonizing, category that – through the mechanisms of translation – gathers eclectic literary production into a monolingual glory hole, or whether – as in the recent French case – it is a deliberately linguistically defined project endeavoring to engineer new connections between the literary production of a globalized language zone, the role of language would appear to be paramount.

Nirmala Menon has described the way in which the postcolonial canon might be "rerouted" through linguistic remapping, by which she means a recasting of the postcolonial literary field as a multilingual one moving beyond the Anglophone and Francophone to engage with a much wider range of languages. In an earlier intervention in the postcolonial field, Harish Trivedi had similarly criticized an area of study that, in his terms, had "ears only for English," pithy shorthand for an acknowledgement that, although often ignored, the linguistic is one of the key indicators of the assumptions, inclusions and exclusions of the field (Trivedi, 1999: p. 272). Menon continues:

> Postcolonial studies should actually identify not just French or English but a host of other active languages that experience the postcolonial condition in these places. That is really the point here. Postcolonial spaces are vast and multilingual, and no single language – whether English or French – can by itself be representative of the diversity of the experiences and literary forms that emerge from these places. There is a need to decentralize the different representations in order to be able to imagine the much more linguistically varied spaces in their *lived* experience. (Menon, 2010: p. 224)

Despite John Docker's indication in the 1970s of the possible links between world literature and postcolonial literary production, the two areas remain more contiguous than overlapping. More so than Anglophone understandings of the term, *littérature-monde* is nevertheless an attempt to integrate postcolonial and metropolitan literatures in French into a single analytical field. Although such a project is to be welcomed, not least for the decolonization of the field of literary production that it potentially

enables, it is the responsibility of the critic to explore the blind spots the concept contains. These relate in part to the questions of genealogy, but also to those of the sociology of literature explored above. In Gupta's terms:

> The relationship between globalization and literature is arguably most immediately to be discerned not in terms of what is available *inside* literature and *within* literary studies but in terms of the manner in which globalized markets and industries act *upon* and from *outside* literature and literary studies. (Gupta, 2009: p. 170)

The politics and practices of language use are central to these processes of shaping and determining the production and reception of world literature, and *littérature-monde* itself necessitates active reflection on questions of language – and specifically of monolingualism and the risks of viewing globalized literary production within a series of cross-cultural yet monolingual frames. Reflecting on the globalization of literary studies, Paul Jay comments:

> We will not have got anywhere if we end up reconstructing the paradigm of English as the privileged center of a comparative approach to literary studies. (Jay, 2001: p. 40).

The lesson of *Weltliteratur* and *littérature-monde* is that we risk being similarly stranded should other languages and cultures serve – unwittingly or not – as the "privileged center" of a model of world literature that offers a multi-cultural or transnational identity, but still retains a stubbornly monolingual core. The rerouting of postcolonial literary study through linguistic remapping that Menon promotes has implications for the study of world literature itself. The solution to the dilemmas explored in this chapter lies in part in the pursuit of a genuinely "transcultural literary history" (Pettersson, 2008) and in the associated development of critical reading practices willing to engage with a persistently multilingual world – a world in which different languages continue, perhaps increasingly so despite recurrent fears of standardization articulated by critics such as Auerbach, to cohabit and co-exist.

NOTES

1 I use world literature (without quotation marks) to relate to the generic phenomenon of a literature that transcends, ignores or erodes national boundaries to achieve some form of global dimension. *Weltliteratur*, "world literature" (with quotation marks) and *littérature-monde* are employed to designate particular manifestations of such a phenomenon in the national or language-specific contexts that these terms imply.

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The Trouble with World Literature

Graham Huggan

Introduction

"World Literature does not exist," says Daniel Dooghan, in an early twenty-first century echo of Salman Rushdie's notorious late-twentieth-century dismissal of Commonwealth Literature; or rather, it "would not exist were it not for the efforts of Western critics and publishers promoting semi-foreign texts" (Dooghan, 2008: p. 9). Certainly, World Literature, like Commonwealth Literature before it, represents something of an easy target: it is global in ambition, but conspicuously excludes the majority of the world's readers; it provides a stimulating encounter with cultural difference, but one all too readily translated into familiar terms; and it underestimates, almost to the point of forgetting, the materiality of the literary among other forms of cultural production, celebrating cosmopolitan forms of consciousness without necessarily acknowledging the global inequalities that drive them – and that drive the predominantly liberal-humanist project of World Literature itself. But if all this is true – and I think it is – it bears asking why World Literature has acquired the importance it has, particularly over the last decade and especially if by no means exclusively in the United States. There are several different reasons for this, and an uncovering of these reasons is part of the rationale informing this chapter. In what follows, I want to ask (not that these questions haven't been asked before) some fundamental questions about World Literature. What *is* World Literature and who gets to decide what it is; what are the procedures for its study; and *where* is it: is it to be understood first and foremost as a North American liberal-arts phenomenon, or should

it rather be seen as a broad-based product of the very globalizing forces it seeks, consciously or unconsciously, to suppress?

The two main arguments I want to advance here are, first and unexceptionably, that debates around *World* Literature are often simultaneously debates around the future of *Comparative* Literature; and, second and more contentiously, that World Literature institutionally supports what it claims ideologically to oppose or, to put it still more bluntly, that it represents the cultural *realpolitik* of globalization masquerading as either a "worldly" cosmopolitanism of reading (Damrosch, 2003) or a transnational study of form (Moretti, 2000). In both cases, what is at stake is "the old/new question of comparison in literary studies" (Chow, 2004): a question that is "old" in so far as comparative projects, at least since the Enlightenment, have nearly always been about the need to broaden *national* horizons – have tended to practice one or other form of anti-nationalism – and "new" in so far as the current, more-or-less integrated "planetary system" (Moretti, 2000) seems to require comparative categories and methods of analysis that are capable of confronting a transnational web of literary relations that takes in more languages and literatures than ever before.

