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Correction: In our 2009 issue the review essay devoted to Hiroki Azuma’s *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals* mistakenly assigned credit for the English translation of this book. It was, in fact, a co-translation by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono, a member of the AILC/ICLA and an Associate Professor at Sophia University, Tokyo.

PRÉSENTATION DU RÉDACTEUR

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION



This annual issue of *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research*, like the previous two, is a tribute to Dorothy Figueira's leadership after Tania Franco Carvalhal's untimely death. On succeeding her as president of the AILC/ICLA, Professor Figueira realized that, beyond our conferences and programs of collaborative cross-cultural scholarship, we needed to ensure more frequent and direct contact with our members. *RL/LR*, which Eva Kushner had founded to inform comparatists worldwide of developments in our field, was clearly the means to this end. Professor Carvalhal had begun the process of reviving the journal in its original reviews-only format, while adding a forum essay of general interest to comparatists and a unit focused on collaborative scholarship. These were policies that I kept when I became editor thanks to Professor Figueira's decisiveness at a time of crisis. As my three-year term draws to a close, I look forward to becoming a loyal reader of *RL/LR*.

This year's forums are thematic in nature, in contrast to the regional focus on India, the Arab world, and Africa in earlier issues. In the first forum, Anxo Abuín González's reflections on the new orality attest to growing interest in comparative inquiry in Spain, a trend noted by Arturo Casas in the 2008 issue. In the second forum, Sandra Bermann, from Princeton's department of comparative literature, which has traditionally encouraged translation, surveys the two fields' new interest in cooperation. Adding to her remarks are essays by or about translators into English, Burton Pike's involving German and Gene Bell-Villada's Spanish and Portuguese. Relevant as well are Mary Ann Frese Witt's comments in the collaborative unit on the translation papers at our 2007 Congress and Lieven D'hulst's book note on a nineteenth-century account of translation from English into French.

The next unit features five review essays on major comparative topics, two of which connect with later items. Jonathan Hart leads off by discussing a richly detailed reference work on non-Anglophone colonialism and postcoloniality. Along with the familiar cases of France and Spain, the nations treated range from Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark to Portugal, Germany, and Italy. Related issues figure in Djelal Kadir's review of Silvia Spitta's striking book on New World/Old World interactions embedded in material objects dating from Columbus to the present. Book notes by Madeleine Dobie on a French collection about "étrangeté" in postcolonial literatures and by James Ramey on a book from Spain about contemporary writers from the global south also address aspects of this topic.

Chantal Zabus's review of a book of essays on the African novel edited by Gaurav Desai offers penetrating insights into the genre's fortunes in the entire region, a topic also treated in Amy Reid's book note on an introduction to francophone African fiction. Zabus also considers the Desai collection's concern with ways to teach this literature in North American academic settings, a question central to two other books treated this year, one on world literature as a whole, reviewed by

Paulo Horta, and the other on Brazilian fiction, reviewed by Eduardo Coutinho. All three books attest to greater North American interest in researching African, Brazilian, and world literatures as well as to efforts at strengthening higher education in these areas, developments that should interest scholars elsewhere as well. Directed at a more advanced level of instruction is the helpful and timely *Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature*, evaluated in Randolph Pope's book note.

Postmodernism, border writing, and feminist criticism are much-discussed issues addressed in the remaining review essays. In "Literature in a Materialist Age," John McGowan debates the critique of postmodernity proposed in Virgil Nemoianu's recent book. Marcel Cornis-Pope, who with John Neubauer coedited the AILC/ICLA's transnational literary history of East Central Europe, discusses books on allied cross-border issues in recent US, Canadian, and Mexican literatures. In the course of assessing a history of feminist literary criticism, Margaret Higonnet also considers ways of treating this topic in broader cross-cultural perspective.

This issue's generous coverage of group research begins with two volumes from our 2007 conference in Brazil, with Mary Ann Frese Witt focusing on papers in French and English, while Thomas Beebe also includes papers in Portuguese. Then, after the coverage of teaching world literature, comes a study of visuality in East Asian and Western writing systems; a set of essays from the Société Française de Littérature Générale et Comparée on modernity in the West and globally; and a book on Nietzsche's ideas of the tragic in interdisciplinary, cross-cultural context. Complementing the appraisal of a book on possible roles for Europe's literatures in the European Union is the review of a Romanian collection on border issues and liminality *vis-à-vis* the West historically as well as in EU Europe and elsewhere.

Reviews of one-author works, besides Kadir's and Coutinho's, include a look back at Canadian literary theorist Northrop Frye and the critique of a provocative "macro-history" of literature's role in Western culture. Also covered are a multinational survey of Holocaust drama and a "transcultural" study of Levinas's ethics. Cross-cultural topics also figure in the remaining book notes: letters among Freud's inner circle, exiled Arab writers in Canada, and a French reading of *Moby-Dick*.

The last unit draws attention to notable comparative journals. Included this year are special issues on eyewitness narratives (in *Partial Answers*) and on human rights (in *Comparative Literature Studies*), as well as a profile of *Comparative Critical Studies*, the journal of the British Comparative Literature Association. Articles on two comparative conferences recently held in India and on a history of the literature of Greater Syria, available only in Arabic, conclude this unit.

Support for *RL/LR* has come from the AILC/ICLA and from George Mason University, which covered the large mailing costs. I am grateful to Jack Censer, Dean of GMU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and to Peter Stearns, the provost, for this assistance. From the AILC/ICLA's leadership, Eduardo Coutinho, Lieven D'hulst, Dorothy Figueira, Gerald Gillespie, Chandra Mohan, Anders Pettersson, and Steven Sondrup were especially helpful. In addition, I wish to thank Marcel Cornis-Pope, Kathleen Komar, Monica Spiridon, and Lois Parkinson Zamora for their advice. As always, special appreciation goes to our contributors for sharing their insights into recent trends in our many-sided field.

John Burt Foster, Jr., Editor.

F O R U M I
L'ORALITÉ RENAISSANTE /
ORALITY REBORN



ESPACES ACOUSTIQUES, TEXTURES SONORES:
ORALITÉ *TERTIAIRE*
ET LANGAGES ÉLECTRONIQUES¹

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

The medium is the mess-age»
Marshall McLuhan, *Counterblast*, 1969.

“Au commencement était l’écoute.” L’expérience littéraire et son rapport au langage sont fortement liés, dans leurs origines, à l’oreille. L’invention de l’écriture a modifié la situation initiale par la disparition de la dimension intime qui rattachait la voix à l’expression para-verbale, aux gestes ou aux silences. L’écriture fut la première grande révolution dans l’ordre intellectuel, permettant, selon l’expression célèbre de Walter J. Ong, la “technologisation” de la parole et l’établissement d’une nouvelle relation avec le langage et la pensée. Comme l’indique Christian Vandendorpe, “en permettant de fixer la pensée, l’écriture en démultiplie la puissance et en modifie le régime. Elle introduit une possibilité d’ordre, de continuité et de cohérence là où régnaient la fluidité et le chaos. [. . .] L’écriture introduira un nouvel ordre dans l’histoire de l’humanité en ce qu’elle permet d’enregistrer les traces d’une configuration mentale et de les réorganiser à volonté. Grâce à elle, une pensée peut être affinée et travaillée inlassablement, connaître des modifications contrôlées et des expansions illimitées, tout en échappant à la répétition qui caractérise la transmission orale. Ce qui était fluide et mouvant peut devenir précis et organisé comme le cristal, la confusion peut céder la place au système” (19-20). Pensée, structures linéaires et livres se sont étroitement associés, ce qui permet à Jacques Derrida d’affirmer que “la fin de l’écriture linéaire est bien la fin du livre” (129).

Cependant, notre présent objet d’étude ne sera pas le couple *oralité-écriture*, ou *voix-lettre*, comme une simple opposition mécanique. Dans un article intitulé

“The Consequences of Literacy,” publié en 1963, l’anthropologue Jack Goody et le critique littéraire Ian Watt employaient le terme “technologie de l’intelligence” (*technology of the intellect*) pour définir chacun des systèmes ou moyens de communication symbolique propres à chaque culture, et mettaient en exergue l’importance de l’écriture dans l’évolution de la pensée et de la société humaines. Les couples traditionnels *primitif-développé*, *sauvage-apprivoisé* ou *prélogique-logique* cédaient ainsi leur place au binôme *pré-alphabétique-alphabétique*, associé aux dispositifs matériels et sémiotiques du traitement de l’information.² La définition, déjà analysée, du monde de l’écriture (avant et après l’imprimerie) comme le domaine de la linéarité, la tabularité, la pensée logique et syllogistique, ont été complétés par les contributions théoriques de Eric A. Havelock, Walter J. Ong (*Orality*), Marshall McLuhan, Pierre Lévy ou Mark Poster.

Il faut cependant rappeler que pour Goody la liste (de choses, de personnes, d’événements, de lexique . . .) est une forme “non syntaxique” impliquant rupture séquentielle et discontinuité, supposant une certaine disposition spatiale, elle peut être lue de diverses façons (latérale et verticale), de haut en bas et de droite à gauche ou vice-versa. Cette option contredit l’idée de linéarité comme caractéristique essentielle de l’écriture, quoique la nature limitée et restreinte de la liste établisse une différence évidente par rapport à l’hypertextualité électronique (Goody 95-96). En tout cas, on pourrait mettre en relief le fait que, dès le début, certains genres qui, comme la liste, étaient liés à l’écriture, ont favorisé un accès à l’information de type aléatoire ou casuel. Cette information n’était pas définie par des séquences, comme l’accès purement sérial. Autrement dit, l’accès aléatoire rend plus facile l’acquisition de n’importe quel item d’information sans besoin de récupérer d’autres fragments, tandis que la modalité de séquences force le parcours de toute l’information précédant l’item choisi (Santos Unamuno).

D’un autre point de vue, Paul Zumthor explique aussi clairement le problème dans son prologue à *La Lettre et la voix*: il voulait démontrer dans son livre que la voix fut au Moyen Age un facteur essentiel omniprésent dans n’importe quelle œuvre aujourd’hui considérée *littéraire*. Elle aurait formé un *continuum* dont les pôles seraient entrelacés par une quantité infinie de formulations hybrides, mixtes ou médiatisées. Il est important de signaler que Zumthor conçoit l’œuvre comme toute communication poétique qui se produit ici et maintenant. Cette définition concerne le texte, mais aussi les productions sonores, les rythmes et les éléments visuels. Le terme englobe donc tous les éléments de la *performance*. Ce n’est qu’à partir de cette idée que nous pouvons comprendre que l’écriture poétique orale fonctionne surtout par la dramatisation du discours : l’art poétique acquiert dans la *performance* une nature instantanée: elle tend à la réalisation immédiate, spontanée, et à la transparence. Elle crée une parole pleine et féconde, met en relief la fonction du corps et du geste comme modélisateurs du discours, du moment qu’ils réalisent dans l’espace la forme externe du poème. Or, la *performance* poétique peut interrompre délibérément cette relation, et admettre uniquement la pertinence due l’expression du visage ou du bras, et peut-être aussi quelque danse neutre. C’est ainsi qu’elle accorderait une grande valeur au silence car, dans le contexte

d'un silence rituel, les gestes peuvent transmettre une expression beaucoup plus nette qu'une phrase éloquente. La *performance* poétique adopte parfois la forme du mime; dans ce cas, l'interprétation du discours dépend entièrement du corps. Dans ce contexte, n'importe quel geste, en apparence dépourvu d'expression, manifeste une vie extraordinaire, et il réussit même à constituer un vrai langage, qui complète l'expression orale, et qui peut même le remplacer en son absence:

La composante fondamentale de la "réception" est ainsi l'action de l'auditeur recréant à son propre usage, et selon ses propres configurations intérieures, l'univers signifiant qui lui est transmis. Les traces qu'imprime en lui cette re-création appartiennent à sa vie intime et n'apparaissent pas nécessairement et immédiatement au dehors. Mais il peut arriver qu'elles s'extériorisent en une performance nouvelle: l'auditeur devient à son tour interprète, et sur ses lèvres, dans son geste, le poème se modifie de façon, qui sait? Radicale. (Zumthor, *Introduction*, 229)

Cette analyse se voit confirmée par la perspective multiple employée par Ong dans le dernier chapitre de son livre *Orality and Literacy*. L'auteur y étudie les méthodes d'intégration ou d'abandon de ces deux principes dans quelques disciplines scientifiques (telles que l'Histoire de la littérature ou les Sciences Sociales, parmi d'autres) et plusieurs tendances théorico-littéraires contemporaines, du New Criticism à l'esthétique de la réception ou la déconstruction. Ong a indiqué à plusieurs reprises que l'élément essentiel des marques discursives de l'oralité est fondé sur le fait que la parole orale est surtout *action* qui veut être rappelée. Ceci explique les récurrences, les formules, l'insistance phatique, l'allusion à la situation ou, finalement, le présentisme. Mais il faut expliquer avec précision que l'oralité ne peut être limitée à un code sémiotique unique; au contraire, elle englobe et organise le code linguistique d'abord, mais aussi les codes kinésique, proxémique, paralinguistique ou prosodique et, très souvent, le code musical.

Les classifications de l'oralité seront utiles dans ce même cadre pragmatique. Il existe une oralité première sans contact avec l'écriture, propre aux sociétés agraphiques. L'oralité secondaire ou *ré-oralisation*, s'établit au moyen de la reconstitution des marques de l'oralité à partir d'un support d'écriture.³ L'on pourrait encore parler d'une modalité mixte de l'oralité, basée sur l'existence simultanée des traditions orale et graphique, enrichie par leurs grandes possibilités de rencontres et d'influences. Aujourd'hui, d'un point de vue anthropologique, l'oralité mixte serait, à la rigueur, la seule vraie option: la globalisation de la culture écrite ne permettant guère l'existence d'îlots de tradition a-graphique pure à cause de l'omniprésence de l'*homo typographicus* décrit par McLuhan.

Pourrait-on parler aujourd'hui d'une oralité tertiaire, née de l'irruption des nouvelles technologies de l'ordinateur? La comparaison entre oralité et milieu hypertextuel est reconnue depuis les études fondatrices de George Landow. Cet auteur rappelle les implications des théories d'Ong dans l'une des dernières versions de son *Hypertext*:

In *Orality and Literacy* he [Ong] argues that computers have brought us into what he terms an age of "secondary orality" that has "striking resemblances"

to the primary, preliterate orality “in its participatory mystique, its fostering of communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas” (136). Nonetheless, although Ong finds interesting parallels between a computer culture and a purely oral one, he mistakenly insists: “The sequential processing and spatializing of the word, initiated by writing and raised to a new order of intensity by print, is further intensified by computer, which maximizes commitment of the word to space and to (electronic) local motion and optimizes analytic sequentiality by making it virtually instantaneous” (136). In fact, hypertext systems, which insert every text into a web of relations, produce a very different effect, for they allow non multisequential reading and thinking (116-18).

Il est évident que l'identification entre ordinateur et renforcement d'écriture linéaire est difficile à accepter pour la plupart des spécialistes, mais quelques notes d'Ong constituent un bon point de départ pour l'analyse de la présence de l'oralité dans les nouveaux supports électroniques (Joyce). Reprenons ici les caractéristiques attribuées par Ong aux discours oraux pour les comparer aux *littératures électroniques*:

(i) “Additive rather than subordinate” (Ong, *Orality*, 37). Le plus souvent, les éléments de la pensée et de l'expression de type oral ne constituent pas une entité simple mais plutôt des groupes d'entités, telles que termes, locutions, phrases parallèles ou antithétiques et épithètes. Ce paradigme ne semble pas trop loin des formes électroniques, qui limitent habituellement les matériaux et les associent de forme imprécise ou provisoire, surtout par la parataxe ou la juxtaposition. L'unité électronique ayant un sens minimal, la *lexie*, permet la coexistence de différents niveaux conceptuels, artistiques, idéologiques, sociaux, anthropologiques, culturels. Ils coexistent en fin de compte au même niveau, s'unissant par des liens, nœuds ou *links*.