The question, whether framed as "old" or "new," is both formal and ideological, positing Comparative Literature as "a basis for the politics of cosmopolitan democratic individualism" (During, 2004: p. 314) and/or a way of promoting broad-based "cultural citizenship in [an increasingly] globalized world" (Pratt, 1995: p. 62). World Literature, as I hope to show, tests the limits of this faith, which is related if not reducible to the tenets of a European-based liberal humanism the ideological lineage of which may be traced more recently to post-war "exilic consciousness" and the minoritarian sympathies of postcolonial thought (Apter, 2004). World Literature, however – as I also hope to show – represents as much a departure from as a continuation of earlier models of Comparative Literature, a departure seen most visibly in its self-serving commitment to the translatability of cultures and its tacit acceptance of "the imperialism of English [and] the diminishment of language-based criticism in favor of a monolingual master scheme" (Arac, 2002: p. 44). As should already be clear, I don't think World Literature is a step in the right direction for Comparative Literature in a global era defined as much by the political fragmentation as the economic integration of the planet; nor do I feel that it succeeds in reconciling the unifying cultural aspirations of "worldliness" (Said, 1991) with the more obviously divisive politico-economic realities of globalization *per se*. Thus, while at one level it is certainly a valid attempt to address what Mary Louise Pratt calls the "three historical processes that are [currently] transforming the way literature and culture are conceived and studied in the academy: globalization, democratization, and decolonization" (Pratt, 1995: p. 59), the problem – and this is only part of the "trouble" with World Literature – is that it is too much a *symptom* of the often profoundly anti-democratic and neo-imperialist tendencies within globalization that an appropriately "global" Comparative Literature should make it its business to contest.

What is World Literature?

Lively debates over the status and function of World Literature have been of a piece with the relatively short institutional history of the discipline, with several key disputants quickly identifying themselves in the relevant journals: Prendergast versus Casanova (*New Left Review*); Arac versus Moretti (*New Left Review*); During versus Chow (*ELH*). Little consensus emerges in these debates other than that World Literature is a "problem:" as Moretti puts it, "world literature is not an object, it's a *problem*, and a problem that asks for a new critical method" (Moretti, 2000: p. 55; emphasis his). However, little agreement has been reached either over method, with Moretti's ambitious pitch for "distant reading" probably representing the most eye-catching contribution to date. I will have more to say on method later, but for now let me try to shed more light on possible definitions of World Literature (since there seems little point in debating how to "*do*" World Literature until there is at least some level of clarification on what World Literature *is*). Perhaps the most concerted effort so far to define World Literature has been that of the Comparative Literature scholar David Damrosch, who in a 2003 monograph (*What is World Literature?*) sets out a coherent if by no means uncontestable program for World Literature as:

> (i) "less a set of works than a network" in which literature "circulate[s] beyond [its] culture of origin, either in [its original language] or in translation;" and (ii) a particular way of reading literature informed by "worldly" and/or cosmopolitan principles and directly or indirectly opposed to nation-based approaches to the comparative study of literary texts. (Damrosch, 2003: p. 4).

Damrosch is well aware of the perils of a program that is always likely to encourage one or other form of literary tourism and can only ever be selectively global; as he says, with an ironic nod to his own literary-historical examples:

> If the scope of World Literature now extends from Akkadian epics to Aztec incantations, the question of what is World Literature could almost be put in opposite terms: what *isn't* World Literature? A category from which nothing could be excluded is essentially useless. (Damrosch, 2003: p. 110; emphasis his)

Damrosch's provisional answer is that World Literature is precisely not "all the literatures in the world," nor is it even necessarily global; rather, it is a mode of *reading* literature that involves a critically detached but socially responsible engagement with worlds that exist beyond our own time and place (Damrosch, 2003: p. 281). The key word here, as throughout Damrosch's work, is "world," by which he seems to understand less any particular society or culture than a cognitive willingness to engage with difference. As a conduit for engagement with other realms of understanding and experience that are different from our own, World Literature exists on

[…] two planes at once: present in our world, it also brings us into a world very differ-
ent from ours and its particular power comes from our doubled experiences of both
registers together. (Damrosch, 2003: p. 164)

This vision of intersecting worlds is neither historical nor anthropological; rather, it
is an effect of the "worldliness" of the *critic*, whose decisions on what counts or not as
World Literature are motivated by a desire to promote a particular worldview inspired
by the socially and culturally educative value of literary texts.

   This worldview owes much to Edward Said, whose 1983 definition of the "worldly"
critic probably comes closer in spirit to Damrosch's project than anything Damrosch
says himself. "Criticism is worldly and in the world," Said says, "as long as it opposes
monocentrism, a concept I understand as working in conjunction with ethnocentrism,
which licenses a culture to cloak itself in the particular authority of certain values
over others" (Said, 1991: p. 53). Saidian "worldliness" is best understood as a loose
set of attitudes rather than a recognizable body of critical/theoretical practices – atti-
tudes informed by anti-authoritarian principles, a fundamental belief in the social
responsibility of the intellectual, and a commitment to the horizon-broadening capac-
ity of literary and other cultural texts. Like cosmopolitanism, "worldliness" is defined
by openness to the world and the civic responsibility that comes with it but, to a
greater extent than cosmopolitanism, it is also characterized by vigilance to "the reali-
ties of power and authority […] that make texts possible and deliver them to their
readers:" a combination of openness and vigilance that Said calls "critical conscious-
ness," and which he then uses to distinguish his critical project from aesthetic phi-
losophies attracted to the idea of "pure textuality" and/or the autonomy of the literary
text (Said, 1991: pp. 4–5).