(ii) “Aggregative rather than analytic” (Ong, *Orality*, 38). On pourrait citer ici le caractère multilinéaire ou rhizomatique de l'expérience lectrice de l'hypertexte et sa tendance à se manifester par des listes ou inventaires, comme nous l'avons constaté. Les textes en ligne, réalisés dans la lecture en temps réel, “performatisés” par la capacité navigatrice-lectrice, avancent seulement par blocs indépendants, construits dans un édifice global inaccessible, ou qui devient partiellement plus proche à chaque phase de lecture.

(iii) “Redundant or ‘copious’” (Ong, *Orality*, 39). La fin du chemin à parcourir se situe à l'intérieur de la pensée, car l'énoncé oral disparaît après sa formulation. La pensée doit donc avancer plus lentement, tout en gardant près du point d'attention une grande partie de l'information mise en scène. La redondance, la répétition de l'allocution à peine formulée, maintient efficacement le locuteur et l'auditeur au même niveau. Il convient que l'orateur répète son discours, ou un discours équivalent, deux ou trois fois de suite. Le *bricolage* ou création d'éléments hétéroclites que Lévi-Strauss croit constitutif des normes de pensée “primitives” ou “sauvages” peut être conçu comme le résultat de la situation intellectuelle orale. La propension à la citation ou la dérive intertextuelle, qu'il faudrait interpréter comme un effet de redondance, car l'écrit imprimé implique

achèvement et autonomie, est commun au langage informatique. Comme l'indique Landow, l'hypertexte place le texte dans le domaine d'autres textes, et détruit son isolement physique d'une façon toute nouvelle. Il permet les notes à un texte individuel et sa connexion à d'autres textes, possiblement contradictoires; c'est ainsi qu'il détruit l'une des caractéristiques fondamentales du texte imprimé: sa séparation et son unicité de voix. Quand on place un texte dans un réseau de textes, le document existe forcément comme une partie d'un dialogue complexe. D'ailleurs, n'oublions pas que si un hypertexte, un texte littéraire électronique ou un texte digital est soumis à une lecture "adéquante," celle-ci ne se produira jamais deux fois dans les mêmes conditions. En effet, la machine (interposée entre l'auteur et le lecteur) dispose d'une capacité telle que très souvent le lecteur, malgré ses efforts, s'avouera incapable de reproduire exactement l'itinéraire suivi.

(iv) "Conservative or traditionalist," (v) "Close to the human lifeworld" et (vi) "Agonistically toned" (Ong, *Orality*, 41, 42 et 43). La culture orale fait d'énormes efforts pour conserver toute l'information possible afin de maintenir la cohésion de la communauté. On pourrait dire la même chose à propos d'Internet. Personne ne saurait douter de l'utilité des formes électroniques, qui adoptent aussi un rôle ludique dans le cas de la littérature. En dernier lieu, la blogosphère encouragerait la prolifération du débat et de la controverse. Pensons aussi aux chats, au IRC (Internet Relay Chat), qui permettent la conversation simultanée entre plusieurs utilisateurs, un genre *confus* entre l'écrit et l'oral qui combine le désordre de l'oralité et l'absence d'information extra ou paralinguistique (Mason; Mayans i Planells; Wardrip-Fruin et Harrigan, 237-290).

(vii) "Empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced" (Ong, *Orality*, 45). D'autres réflexions pourraient s'ajouter aux idées précédentes: l'immédiateté de la situation communicative (son présentisme), essentiel pour les actes communicatifs très directs. L'interactivité est une condition tenue comme essentielle dans l'hypertextualité électronique. L'existence de communautés digitales rassemblées autour d'un même sujet semble bien confirmer cette caractéristique, comme le prouve Derrick de Kerchove, créateur du concept de *connectivité* ou *webness*. Le nouvel espace ouvert par Internet pourrait, pour Stevan Harnad (258), réconcilier les meilleurs aspects de l'oral et de l'écrit: il s'agit d'échanges rapides qui permettent aux interlocuteurs d'avoir une trace écrite de leurs propos. Se produit ainsi un effet de "constellation" où chaque accès d'un internaute peut conditionner directement ou indirectement le mode d'agir, de lire et de vivre de n'importe quel autre membre du réseau.

(viii) "Homeostatic" (Ong, *Orality*, 46). Les cultures de la tradition orale tendent à éliminer ou à remplacer les expressions (verbales) correspondant à des contextes qui ont perdu leur fonctionnalité ou leur sens dans la vie quotidienne. Il serait possible d'intégrer dans ce point l'existence, dans le milieu électronique, d'un temps des procédés dépassés, réduisant toute expérience hypertextuelle à des limites temporelles très courtes et subordonnant le système à de constantes variations.

(ix) "Situational rather than abstract" (Ong, *Orality*, 49). La communication

orale dépend des coordonnées espace-temps immédiates de la situation communicative, et s'attache aux objets et instruments proches de la situation énonciative. Le *temps réel* est aussi caractéristique du milieu électronique. J'entends par là le temps du virtuel dans lequel l'émetteur et le récepteur coexistent dans une identification simultanée et unique, modifiant fortement le rôle du contraire.

L'existence d'une forme tertiaire d'oralité (définie par Gregory Ulmer comme *electracy*) pourrait se réaliser, dans le cas de la littérature électronique, par la mise en relief de plusieurs des conditions citées et par la présence d'autres. Ong emploie parfois l'expression "secondary visualism" dans ses écrits inédits pour mettre l'accent sur l'usage de plus en plus fréquent d'éléments visuels et interactifs dans les "computer-mediated texts." Comme dans le cas de la poésie orale, par exemple, le format électronique implique l'option d'accumulation d'information, mais élevée à la plus haute puissance (Havelock définit la poésie comme "accumulation d'information générale pour usage ultérieur"). Un autre élément à considérer est la multilinéarité, selon le principe, énoncé par Ong, et selon lequel "an oral culture has no experience of a lengthy, epic-size or novel-size climactic linear plot" (*Orality*, 143). Havelock indiquait que l'oralité première représentait "an echo system, light as air and as fleeting" (66). En effet, il existe un autre élément de comparaison dans l'existence éphémère des textes digitaux: la vitesse "com que as suas estruturas proteiformes se alteram, se perdem (às vezes, para sempre), ou são retomadas" (Dos Santos, 100). La productivité hypertextuelle ne peut être fixée; elle est constamment déplacée et modifiée, et n'existe que dans le travail du lecteur. Sont également nombreuses les *formes courtes* qui développent le principe défini par André Jolles comme *Sprachgebärden* ou *gestes du langage*: les besoins basiques d'expression que les cultures traditionnelles ont accumulés au long du temps. Elles reproduisent l'idée de mythe comme moyen de perception élémentaire et sensible, mais aussi ce que Susana Pajares Tosca (99-101) a appelé "la cualidad lírica de los hiperenlaces," tout en parlant du travail hypertextuel dans le contexte de l'intensité poétique.

Bien entendu, les études de cyberculture en général ont mis en relief la pertinence de l'idée de performativité (l'*homo performans* de Victor Turner), à partir de laquelle le processus et le résultat deviennent nettement différents. J'emploie le terme *performance* dans le sens de "one-time action" où s'établit une interaction directe entre le *performer* et l'audience. Les hyperlecteurs sont des acteurs d'une spectacularité; ils assument la fonction de producteurs ou organisateurs d'une mise en scène ou dramatisation destinée à doter les signifiants et les signifiés de l'apparence d'une brève permanence. Ong ne reconnaît pas à l'oral sa condition de texte à cause de son caractère performatif: la poésie orale est un événement, une *utterance*, comme l'indique Goody par l'opposition de ce terme aux notions de *text* ou *score*. La *performance* implique aussi un processus de permutation ou conversion de rôles, par lequel ceux qui ont formé un jour l'audience pourront devenir immédiatement ou postérieurement des locuteurs, comme les *écrivains* ou *lecteurs* de la littérature électronique.

Il n'est pas nécessaire de rappeler l'importance de la musique et de la danse dans les rites et les cérémonies ou dans les actes des *storytelling*.⁴ Je crois que l'évolution du paradigme hyper-médiatique se rapproche de plus en plus de la culture visuelle d'objets sonores où la parole se mêle à la musique, au bruit, aux chansons ou au silence. Un objet sonore est une identité perceptible auditivement ou, comme dirait Pierre Schaeffer, tout phénomène sonore perçu comme un ensemble ou un tout cohérent qui mérite une écoute concentrée et individualisée (Sérgio Bairon retiendrait plutôt l'expression *texturas sonoras*, définissant le texte comme "sopa de sonidos" composé de phrases, de figurations mélodiques, de bruits, et de mots isolés . . .) Il serait intéressant d'appliquer à certaines expériences poétiques électroniques une partie des concepts de Pierre Schaeffer. On perçoit, par exemple, le fonctionnement de l'*acousmatique*, ce qui appartient aux voix erratiques sur la surface de l'écran, ni pleinement intégrées ni clairement exclues; des voix n'appartenant qu'au monde électronique, comme dirait Michel Chion. Sont aussi manipulées les "quatre écoutes" dont parle Schaeffer dans le troisième chapitre de son livre: ouïr, écouter, entendre et comprendre. Schaeffer dit: "Je comprends à l'issue d'un travail, d'une activité consciente de l'esprit qui ne se contente plus d'accueillir une signification; mais abstrait, compare, déduit, met en rapport des informations de source et de nature diverses; il s'agit de préciser la signification initiale, ou de dégager une signification supplémentaire" (110).

Dans de nombreux hypermédia, le son est associé au mot de façon essentielle, en conformité avec l'énoncé d'Ong sur la culture orale:

Written texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly, to the world of sound, the natural habitat of language, to yield their meanings. "Reading" a text means converting it to sound, aloud or in the imagination, syllable-by-syllable in slow reading or sketchily in the rapid reading common to high-technology cultures. Writing can never dispense with orality. (*Orality*, 8)

De son côté, Havelock s'interrogeait "Un texte, peut-il parler?" (44). L'hyper-médialité explore l'existence d'un "langage accumulé" qui rend les textes écrits plus actuels ou plus problématiques dans leur rapport avec l'oral et avec la voix. Ceci semble spécialement évident dans la *performance* de la poésie, qui rejette l'idée du poème "as a fixed, stable, finite linguistic object; it is to deny the poem its self-presence and its unity" (Bernstein, 9).

W. J. T. Mitchell ("No existen") a insisté récemment sur le caractère mixte des moyens visuels toujours soumis à une relation image/son/texte qui doit être prise dans sa "proportionnalité sensorielle."⁵ D'après les théories, déjà exposées, de Marshall McLuhan (*Gutenberg et Global*), il serait possible de concevoir, jusqu'à un certain point une "communauté de sensations," comprenant le visuel et l'auditif ou le tactile (haptique), les trois sens théoriques déterminés par Hegel. C'est l'*espace acoustique* des technologies, l'espace de la globalité des sens et de la compréhension la plus sélective du monde, l'espace "en profondeur," dynamique et en perpétuel mouvement, illimité et multidirectionnel. C'est l'*audiotactile*, compris comme rassemblement des cinq sens afin de construire le lieu commun

de l'expérience consciente. L'étude des proportions se rapportera à la relation domination/subordination entre moyens, mais il faut rappeler d'autres évidences: un sens peut en activer un autre, la parole écrite peut appeler directement le sens de la vue, mais elle peut en même temps activer l'audition (dans la sous-vocalisation). Les moyens s'imbriquent les uns dans les autres, ils s'entrelacent sans fissures ou se déplacent sur des voies parallèles qui ne se touchent jamais. Le schéma suivant, adapté de Sempere (39), sert à illustrer les caractéristiques propres de chaque ère médiatique.

ÈRE	MILIEU DOMINATEUR	PERCEPTION	ESPACE	EFFETS
PRÉ-ALPHA-BÉTIQUE	LANGAGE ORAL	AUDIOTACTILE ET MULTISENSORIELLE	ACOUSTIQUE SANS LIMITES SANS DIRECTION SANS HORIZONS	EMOTIONALITÉ INTUITION EXPÉRIENCE TOTALE
ALPHA-BÉTIQUE	IMPRIMERIE	VUE	VISUEL LINÉALE TABULAIRE HOMOGÈNE CONTINUE	RATIONALITÉ ABSTRACTION ANALYSE SEQUENCIALITÉ
ÉLECTRONIQUE	TÉLÉVISION	UNI-SENSORIELLE	ACOUSTIQUE INSTANTANÉ SIMULTANÉ OMNIPRÉSENTE	LE VILLAGE GLOBAL RETRIBALISATION INTERACTION EMOTIONALITÉ CHAOS EXPÉRIENCE TOTALE
	INTERNET	AUDIO-TACTILE MULTISENSORIELLE	SPHÉRIQUE	

Cet essai propose l'existence de nouvelles formes dans le champ de l'art électronique qui explorent les relations entre le linguistique, le visuel et l'auditif-oral. Ces formes hybrides de *visual poetry* ou *sound art/poetry* ne sont pas encore complètement définies, mais leurs résultats sont déjà importants. On pourrait citer les exemples de John Cayley (*Translation*), Talan Memmott (*Nippon*), qui prouvent la relation entre la visualité et les processus de sous-vocalisation, parfois onomatopéiques. Le cas de María Mencía, commenté par N. Katherine Hayles (71-74), est particulièrement remarquable. Dans *Worthy Mouths* ce rapport voix-texte se thématise ironiquement par la superposition d'une bouche muette et d'un texte qui, reproduit à la plus grande vitesse, ne peut être commodément déchiffré. Dans *Another Kind of Language*, l'utilisateur déplace la souris sur un damier d'images et de bruits évoquant vaguement les sons du langage. Dans *Birds*

Singing Other Birds' Songs, d'abord conçu comme une installation et devenue aujourd'hui une vidéo *flash*, les lettres, les sons et les bruits font partie d'une composition visuelle qui met en question la relation entre la voix humaine et les sons naturels. On lit dans la section "Methodology" de son website (*from Visual Poetry to Digital Art: Image-Sound-Text, convergent media and the development of new media languages*):

New experiences emerge in the digital world. New genres appear as different media and disciplines mix in the electronic arena. We are faced with new ways of looking, reading and writing and therefore, of interpretation and understanding. But where are these new forms coming from? How are they evolving? This is where my research began. Recognising elements in the digital medium, which were used in Visual/Sound Poetics, as well as in the Visual Arts, Sound Art and Performance, awoke my curiosity to find out more about the history and conceptual ideas behind these forms; particularly the arts engaged in the exploration of visuality, orality and the semantic/"non semantic" meaning of language. When I started this investigation the key element that interested me, was to examine the area of the in-between in the visual, the phonetic and the semantic area of language and to stretch its possibilities using the digital medium. [. . .] The fascination with this three-dimensional state of consciousness, where the elements of the linguistic in an aural and visual form escaped their linguistic association and yet remained linguistic, prompted me to examine this area further by putting forward the following research question: How can communicative systems be developed with the convergence of "Image-Text, Semantic-Text, and Phonetic-Text," using new technologies?