   World Literature, in this Saidian context, assumes the humanistic mantle of a
Comparative Literature that it seeks both to redirect and to re-invigorate through
sweeping, if also individually detailed, understandings of "transculturated" literary
work[1]. As Damrosch puts it, World Literature aims to chart:

   The intertwined shifts of language, era, region, religion, social status, and literary
   context that a [literary] work can incur as it moves from its point of origin out into a
   new cultural sphere. (Damrosch, 2003: p. 34)

   The view that "works of World Literature take on a new life as they move into the
world at large" (Damrosch, 2003: p. 24) is distinctly Saidian, as is Damrosch's default
preference for canonical literature, despite his assertion to the contrary that World
Literature is a mode "available to established classics and new discoveries alike"
(Damrosch, 2003: p. 5). However, Damrosch is notably less attentive than Said to the
power differentials involved in the circulation of literary texts within a globalized
system skewed consciously or unconsciously towards the cultural biases of the West.
It is here that an alternative model of World Literature, associated first and foremost
with the work of the literary theorist and historian Franco Moretti, comes in useful,

which is oriented less towards a *conversational* than a *competitive* paradigm for the comparative analysis of literary texts.

Damrosch's model of World Literature might be critically described as a form of applied transnational humanism that lessens the very cultural differences it insists upon by assimilating them into a loosely defined world system that assumes their cultural translatability to and for the West. Moretti aims to get around this problem, first, by identifying World Literature *as* a problem, and, second, by "scientifically" analyzing the disparities within a literary world system that is simultaneously "one and unequal" with a readily identifiable periphery and an equally recognizable core (Moretti, 2000: pp. 55–6). Drawing on the world-systems theory of Wallerstein and others, Moretti favors an economistic approach that looks for explanatory patterns of "literary evolution" within an overarching context of global capitalism in which what he mysteriously calls the "destiny of cultures of the periphery" is inevitably interrupted, sometimes irreversibly altered, by "cultures of the core" (Moretti, 2000: p. 56).

Moretti no more believes than Damrosch that World Literature can be reduced to a set of texts, but he goes further than Damrosch in suggesting that the world-historical system these texts belong to is more important than the texts themselves. Hence his radical insistence on dispensing with what remains the staple of literary criticism – close reading – and his commitment instead to a "second-hand" form of literary history that avoids direct textual analysis and is defined, rather, by its unapologetic *distance* from the text (Moretti, 2000: p. 57). "Distant reading," as Moretti sees it, is nothing other than a new method for the comparative analysis of literature within an unevenly developed world system, and its progeny, World Literature, nothing other than a "study of the struggle for symbolic hegemony across the world" (Moretti, 2000: p. 64). However, for all the claim to newness, "distant reading" remains ideologically wedded to the anti-nationalistic imperatives of a dominant (Euro-American) model of Comparative Literature, which continues to represent a "thorn in the side [of] national literatures" (Moretti, 2000: p. 68); although quite why national literatures must be seen as simultaneously national*istic* – almost a default mode of Comparative Literature – is a question the discipline still needs to ask itself: as if there were something inherently progressive about the transcendence of national boundaries, and as if the transnational spirit the discipline invokes were intrinsically opposed to the imperialist nationalisms from which, in the most popular version of its own institutional history, it emerged (Chow, 2004). What *is* progressive about Moretti's model of World Literature is another kind of opposition: to what Rey Chow calls the historical myth of "peaceful co-existence" that underwrites comparative criticism, and that is grounded in the "possibility of peer-like equality and mutuality of those compared" (Chow, 2004: p. 290). Not even Damrosch's "conversational" approach subscribes to this myth – which may itself be historically ungrounded – while Moretti's "competitive" model laughs off such reprehensibly utopian thinking, which he also sees as lying behind the unhistoricized forms of Eurocentric universalism from which the "new" Comparative Literature

needs implicitly to deliver itself, and the unconsidered methods of comparison-as-equivalence it seeks explicitly to debunk. However, World Literature has considerable methodological problems of its own, not least those related to its own internally differentiated understandings of the value of comparison; and it is to these problems, which are as much ideological as methodological, that I turn next.

"Doing" World Literature

For contemporary innovators such as Moretti, there is no real need to define World Literature before engaging in its practice, since it is the practice that effectively makes the literature; or, to put it more accurately, World Literature is one name among others for a theory of comparative analysis that reflects on the (im)possibilities of its own practice, one that simultaneously confronts "the expansion of the knowable produced by the emergence of a [...] world-spanning literature" and recognizes the impossibility of either "knowing everything" or "reading enough" (Arac, 2002: pp. 41–2). Moretti's answer to this dilemma is to turn to *science*, more specifically the science of comparative morphology, which lies at the heart of his part cultural-historical, part literary-sociological approach. Moretti's ambition, broadly conceived, is to uncover the laws of "literary evolution" that underlie the relationship between local forms and global markets – laws as much intuited as instantiated through a combination of empirical data and imaginative wager that justifies a series of historical experiments in transcultural literary form (Moretti, 2000: pp. 55, 61–2).