L'autre exemple que nous voudrions commenter est le cas de Rui Torres, professeur, programmeur et poète portugais, responsable d'une page excellente de recours électroniques, *Telepoesis.net*. Son expérimentation avec la poésie met l'accent sur l'exploitation des éléments "verbo-voco-visuels" transformés en temps réel en un espace virtuel. Dans *Amor de Clarice* (2005), à partir de la relecture d'un texte littéraire de l'auteure brésilienne Clarice Lispector, il réalise un travail avec des sons, la vidéo, l'image et l'animation qui a fini par intégrer l'idée d'interactivité. L'œuvre de Torres joue sur les vocalisations neutres accompagnant quelques vers déplacés sur l'écran, sur un fond de lettres, au choix du lecteur. La dimension poétique de l'"envolvimento sonoro" provient du questionnement distanciateur des effets de répétition et de la qualité acousmatique de cette voix lyrique. *Poemas no meio do caminho* est composé de poèmes combinatoires et génératifs, programmés pour permettre au lecteur d'altérer, en temps d'exécution, les paradigmes qui nourrissent la syntaxe originelle. Les poèmes sont créés de façon aléatoire à partir d'une base de données pourvus de voix et de textures sonores qui mettent en évidence la disjonction entre les niveaux écrit et parlé. Pour finir, *Mar de Sophia* est un ensemble de poèmes—algorithmes dans lesquels le texte animé sur l'écran est créé de façon automatique à partir du texte de la poétesse Sophia Andresen, indexée sur les listes XML. Le code, écrit en Actionscript, permet au lecteur d'altérer ces listes par la sélection du vocabulaire.

Derrick de Kerckhove, disciple de McLuhan, adoptait le principe de Karl-

Heinz Stockhausen pour la mission de l'artiste: "voir plus, écouter plus, sentir plus" (112). C'est-à-dire, récupérer les contextes les plus amples que les scientifiques et les académiciens ont abandonnés pour se consacrer uniquement aux textes; jeter un pont entre le monde et les nouvelles technologies; apprendre à connecter les réalités contemporaines avec notre esprit, avec l'intérieur de notre peau.

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Notes

- 1 Cet article s'inscrit dans le Projet "La literatura electrónica en España. Inventario y estudio" (Xunta de Galicia, INCITE 09 204 039 PR), dirigé par Anxo Abuín de l'Université de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle.
- 2 Une suggestion pour dépasser cette dichotomie est proposée par Theall, qui prend comme modèle de multisensorialité le *Finnegans Wake*, œuvre qui fascinait McLuhan. Cf. Mason.
- 3 "At the same time, with telephone, radio, television and various kinds of sound tape, electronic technology has brought us into the age of 'secondary orality.' This new orality has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment and even its use of formulas [. . .]. But it is essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print, which are essential for the manufacture and operation of the equipment and for its use as well. Secondary orality is both remarkably like and remarkably unlike primary orality. Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals in on themselves. But secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture—McLuhan's 'global village'" (Ong, *Orality*, 134-35).
- 4 "Music in oral, preliterate cultures plays a central role in expressing the collective memory and aspirations of the tribe. Music is closely associated with storytelling, and both are crucial to the instruction of youths learning the ways of the people and imitating ideals and behaviors that have worked in the past. The centralized, traditionalist authority structure of the village is supported by music. The people are welded together in unity through music, dance, storytelling, and related mythic rituals" (Real, 15). Vid. sa connexion avec la culture *hip-hop*: "Also marking the rediscovery of aural culture, rap music clearly reflects oral traditions among urban African Americans. In anticipation of discussions of postmodernism to follow, let us say here that rap is a form of postmodern discourse shaped and made possible by our consumption-based, technologically advanced society which simultaneously tells the story of oppression that has come from that society. Rap is personalized and fragmented in the 'pastiche' style characteristic of postmodernism. Rap's 'sampling' of mixed and remixed sounds reflects the breakdown of standard frames of knowledge and even traditional ethics in the postmodern era. The flexible language game that is rap captures the beauty of oral improvisation within the technologies of electronic culture" (17).
- 5 Vid. le deuxième et quatrième points de ses "Eight counter-theses on visual culture": "2. Visual culture entails a meditation on blindness, the invisible, the unseen, the unseeable, and the overlooked; also on deafness and the visible language of gesture; it also compels attention to the tactile, the auditory, the haptic, and the phenomenon of synesthesia. [. . .] 4. There are no visual media. All media are mixed media, with varying ratios of senses and sign-types" (Mitchell, "Showing," 170).

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FORUM II

TRADUCTION ET TRADUCTEURS / TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATORS



COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION: SOME OBSERVATIONS

Thinking about translation's role in literary and cultural history elicits a keen awareness of its transformative potential. From Cicero to Lawrence Venuti and Maria Tymoczko we find testimony to the power, if also the complex and varying functions, of translation. As translation's role in the postcolonial, poststructuralist and post-, sub- and inter-national context plays itself out on the world scene today, its capacity both to extend the life of literary and cultural texts—but also to intervene in their worldly effects—comes to the fore. Rethinking translation in the twenty-first century, can, I believe, refine and extend our views of comparative reading and criticism. Ideally, a heightened attention to translation might foster a textually and linguistically particularized mode of reading, one in which translation practice is understood as both local and global, specific yet connected to broader affiliations and solidarities. Such a translation-inflected approach, one based on theories and practices from different parts of the globe, could prepare comparative literature to play a particularly open and democratizing role in literary studies today.

Like anyone who writes, I consider this question, of course, not from an impartial standpoint, but from a very particular one. In my case, it is a Department of Comparative Literature founded by a well-known translator of Greek and Latin texts, Robert Fagles, and that early developed a commitment to the scholarly and pedagogical importance of translation. Recently, it established a separate undergraduate certificate Program in Translation and Intercultural Communication, meant to engage students not only from the humanities, but also from the social sciences, natural sciences, and engineering. Here, colleagues from comparative literature, along with those from other departments on campus, train a wide-ranging group of undergraduates in the specificity of languages, cultures, and the theory and practice of translation. Creating programs and courses in translation and translation studies is hardly particular to Princeton alone, a fact that testifies to a growing interest in these fields.

Such institutional change is but one sign of comparative literature's recent and fruitful engagement with translation issues. Equally striking is the growing number of conferences and conference sessions—as well as scholarly writings—devoted to them. Many conferences emanate from translation studies programs

and departments. But an increasing number of literature conferences now integrate translation issues into their range of scholarly and pedagogical concerns. Recent annual meetings of the American Comparative Literature Association, the International Comparative Literature Association, and even the Modern Language Association here in the US register this trend, at times dramatically.

At the ACLA's 2008 meeting at Long Beach, "Arrivals and Departures," several seminars addressed major issues of translation research and pedagogy. One, for instance, considered translation and *translatio* in medieval cultures, while others focused on translation in the avant-garde, and on institutionalizing translation into the US university curriculum. In following years, the interest in translation-related papers and sessions increased. In 2009, at the ACLA conference hosted at Harvard and entitled "Global Languages, Local Cultures," a far greater number of seminars and individual papers explored problems of language, translation, and transmission. While some addressed literary translation in terms of gender and sexuality, others examined translation as seen from different parts of the globe, and still others considered its relationship to World Literature. Last spring's ACLA 2010 continued to pursue these linguistic and translational directions, as its title "Creoles, Diasporas, Cosmopolitanisms" suggests. Here, an impressive set of sessions explored the linguistic and cultural effects of migration and diaspora on literary translation, while others addressed their role in the teaching of translated texts and the scholarship shaping our sense of World Literature and comparative literature more generally. Such issues will come center stage at ACLA 2011, "World Literature/Comparative Literature," to be hosted by Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, as well as at the upcoming AILC/ICLA meeting in Korea, "Expanding the Frontiers of Comparative Literature." Here, the Congress specifically invites translation in the twenty-first century to "stand on the front lines of genuine mutual exchange between different cultures." (Call for Papers, 2nd circular.)

That a lively interest in translation and translation studies already extends beyond comparative literature to departments of English and foreign language became evident in the MLA's most recent, December 2009 meeting. Here Professor Catherine Porter's presidential address and the associated presidential forums on "The Tasks of Translation in the Global Context" brought home the importance of translation to all literary fields.

Such telling conferences signal the new interest building around translation. But they also point to broader transformations—both in our increasingly global world, where translation's role, often unacknowledged, grows more pervasive and visible, and in the academy as well.

A number of influential books from the past decade provide models for describing, or interpreting the circulation of literary texts—and begin to address the role of translation within it. Among them, one might note especially Pascale Casanova's *République mondiale des lettres*, Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* as well as David Damrosch's *What is World*

Literature? By highlighting in their very different ways the status and nature of textual exchange over time and place, these broad, framing statements directly and indirectly affirm the need to think through the history and the present role of translation. In some cases, and particularly in Damrosch's work, the issue takes on particular significance, opening new directions in the study of World Literature.

Other books in the field emphasize the importance of language and translation to a "new" comparative literature. More than a decade ago Susan Bassnett argued for a closer connection between comparative literature and translation—and that translation studies be "the principal discipline from now on, with comparative literature as a valued but subsidiary subject area" (161). Also at that time André Lefevere wrote his prescient—and still influential—*Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context*. Since then, two other well-known comparative literature theorists—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Emily Apter—have made somewhat different points. In Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* and her series of ground breaking essays on translation, she argues for the critical importance of deep language learning, and for the translator's agency and ethical commitment to the other. Underscoring the role of translation in the transmission of literary and cultural texts, Spivak suggests a new, more responsive, and responsible imagining of other cultures, not only the dominant ones, and encourages a rethinking of ourselves through the eyes of emergent rather than dominant peoples. For Spivak, a deep knowledge of languages and area studies (voided of the cold war politics that once invested them) can alone revitalize the discipline of comparative literature. Translation is clearly a salient, if complex part of this effort.

Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* begins by situating the intertwined history of translation and comparative literature in their transnational beginnings in Istanbul (looking pointedly to Spitzer as well as Auerbach). Drawing ultimately on a range of critical perspectives—from Spitzer, Said, Derrida, and Spivak—she underscores the need to keep the question of language itself at the forefront. In detailed analyses of specific theoretical problems, she emphasizes translation's ability not only to allow a text to "live on." She also highlights its potential to transform, and especially to de-predicate restrictive linguistic and cultural assumptions. Finding in language's "gaps" and its untranslatable impasses the means to detach our understanding of words from their ingrained stereotypes and cultural simplifications, she reveals translation's—and comparative literature's—potential for creating new imaginative space for the humanities.

Spivak's and Apter's insights cross, converge with, and extend some of Said's later work, as well as the contributions of a number of other important postcolonial and poststructuralist critics. They also take up themes developed in different ways through what has been called the "cultural turn" in translation studies, and expressed in the work of figures such as Lawrence Venuti, Theo Hermans, Paul Bandia, Michael Cronin, Jeremy Munday, and Maria Tymoczko. Such theorists write important changes into the history of translation studies beginning in the 1990's, shifting emphasis from linguistics to context and function—and from Eurocentric ideas to a new openness to theories and practices of other cultures.

Influenced by postcolonial and poststructuralist theory, translation studies also reveals language's value-laden responses to specific situations: How might different sorts of translation affect how we think about nations (colonial or newly emerging), cultures (dominant, subversive, diasporic) and individual translators?

Among those figures clearly associated with comparative literature as well as translation studies, Venuti stands out as one of the most productive and well-known. Works such as *The Scandals of Translation* and *The Translator's Invisibility*, but also *The Translation Studies Reader* have gone far to illuminate the role of translation in the history—as well as in the present—of literary study. Along with Antoine Berman, he has emphasized the need to use translation not to naturalize or domesticate texts (the usual mode of commercial literary translation in Europe and the US), but rather to “foreignize” them, thereby emphasizing their difference. Venuti's insistence on the translator's agency and ethical responsibility has had a major impact on our awareness of the transformative power of translation—for good or for ill. Other translators and theorists—such as Suzanne Jill Levine, Jonathan Munday, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Mona Baker and Theo Hermans—have emphasized in different ways the translator's intervenient power and the ethical and political issues this entails, whether s/he negotiates questions of gender, of history, or of contemporary politics.

Perhaps one of the most interesting translation theorists now on the scene, one with a longstanding commitment to comparative literature, is Michael Cronin, whose work views translation as a way to enhance our understanding of the particular source text, while negotiating with it from our own, equally particularized viewpoint (be this as a reader or a translator). In his *Translation and Globalization*, but especially his *Translation and Identity*, it becomes clear that the potential of thinking about translation in this way is that it does not homogenize or appropriate, but rather allows the particulars of cultural otherness to appear—yet also to be negotiated by the host culture. Accepting translation as a mode of relation or connection, he grants that these relations are as various as the human beings who create them, with their complex ideological approaches, mentalities, languages, and cultural contexts. In his view, translation can actually nurture diversity while looking beyond the local to broader affiliations, and far-reaching solidarities: “One of the ways in which we connect with others from different languages and cultures is through translation, so commitment to appropriate, culturally sensitive models of translation would appear to be central to any concept of global citizenship in the twenty-first century” (*Translation and Identity* 30).

Cronin's work can speak persuasively not only to scholars of translation but also to those in other literary—and non-literary—fields, perhaps because by accepting translation's work on what he calls a “micro-cosmopolitan” level, he allows us to think the global in more open, but also more precise, local ways. He suggests, for instance, that we might study literature and culture “from below,” from the viewpoint of language itself, with its many, often unforeseen cultural and historical imbrications—and that we might enter the critical discussion from any linguistic or cultural vantage point (not only those of hegemonic English, French, Spanish,

or Mandarin Chinese) and move outward to others. In these ways, his writing offers a polycentric response to some of the broad framing theories mentioned at the start, while emphasizing the importance of a close reading of texts and contexts.

The challenge to rethink translation from different cultural contexts has, of course, already been heard. In addition to many of those critics mentioned above, Paul Bandia, for instance, considers translation's role in postcolonial Africa and particularly in African Europhone literature in his *Translation as Reparation: Orality, Writing and Translation in Postcolonial Africa*. Theo Hermans' recent collection, *Translating Others*, Vols. 1 and 2, brings together translation theorists from beyond Europe and the US, particularly from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. All provide insight—and examples—for a new translation studies. Its lead article, by Maria Tymoczko, reminds us that the very word “translation” means different things outside the European context. Terms used for translation in India, *rupanta* (“change in form”) or *anuvad* (“speaking after”), or in Arabic *tarjama* (“biography”), or in Chinese *fan yi* (“turning over”) all reveal specific valences of translation, suggesting the importance of expanding and questioning European-based definitions (Tymoczko 22). She also underscores specific ways that our notions of translation alter through a broader knowledge of their worldly contexts. For instance, the importance of orality in many cultures suggests a reassessment of interpretation and interpreters as categories in translation studies. Similarly, a frequent reliance on community translations challenges the usual references in Europe and the US to an individual translator. And attempts to create clear boundaries between translation and other sorts of re-writing, re-processing, or representing source texts become more complex in a planetary context. Might there be any overarching theoretical framework for such wide-ranging ideas and practices? Tymoczko insists on the importance of seeking one, though it would have to rely on “cluster concepts,” based on affiliations and relations among instances of translation rather than on a strict logical definition that would bind them all.