Moretti is refreshingly honest about the "dialogue between fact and fancy" he is undertaking, and about the "structural compromise" his experiments – mostly in the spatial history of the novel – uncover between local socio-cultural realities and Western literary forms (Moretti, 2000: p. 62). There are numerous problems, however, that are thinly disguised – or even produced – by Moretti's particular brand of sociological formalism. The biggest problem – brilliantly analyzed by Christopher Prendergast in a detailed response to Moretti's work – is that it makes a rhetorical appeal to scientific method but without committing itself to scientific principles. This leads Moretti, for example, to assume a figural (not literal) equivalence between the laws of nature and the laws of culture, which, based on the principle of extended analogy, mistakes "analogical reasoning on the base of scientific terms [for] scientific reasoning itself" (Prendergast, 2004: p. 59). As Prendergast argues;

> [Moretti's] application of evolutionary concepts to literary history is not meant *literally*; literature is not a biological organism. Yet the naivety of the supposition carries an equally obvious lesson: if not meant literally, if you strip from the evolutionary paradigm its at once defining and delimiting genetic processes, then all you are left with is the husk of an analogy. It is a case of saying that X is "like" Y. This is exactly what Moretti says. (Prendergast, 2004: p. 59)

What this means is that Moretti's imaginative twinning of World Literature and comparative morphology always risks lapsing into a form of social Darwinism which, as history has repeatedly shown us, is as dangerous in application as it is unfaithful to the evolutionary teachings of Darwin himself. Prendergast again:

> Literary markets are of course facts on the ground [...] and Moretti has done more than most to analyse their workings. The trouble, however, lies elsewhere. Philosophers of the market like to think of it as a cognate of Nature. I cannot recall a single "Marxist" who does so. The equation of market and nature under the aegis of evolutionary biology is exactly the move of social Darwinism. Clearly, there is a politics in this. It is a version of victors' history. A more imaginative grip on counterfactual thinking is thereby fore-closed. (Prendergast, 2004: p. 61)

Prendergast also sees a "naturalized version of winners' history" (Prendergast, 2004: p. 62) in the work of the French sociologist Pascale Casanova, best known for her controversial 1999 study of the international literary system, *La République mondiale des lettres* (The World Republic of Letters). Casanova's work, like Moretti's (from which it differs in other respects), looks to sketch the historical conditions that have given rise to a convergence between World Literature and a world market conditions, characterized by relations of intense competition, in which the continuing battle over literary value is still largely controlled via the metropolitan centers of the West. While some evidence is given for these relations, few counter-examples are provided, and the importance of other literary markets – and, for that matter, literary relations other than those of competition – is insufficiently addressed. Instead, Casanova produces what Prendergast calls a "scenario of underdog nations battling for a place in a literary sun blocked by the shadow of tyrant languages and literatures" (Prendergast, 2001: p. 17) – a devastating but not entirely unfair caricature of a history that is only as historical as it needs to be in order to confirm its pre-determined "facts."

Prendergast scores several other palpable hits, but what interests me here is not the ahistoricity of Casanova's categories, but rather the implications of her approach for World Literature as a comparative project which, like Moretti's, privileges literary history over literary analysis, using a play of broadly structural equivalences to set up "family resemblances" between national literatures, as well as to posit transnational connections in the world system within which these literatures are enmeshed. Of course, "equivalences" are not the same thing as "resemblances," nor are either of these identical with "analogies" – not an example of semantic nitpicking on my part but rather a reminder of the inescapable rhetoricity of comparatism itself. While this is part of the "problem" Moretti identifies, he chooses to address it not so much by inventing new *categories* of analysis but by substituting one set of *metaphors* for another: metaphors that always risk re-mystifying the social and historical conditions on which the analysis rests.

Needless to say, what I am arguing for here is not a language of analysis that is "metaphor-free" but one that is more attentive to the metaphors it uses: a lesson that

can be learned all over again from the philological legacy of Comparative Literature in Europe and elsewhere in the West. As Emily Apter argues, the "philology wars" currently being fought over the future of Comparative Literature advance conflicting views on the value of philology while re-emphasizing its central importance in the historical development of Comparative Literature in the West (Apter, 2004: p. 100–101).[2] Thus, while philology can be used – and is being used – as a conservative attempt to shore up the European foundations of the discipline against the rebellious incursions of, e.g., postcolonial literature and World Literature, it can just as easily be used – and should be used – to address such crucial issues as

> […] the cultural implications of literary methodology, the rethinking [of] world literature beyond Anglocentric parameters, [and] the question of whether European humanism will continue to have traction in the global marketplace of culture" in times to come. (Apter, 2004: p. 101)

As Apter further suggests, Spitzer's:

> Linguistically focused world-systems theory […] stands as a counterweight to Morettis's narrative-based paradigms of distant reading. If distant reading privileges outsized categories of cultural comparison – national epic, the "planetary" laws of genre – philology affords its micrological counterpart as close reading with a worldview: word histories as world histories; stylistics and metrics in diaspora. (Apter, 2004: p. 108)

Central to philology, as to World Literature, is the practice of *translation*, though this practice is regarded very differently in the two disciplines: the painstaking *translatio* of Spitzer; the inviting readability of World Literature's "foreign-language" texts. Two problems obtain in World Literature's approach to literature in translation, which I will call for short the rule of English and the assumption of translatability. By the rule of English, I mean what Jonathan Arac has admonishingly described as the "unavowed imperialism" of a contemporary discipline (World Literature) in which the value of language-based criticism is increasingly diminished, and English, as the privileged medium of global culture, stands in for the messiness of linguistic difference in a globalized world (Arac, 2002: p. 44). For World Literature practitioners like Damrosch, the turn to English is partly justified in pedagogical terms, as the function of a significant downturn in language learning at American schools and colleges. Damrosch does not *reject* language learning; on the contrary, he remains convinced that it provides a "crucial mode of access to other cultures, the best way to ensure that [World Literature] students will become more than cultural ecotourists" (Damrosch, 2003: p. 290). But the use of English translations is still the "logical" choice, though the only part-acknowledged logic for this choice is that of globalization, which after all – as for Moretti – has consolidated English as "the global language of exchange and information […] the crucial enabling medium that makes possible his survey of all those continents and years" (Arac, 2002: pp. 35, 40). For Moretti, moreover, English is the privileged language of *theory* in a planetary

system in which language is treated almost exclusively in the abstract, with English as the largely unproblematic medium by which "knowledge may be translated from the local to the global" and a whole raft of national literatures is effectively dissolved into "little more than one single means by which they may be known" (Arac, 2002: p. 40).

This "Anglo-globalism" (Arac's term) remains a problem in a field that is clearly well-set to capitalize on English as both world language and world literature, with Anglophone writers now routinely "triangulat[ing] among the local, the international, and the personal landscapes of their worlds" (Damrosch, 2003: p. 230). But if English is the preferred language of World Literature, and all the signs are that it is, then what is to stop the study of World Literature being seen as little more than Anglo-globalist triumphalism masquerading as liberal-democratic global consciousness? What is to stop World Literature being seen as little other than the reflection of an American view of global culture in which, via English translation, all roads lead back inexorably to the West? Damrosch tries to circumvent these problems by showing the *gains* to be had from studying works in translation. Translations, he says after Steiner, are transformations as well as interpretations of their source material, enabling readers to appreciate the play between their "source" and "target" cultures, and balancing the potentially unsettling encounter with linguistic/cultural difference against the empowering possibility of "re-translating" it into new terms (Damrosh, 2003: p. 167).[3] But which readers? Not for the first time, Damrosch's model sets up a potentially authoritarian division between linguistically deficient American students – apparently his primary constituency for World Literature – and their linguistically gifted teachers, who, operating in part as "global synthesizers" (Arac, 2002), alone possess the cultural knowledge and analytical apparatus to tease out meanings from translated "foreign" texts. World Literature, seen this way, consists of unusually mobile texts, which – worldly in their turn – are presented to culturally unfamiliar and/or linguistically foreign readers by an "all-knowing" worldly critic, who strategically positions them for educational purposes on the global stage (Dooghan, 2008).

There are obviously more dialogic models of World Literature than this, but the fact remains that its primary subject matter is seldom discussed beyond the immediate Euro-American context, tending automatically to assume the translatability of linguistic/cultural knowledge to and for the West. To that extent, the field tends to perform the exclusions of a "globalization" it is not always ready to acknowledge rather than the inclusions of a "worldliness" it enthusiastically fosters and avows. The most flagrant exclusion, as Dooghan points out, is readers beyond its own particular institutional context, who are assumed not to exist or, if they do, to be unwilling or unable to participate in discussions that still often take place in their name (Dooghan, 2008: p. 10). There is nothing very worldly, Dooghan testily suggests, about a field that excludes the majority of the world's readers, but then assumes that the majority of the world's literatures are available, through translation, for consumption in and by the West. This raises a key question, also often left out of discussions, as to the

institutional location of World Literature. So where is World Literature, and what are the ideological implications of its self-positioning?

Where is World Literature?

For Damrosch and others, World Literature is both an ongoing scholarly "problem" and an emerging pedagogic project with an institutional foothold in North America, particularly the US.[4] To some extent, Damrosch's views on World Literature reflect basic differences between North American and European graduate programs in Comparative Literature, with the former more likely than the latter to include a global component and to be tied in with wide-ranging undergraduate programs (often on a broad-based liberal-arts or cross-disciplinary humanities model, e.g. Arts One or Great Books). Similar differences can be traced in the educational materials used for such programs, with a greater incidence in the US of broad-based anthologies, usually produced specifically for ethnically diverse North American constituencies and often adopting semi-autobiographical and/or semi-anthropological approaches to the study of "culturally different" texts. In such anthologies, identity politics are writ large in keeping with US liberal-arts paradigms of intercultural dialogue and individual achievement, while the engagement with difference is framed in terms that popularize cultural translation processes through the production of simultaneously mobile ("transcultural") and iconic ("culturally representative") texts. A good example is *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, a popular candidate in World Literature anthologies and courses, and a work that consciously plays to its own international appeal, mediating between personal and collective history in ways that facilitate "cross-borders" discussions of its cultural translatability, but also complicating any easy "anthropological" view that might construct it as a culturally representative (Mayan) text. Needless to say, works such as *I, Rigoberta Menchú* also create the possibility of reflecting on transhistorical issues of human concern (around gender, indigeneity, etc.) that can be "re-translated" into the more familiar terms of contemporary North American identity politics, and allowing for forms of sympathetic identification that abstract away from the social, political, and historical specificities of the text.

Damrosch's answer to this would be that "worldly" texts such as *I, Rigoberta Menchú* manifest differently at different time and in different places, but proof of this surely requires the surrendering of responsive forms of experiential authority to a more methodologically rigorous approach. To be fair to Damrosch, his call for "detached engagement," while very different in kind from Moretti's model of "distant reading," at least allows for critical reflection on the pitfalls of personal and/or self-identifying responses to literature that falsely assume the transparency of the text. However, the "conversational" model of World Literature, designed to put different *disciplines* as well as different works of literature into dialogue with one another, is always liable to bypass specific forms of methodological training, producing instead a "sociology" that looks like sociology, a "history" that looks like history, and the

rest. To take just one example, the sociological credentials of World Literature are deeply doubtful, even in Moretti's supposedly scientific conception of "distant reading," which hovers energetically but enigmatically between qualitative-philological and quantitative-sociological understandings of the historical properties and spatial distribution of literary texts. World Literature is emphatically *not* a branch of the sociology of literature or the history of the book, and while it could be argued that its practitioners make no particular claim to this, the concepts of literary trans-mission and historical reception they draw upon seem either to require more collec-tive evidence than they can muster (Moretti, 2000) or to fall back on individuated literary-historical narratives – case studies – as a way of accounting for the mobility of texts (Damrosch, 2003).