Such recent ideas and signs of interest, sketched all too briefly here, underscore translation's potentially transformative role in comparative literary study. Drawing, for instance, on Cronin's emphasis on analysis “from below,” at the local level of language and culture, we can better discern the complex other-directedness and allegiances of any literary text or tradition. Such an approach, by adhering neither to an all-encompassing, often hegemonic idea of global interconnection, nor to an insistence on unified and impermeable local languages and cultures, would democratize our work, as it supports and enables a non-elitist, culturally/linguistically based study. This sort of approach would, I believe, begin to transform our understanding of what both comparative literature and translation studies mean.

But to fulfill the promise of this new dimension in literary study, we would need, as Tymoczko makes clear, a more complete, systematic inquiry into translation's meaning and role in other cultural contexts around the planet. This should, I believe, be studied by those who live and work within those cultures, who know

them well. Such a study, organized perhaps as a long-term project among colleagues of the AILC/ICLA, would begin to respond to the Korea Congress's charge to translation that it "stand on the front lines of genuine mutual exchange between different cultures."

On these bases, we can outline new prospects for comparative literary study, in which the roles of language, translation and the various forms of re-writing that allow literature to flourish come into clearer focus. They would enable, I think, at least three advances. One is a renewed emphasis on the close reading of literary texts, conceived now from the perspective of the deep language and cultural learning typical of translation as Spivak and others have suggested, but alive to the linguistic and cultural complexity that inheres in each text. A second would be a heightened attention to theoretical issues implicit in language itself, including the question of "untranslatables" that Apter has emphasized, and that come to our attention, for instance, in the cross-cultural study of the very term "translation." Such examples, fully analyzed, could help to loosen and "de-predicate" restrictive cultural assumptions. A third would be a re-description of literary exchange and circulation—but now detailed "from below" and offered in polycentric terms. New possibilities and questions for literary and commercial exchange offered by the internet would also arise here, since the cultural networks it elaborates transform conventional views of translation and literary writing almost as much as a knowledge of language's more material cultural contexts. In such a model of literary circulation, polycentric networks take the place of clear centers and peripheries, introducing the potential for a more sensitive global consciousness. With this would come a greater consciousness of our own educative work as not only partial, particular, and frankly literary, but also as having broader worldly effects.

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TRAVAILS OF A TRANSLATOR

The translator's motto should be: "Expect the unexpected." He never knows what problems his next translation will bring. Every book, every author, presents problems he has never encountered, and leads to solutions, or attempts at solutions, that he would never otherwise have thought of. One thing seems generally true: it is easier to translate a good writer than a mediocre one. The good writer knows exactly the effect he wants to achieve, even if he sometimes misses, while the mediocre writer has a looser grasp of what he is doing, so the translator has to try to figure out what the author meant to say.

Good writers present specific problems, and the translator has no difficulty recognizing them when he comes across them. Good writers can also reveal, in the patient process of being translated, how their minds were working while they were writing. I translated a long-lost story by Proust, "L'indifférent" [The Indifferent One], for the literary magazine *Conjunctions*. Proust wrote it when he was twenty-two, and it is abundantly clear from the text that he wanted to be "Proust" but didn't know how to get there. The body of the story has impressive touches, but the situations are absurd. The author tries one device after another in trying to become "Proust," but it is only in the last two pages that something "clicks," that he finally achieves the mastery over his material that he was seeking. The translator follows this process, line by line and scene by scene.

The translator must also be alert to nuances in the text. In Proust's story a beautiful, elegant society lady is sitting in her box at the opera with only a female companion. A male acquaintance comes in and asks her, with the stiletto nastiness of their social circle in which Proust was later to specialize, "Qui sont vos

hommes ce soir?” Literally, “Who are your men this evening?” His meaning is: “Where are they?” I translated this ostensibly bland question as “Who are your cavaliers this evening?” which conveys the barb.

Translating Robert Musil’s *The Man without Qualities* (with Sophie Wilkins) presented other problems. Trained as a scientist, Musil invented a new and unique literary style that seemed, for the translator, very difficult. Then I happened to read that every evening Musil read aloud to his wife what he had written during the day, and that was the key to translating it: what looks like an extraordinarily difficult written style was actually a *spoken* style. Musil sounds wonderful in German read aloud, and so one began with the *rhythm* of the sentences, and fitted the words in English to the rhythm. Suddenly it became possible to reflect in English the wonderful flow of Musil’s German.

This discovery was also helpful when I later translated Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, written in a style that is a rushing torrent of sentences. Rather than working from word to word, I decided to start with this rhythm and fit the words to it. The result in English closely approximates the effect of the original.

Musil presented other problems, chief among them finding equivalents for the infinitely subtle and nuanced gradations of title and talk in the old Austrian Empire with which Musil had such satirical fun. The translators could follow Musil when he riffed on the official rank “kaiserlich-königlich” (imperial-royal) being a different category from the rank of “kaiserlich und königlich” (imperial and royal). But in the dialogue, each of the characters speaks in the idiolect of his or her social class and background—with the amusing result that when they are talking *to* each other they are talking *past* each other. Thus General Stumm von Bordwehr talks like an Austrian general, but we couldn’t have him talking in English like a British or American general, since the cultural effect would be totally out of place—it wouldn’t be at all equivalent. We had to translate the dialogue straightforwardly, giving little linguistic pushes where we could to the idiosyncrasies of the characters’ speech.

What to call the character Graf Leinsdorf presented a problem. “Graf” is “Count” in English, but the social and cultural differences in concepts of rank between old Austria and England and America turned out to be insuperable. Although nominally a Count, Leinsdorf was a feudal lord, and one of the highest and most influential people in the Austrian government, whereas a Count in England is of a much lower order, and in the US these aristocratic titles are all conceptually meaningless—we have no equivalents for them. For the British, “Count Leinsdorf” would not indicate Leinsdorf’s high authority. I looked everywhere, and even consulted a number of friends and colleagues in England. We finally settled on calling him “Count Leinsdorf” but having him addressed as “Your Excellency,” which (I was told) would indicate in England that he was a *foreign* aristocrat. In the US, of course, it indicates nothing at all: “Count” is simply a label, not a concept. Fortunately Musil was a genius, and grounded his novel in human nature and human psychology, so that even in translation *The Man without Qualities* retains its force.

This example from Musil brings up what to my mind is the greatest problem in translation: how to bridge cultural differences, which are embedded in language. In an important sense, words are not the translator's root problem. The greatest problem in the case of Musil's novel was finding equivalents in the English-speaking world for the cultural differences between the old, disappeared Austrian Empire that Musil was satirizing—equivalents that did not and do not exist. The Austrian Empire ended in 1918; Musil worked on his novel between 1924 and 1942—it is unfinished—and the current English translation dates from the 1990s. Three different cultural epochs, each of which the translators had to take into account, both in terms of the author's perspective and the current audience for whom the translation is intended. The editor also insisted that the translation be "mid-Atlantic," that is, acceptable in both the United Kingdom and the US: yet another cultural decision.

Problems of all kinds beset the translator. For instance, how is one to translate Kafka? His prose is straightforward, and seems free of problems. But he was a subtle writer, and embeds his difficulties in his choice of vocabulary: his smooth surfaces conceal treacherous reefs. Kafka often chooses an ambiguous word with many different connotations rather than a direct term, or plays with the oddities of language, as when, in *The Trial*, he uses the term "unschuldig" (literally "not guilty") to point out that there is no word for "innocent" (itself literally "not guilty" in Latin, but not apparent in English). Kafka brings to our attention that the concept of guilt, but not its opposite, is linguistically embedded in our culture.

An outstanding example of Kafka's skill at manipulating words is the title of his most famous story, "Die Verwandlung," wrongly translated into English as "The Metamorphosis." There is a perfectly good word for metamorphosis in German—*die Metamorphose*—and Kafka didn't use it. "Verwandlung" is a word whose basic meaning is "transformation," and that has other echoes. In Kafka's story not only Gregor Samsa, but his entire family is transformed (not metamorphosed). Kafka here avoids the conceptual, scientific term for a word that has acquired a nimbus of associations through long usage. Freud noted in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that "in every language concrete terms, in consequence of the history of their development, are richer in associations than conceptual ones," and Kafka is a magician of word associations. He chooses his words like a poet.