Meanwhile, World Literature is not nearly as attentive to its own institutional history as it might be. There is little sense in the major critical exchanges to date of when the discipline first emerged or where it is currently located. There is little discussion of its anchoring – in North America at least – in the liberal arts. And there is little debate on the intersecting institutional histories that have brought Comparative Literature and World Literature together (with a sure sign of ahistoric-ity being the claim that World Literature is a new, or even "the" new, form of Comparative Literature: a claim that smacks more of intellectual opportunism than of historical positioning, and that has yet to be put to the test). It is not my task here to produce such a history, rather to alert attention to the need for one; and also to point out – in what is admittedly a preliminary and cursory fashion – the con-nection between World Literature and a consumerist North American model of liberal-arts education that has explicit links with globalization, which I will loosely define here as contemporary capitalism's locally and regionally differentiated, not always celebratory but nearly always insufficiently critical, understanding of itself.[5] The early history of World Literature suggests an at best ambivalent relationship with globalization, a term sometimes explicitly rejected by its practitioners. The clearest view on this is provided by the UK-based scholar Christopher Prendergast, who, at the beginning of a 2001 *New Left Review* article, praises Pascale Casanova for "going global" while "refus[ing] to traffic in the term 'globalization' and its tacky Third Way *idées reçues*" (Prendergast, 2001: p. 8). Casanova's conception of World Literature – among several others – comes in for heavy criticism later in Prendergast's article, but the point I want to make here is that his opening dismissal of globalization is considered to be enough. Similarly, Damrosch's work has little truck with globalization, although he rather sheepishly admits (again at the begin-ning of his book) that it forms one of the primary contexts for the emergence of World Literature at large (Damrosch, 2003: p. 4).

Why are World Literature practitioners, by and large, so reluctant to deal with globalization? Why are they so intent on creating alternatives to globalization (Damrosch's "worldliness," Moretti's "planetary system") that explicitly or implicitly position World Literature against it? There are several possible answers to this, but the one I want to consider is that World Literature is obliged – to some extent at

least – to rail against (or simply ignore) the conspicuous inequalities produced by globalization because the field *is itself* a relatively unacknowledged product of globalization, both in terms of economic disparities and in terms of what Mary Gallagher, in one of the few extended discussions of the topic, calls the "changing cultural and inter-cultural dynamics of the contemporary world" (Gallagher, 2008: p. 35). The implications of this non-acknowledgement are profound, e.g. the possibility that

> world literature does not spring spontaneously from a host of freely developing cultural equals, but rather represents the exploitation of geographic and cultural diversity by a limited ensemble of economic and cultural forms. (Brown, quoted in Gallagher, 2008: p. 40)

As Gallagher herself puts it:

> Just as anthologies of so-called "international" writing in previous decades usually only included writing from a variety of traditions firmly inside the Western world, so certain anthologies of global or world writing reproduce a symmetrical, if inverse, exclusion. (Gallagher, 2008: p. 44)

Is the Western/ non-Western divide paradoxically reproduced in World Literature? Certainly, some packaged versions of World Literature look suspiciously like the latest instance of the "postcolonial exotic," my own not always sufficiently modulated term for the clash between contemporary anti-colonial expressions of global consciousness and the neo-colonial culture industries – closely attached if not necessarily identical to globalization – within which those expressions are inextricably enmeshed.[6] And certainly, World Literature risks re-introducing the very cultural-political divisions it seeks to contest, producing "global" versions of

> non-Western literature […] in terms of the positions that economically, ethnically, sexually, and geographically differentiated subjects occupy within the single culture of global capitalism – a culture that has […] subsumed what was once a genuinely multicultural globe. (Brown, quoted in Gallagher, 2008: p. 40)

World Literature, as yet, has no real answers to these criticisms, however much it might try to differentiate itself from "Third Way" political pieties or to protect itself from the naked commercial credos that create such illusions as a "global airport literature," effectively unmoored from time and place (Damrosch, 2008: p. 4). "Worldliness," as I have been trying to suggest, is one of the smokescreens behind which World Literature practitioners hide; others are "cosmopolitanism" and "comparatism." This last bears further examining. If World Literature represents an institutional dead end – or at least a false institutional beginning – then what other current developments within the field of Comparative Literature might we turn to? Is the discipline of Comparative Literature dead?

Conclusion: Toward a New Comparative Literature

Rumors of the death of Comparative Literature have been abroad for some time now, with even the most dedicated of comparatists given to talking apocalyptically about a "dying discipline" even as they busy themselves plotting the coordinates of its rebirth (Spivak, 2003: p. xii). Probably the most visible of these has been the prominent postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose 2003 book *Death of a Discipline* sets out to contradict its own title by reconfiguring Comparative Literature as a deliberately uneasy amalgam of Area Studies, postcolonial studies, and literary studies, provisionally transformed "from below" by being opened up to the non-hegemonic languages of the South (Spivak, 2003: p. 9). Spivak's stated aim is to effect a double decolonization of (1) European national language-based Comparative Literature and (2) the Cold War format of Area Studies, with both decolonizing processes creating the conditions for what she calls, after her mentor Derrida, a transformation of "the politics of hostility" into "a politics of friendship to come" (Spivak, 2003: p. 13).[7] However, this utopian impulse is tempered by the need to re-examine the "politics of collectivity" that drove earlier models of Comparative Literature (humanism) and cultural/ethnic studies (identity politics), while also challenging Moretti's "disciplinary [regime] of distant reading," which brings the world's literatures together as an illusory object of Western control (Spivak, 2003: p. 30).

Spivak offers a further challenge to Moretti by asserting the centrality of *literature* to the task of imagining alternative collectivities: it is "what escapes the system" (Spivak, 2003: p. 52), she says, the implication being that literature's irreducibility offers a necessary and energizing antidote to the instrumental rationalism of the social sciences, with both still being brought together to provide the open model for a "new" Comparative Literature "with unanticipatable results" (Spivak, 2003: p. 50). This "new" Comparative Literature is bitterly opposed to the globalization from which it nonetheless originates. Instead, it stakes its faith in *planetarity* as a fragile counter-weight to globalization's homogenizing impulses, with the recognition that we are (embodied) "planetary subjects" rather than (abstract) "global agents" providing the basis for new forms of global citizenship that go beyond the blandishments of multiculturalism, the complacency of "worldly" cosmopolitanism, and the competing "nationalism[s] over against colonialism" in which postcolonial studies is residually held (Spivak, 2003: p. 73, 81).[8]

Characteristically, Spivak re*codes* existing models rather than rejecting them entirely, producing a catachrestic combination of approaches and methodologies that is cease-lessly in motion, representation-based but never representative, and explicitly or implicitly opposed to the imprisoning logic of the special case (Spivak, 2003: p. 70). However, it remains unclear what this "new" Comparative Literature looks like in practice, or even whether it is meant to be individually or collectively practicable, despite Spivak's insistence that the discipline's foundational imperatives are pedagogical:

that it is driven above all else by the desire to "learn to learn from below" (Spivak, 2003: p. 100). More practically oriented than Spivak's model of the "new" Comparative Literature is that of Emily Apter, who shares Spivak's vision of "planetary criticism," but – to a greater extent than Spivak – places the theory and practice of *translation* center stage. "Global translation," Apter suggests, is another name for Comparative Literature in a context of global conflict in which "the translation zone is a war zone" and "mixed tongues contest the imperium of English" on the world stage (Apter, 2006: p. xi). Here, Apter is following the work of Casanova, for whom the world's literatures are dramatically envisioned as jostling for space within an intensely competitive global marketplace in which the "linguistic superpowers increasingly call the shots" (Apter, 2006: p. 99). However, Apter sees World Literature scholars like Casanova as over-emphasizing "reading wars" (e.g., academic debates over the canon) at the expense of the "language wars" that underpin them (e.g., the continuing struggles of minority languages to assert themselves in an unevenly developed world where their very survival may be at stake (Apter, 2006: p. 139).

In a more positive vein, "reading" and "language" wars provide the linked context for what Apter calls "a revolution in the protocols of readability" (Apter, 2006: p. 148). This revolution, spearheaded by the latest developments in information technology, opens up the possibility of a "linguistic marketplace" (Apter, 2006: p. 226) in which the languages and literatures of the world can be brought into colloquy with one another – a clear nod to the Goethean "conversational" model of *Weltliteratur*, but without subscribing to the nostalgia that drives it, e.g. an attempt to recapture the generous spirit of intercultural dialogue it perceives as having been lost. Thus, while Apter acknowledges the humanistic legacy of *World* Literature – a legacy she explicitly links to the twentieth-century philology of Auerbach and Spitzer – her primary task is to reinvent *Comparative* Literature for the twenty-first century, in a context where contemporary technologies of communication, at least some of which have been developed in direct response to globalization, allow for a "renewal of the psychic life of diplomacy in a fundamentally unstable world" (Apter, 2006: p. 11). By Comparative Literature, Apter seems to understand – as does Spivak – an assemblage of different, not necessarily compatible approaches in which there is no overriding, theoretically privileged model (e.g., World Literature) but rather a to-and-fro – a translation – between illuminating alternatives; and in which the project of comparison is sharply differentiated from the creation of equivalences, often to the extent that the potential commonalities of national literatures collapse into a last-ditch universalism – what Apter calls, after Badiou, a "comparativity with the least relation" (Apter, 2006: p. 86) – that effectively stands the traditional, national-language based practices of Comparative Literature on their heads.[9] Instead, *creolization* emerges as a working principle in a globalized context of competing "language worlds" where there is a fierce "jockeying for power and respect in the field of language," and in which the possibility of an "isomorphic fit between the name of a nation and the name of a language" that informed earlier models of Comparative Literature is the very possibility that its latest version, the "new" Comparative Literature, rejects (Apter, 2006: p. 243–5).[10]

The call for a "new" Comparative Literature that – in Apter's terms – "expands centripetally toward a genuinely planetary criticism" (Apter, 2006: p. 10) offers the chance of a viable alternative to comparative models that are either residually nation-based (postcolonial literature) or not as global as they claim to be (World Literature) while simultaneously presenting the opportunity for a critical response to the processes and patterns of global uneven development that such models only partially engage with or strategically overlook. However, to some extent the claim of newness serves to disguise what are essentially familiar problems: the basic methodological problems of comparison; the tension between conversational and competitive models; the translatability or not of cultural material to Euro-American readers not necessarily willing to accept their own biases or to entertain the possibility that Comparative Literature's traditional Eurocentrism of content is now being replaced by a Eurocentrism of method and form (Chow, 2004). Perhaps the "new" Comparative Literature is not so different, after all, from the institutionally competing models – postcolonial literature, World Literature – from which it appears so eager to separate itself. And, like them, it seems condemned – at least for now – either to depend on translation practices that inadvertently reinforce the cultural hegemony of English, or to preach a linguistic diversity it cannot possibly practice, just as World Literature reaches out toward a differentiated world it cannot possibly grasp.

Notes

1 To some extent, I am adopting Mary Louise Pratt's 1992 definition of the term "transculturation" – itself derived from the work of Ortíz and others – as that set of practices and processes by which "subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (Pratt, 1992: p. 7). However, theorists/practitioners of World Literature such as Damrosch, while not necessarily inattentive to the power differentials involved in transculturation processes, tend to open it up across a larger number of contexts than those to which Pratt would probably want to apply it, to the extent that "transculturation" becomes virtually synonymous with the transnational/global circulation of literary and other cultural texts.

2 Few have done more than Apter to recover both the philological legacy of contemporary Comparative Literature and to maintain the critical spirit of transnational humanism in which early "exilic" practitioners such as

Auerbach and Spitzer *contested*, as much as celebrated, traditional lineages of European thought. A further, more recent lineage – that from Auerbach and Spitzer to Said – suggests that what many outside the field see as the fundamental Eurocentrism of early Comparative Literature is misleading, and that it as much the work of Auerbach and Spitzer as that of later, postcolonial comparatists like Said and Spivak, that underlies what Apter calls the "worlded minoritarian comparatism" of today (Apter, 2004: p. 82).

3 The classic work to consult here is Steiner's 1973 study *After Babel*, which not only emphasizes that translation is "fully implicated in the most rudimentary communication," but is also explicit in the "coexistence and mutual contact of the thousands of languages spoken on the earth" (Steiner, 1973: p. 471). "To move between languages, to translate […] is to experience the almost bewildering bias of the human spirit towards freedom" (Steiner, 1973: p. 473): a sentiment

shared, not just but "worldly" critics such as Damrosch, but by many of their contemporary postcolonial counterparts, who might not otherwise be likely to share Steiner's political views.

4 Programs in World Literature exist, for example, at the University of Alabama, Central Michigan University, Creighton University, Duquesne University, the University of Illinois, Ohio State University, and (in Canada) Simon Fraser University. While such programs exist outside of North America, e.g. in China, these are rare – and rarer still is the possibility of the North American, particularly US, emphasis of World Literature being addressed.

5 This admittedly shorthand definition closely follows the work of Samir Amin and other contemporary Marxist critics, for whom globalization is both a visible manifestation of the latest stage of capital and an equally clear sign of what Spivak calls the "financialization of the globe" (Spivak, 2003: p. 85; see also the concluding section of this chapter). However, this largely negative view of globalization is not generally shared by theorists/practitioners of World Literature, especially those drawn to "conversational" models; nor is it necessarily adhered to by their more sociologically inclined and/or politically committed adversaries, who are often less Marxist than they claim to be – or only Marxist to a point.

6 For a detailed account of this entanglement, see my 2001 study *The Postcolonial Exotic*.

7 The relevant work here is Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* (1997).

8 "Planetarity," according to Spivak, involves a mind-set that thinks we live as embodied subjects on a planet rather than as abstract agents on a globe (Spivak, 2006: p. 107). As Spivak insists, "I continue to think that to be human is to be intended toward exteriority. And if we can get to 'planet-feeling,' the outside or the other is indefinite" (Spivak, 2006: p. 107). The implication here, other than that planetarity is opposed to the economic-rationalist logic of globalization, is that "planet-feeling" is allied to global citizenship, the idea of individual/collective responsibility in an increasingly intercon-

nected world. For a related if non-identical view of planetarity, see also Gilroy, who argues that it is a form of cosmopolitan "conviviality," inspired by the recognition that strangers can also be neighbors, and that an awareness of the fragility of co-existence is a necessary pre-condition for living in the world.

9 Badiou has become an increasingly important figure for Comparative Literature, influencing the work not only of renegade postcolonialists like Peter Hallward, but also postmodern comparatists like Emily Apter, who might not necessarily be expected to be amenable to Badiou's universalist views. For a useful overview of Badiou's work, see the various (translated) essays and lectures in his *Theoretical Writings* (2004); see also *Manifeste pour la philosophie* (1989).

10 "Creolization" is a notoriously difficult concept, not least because it is often used loosely in the global context as a synonym for "hybridity." Contemporary theorists (and/or theorists of the contemporary) who use the term are not always as attentive as they might be to (1) its linguistic applications and (2) its historical connections to those New World processes of slavery, colonization, and migration that helped create Creole societies in the Caribbean, Latin America, and elsewhere. In the colonial/postcolonial context, creolization theory is usually associated first and foremost with the work of Francophone postcolonial thinkers such as Édouard Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau and, more recently, Françoise Lionnet and Chris Bongie, though their work is indebted in turn to that of the Barbadian poet and scholar Kamau Edward Brathwaite, whose foundational 1971 monograph *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820*, is one of the stand-out studies in an increasingly crowded field. Apter's *Translation Zone* is probably the most thorough study to date of the possibilities of founding a "new" Comparative Literature on the principles of creolization theory; see also, however, the continuing work of Francophone and Latin American comparatists such as Françoise Lionnet, Nestor García Canclini, and Mary Louise Pratt.

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