A major problem with these European experimental writers of the Modernist period in the first half of the twentieth century is that they were inventing new and difficult literary styles in ways that are difficult to get across in English. English-speaking readers can accept Joyce's experimental *Ulysses*, but seem to prefer that translations of foreign writers "tell stories" rather than convey their authors' radical stylistic experiments. Thus Rilke's *Duino Elegies* are in German linguistically disorienting and granitic in effect, whereas their first translation into English by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (1927) normed these poems to the august tradition of the English elegy. The translation was a great success: English-speaking readers could think they were reading a familiar form, whereas German readers were faced with poetry that was radically new and disorienting.

In translating Rilke's novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, an early work of experimental Modernism, I paid special attention to Rilke's odd, bifurcated style, in which the harsh, bitten-off language used to depict the character's isolation as an adult is interspersed with the lyric language of high poetic intensity evoking memories of his childhood. Earlier translations smoothed the novel out in a way that reads beautifully in English but cancels out Rilke's rigorous experimental search for a new literary language, opposed to the conventional storytelling of the nineteenth-century novel, a new language that would be closer to the fragmented reality of the early twentieth century.

The current generation of translators, of whom I am one, are more language-oriented than most of our predecessors: in the later twentieth century language itself became a central object of study and concern for philosophy, literature, and culture in general, and literary translators who grew up in this atmosphere approached their task with greater awareness of language and, one might add, with greater apprehension. I would venture to say that this has, on the whole, benefited recent translations of European writers of the Modernist period.

But today the situation is different. As cultural traffic among countries and cultures has exploded with the astounding increase in what is, to some extent, the "homogenization" of culture, writing has changed. Now there is something called an "international style" in literature, in which books are written with an international audience in mind. A novel's setting might be foreign, but its style is uncomplicated and its characters, situation, and action are easily familiar to audiences in other countries. (There can also be some small cultural bumps here too, of course, especially in the case of novels that are now frequently set in countries other than the one they were written in.) Translating this kind of literature becomes piece work; Claude Belton wrote a hilarious satire about this in his 2004 novel *Les nègres du traducteur* [The Translator's Ghostwriters].

Translation can not be done on the basis of theory: the theory of translation can only be a branch of philosophical thought and argument. For the translator, each book, each author, presents unique problems that vary so widely from case to case that it is impossible to derive abstract theoretical concepts. As Mallarmé said to Degas when the painter told the poet that he liked to dabble in poetry but had trouble finding ideas: "poetry is made with words, not ideas."

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THE TRANSLATOR AS HUMAN, TOO

Gregory Rabassa. *If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents*. New York: New Directions, 2005. 189 pp. 978-0811216654.

In 1967 Gregory Rabassa, a forty-something professor of Spanish and Portuguese, laboring quietly in the halls of Columbia University, received the National Book Award for his deft translation of Julio Cortázar's vast, dazzlingly unique novel *Rayuela* [Hopscotch]. The prize was fully deserved, given the difficulties posed by the Argentine avant-gardist's formal experiment on one hand and Rabassa's superb job of Englishing its stylistic pyrotechnics on the other. He had achieved something roughly analogous to what the best translators of Joyce's *Ulysses* had accomplished elsewhere.

In many ways the prize came as a "first." The Translation rubric was a brand-new one for that year. Later recipients of the prestigious Award would include William Weaver for Calvino's *Cosmicomics* (1969) and, finally, Richard Howard for Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil* (1983)—after which the category was permanently dropped. Since 1980 (the year of the election of President Reagan), broad US interest in translated literatures and foreign films has been in steady decline. Today, save for a handful of Latin Americans and Holocaust memoirists, most non-English-language narrative in the US serves as raw material for university-based imprints or small presses.

The prize for Rabassa's effort was also the first instance of wide US recognition for what would soon become known as the Latin American "Boom" of the novel. Previously, writing from the other America had gained, at best, select visibility in educated US circles. Granted, Borges and Neruda had their fan base, but it existed solely among bohemian cultists and cosmopolitan culturati. (Their works, fittingly, were originally put out by New Directions and Grove Press, both of them avant-garde outfits.) The 1967 Award thus not only hailed Rabassa's noble labors but indirectly celebrated Cortázar's high art—a significant gesture in a country where, unlike, say, France or Italy, there are no major prizes that specifically honor foreign books. Today, of course, the works of García Márquez and Vargas Llosa are issued by commercial houses, are stocked in US chain stores, and are even featured on occasion in the American mass media, as when *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Love in the Time of Cholera* were recently chosen by TV hostess Oprah Winfrey for her highly influential Book Club.

If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents is the multilayered title of a brief and delightful memoir by Gregory Rabassa. Among its surprises: prize-winning *Hopscotch* was in fact Rabassa's first translated volume ever. Earlier during that decade he had rendered a few South American poems and short stories for *Odyssey Review*, a little magazine in New York. Though lasting only six issues, the journal printed numerous foreign authors who were slowly, unwittingly headed for world acclaim—and it in turn prompted a phone call to Rabassa from Sarah

Blackburn, an editor at Pantheon Books (part of the Random House group), who asked if he might like to translate an Argentine novel called *Rayuela*. Rabassa accepted; the rest is (literary) history. A further surprise is that Rabassa had not so much as set eyes on the work as yet, and moreover that, rather than study the text in advance, he Englished it even as he read it, chapter by chapter. This indeed was to be the Rabassa working “method” for virtually all of the books he has done since, save for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a novel whose fame preceded his translating assignment.

“Serendipity” is a favorite word of Rabassa’s, who drolly confesses, “I have always thought that I just stumbled into translation because it was there” (10). Indeed, he unabashedly describes himself as “an amateur and a dilettante” (68). These are precisely the traits that give *If This Be Treason* its light, bright, sparkling character. Written as he entered—his word—“octogenaria,” it is, amazingly enough, the first book penned by Gregory Rabassa as a North American man of letters.

Being a memoir, the volume looks back at the author’s past: birth in a Yonkers NY mansion in 1922, upbringing on a farm in New Hampshire’s north country, father a ruined Cuban cigar merchant, mother a New Yorker of immigrant English stock. We read about his childhood love of word play; the school teachers—cited lovingly by name—who first trained him in foreign grammars; language study at Dartmouth College (back when translation was still the pedagogical norm); his uniformed employ as a cryptographer for Allied forces in wartime Italy (where he delved into Dante) and later in Algiers. Returning to civilian life he enrolls in graduate study in Romance Languages at Columbia (mainly because its schools of Law and Journalism were too much work), learns Portuguese and, along the way, discovers Brazil’s fascinating African component.

The bulk of *If This Be Treason*, however, consists of a “Bill of Particulars” section, in which Rabassa spends 130 pages discussing the two-and-a-half dozen Iberian writers, from both sides of the Atlantic, whom he has translated, and recounts the specific circumstances surrounding each of those tasks. Among the masters so served, besides the usual big-name suspects, are Goytisolo, Juan Benet, Lezama Lima, Lobo Antunes, Machado de Assis, and dramatic works by René Marqués and José Ruibal. One surprise item is a chapbook of poems by Vinicius de Moraes—bossa nova singer, co-composer of “The Girl from Ipanema,” and author of the play on which the film *Black Orpheus* was loosely based. In the course of Rabassa’s long career he has taken on just one non-fiction tome, an introduction to Brazilian literature by eminent scholar Afrânio Coutinho, after which he swore never to do another, inasmuch as “the language of criticism . . . offered few adventures and not a great deal of creativity for the translator” (82).

As expected, *If This Be . . .* brings in engaging chit-chat about the translator’s trade. He notes how *pierre* for Flaubert carries rich connotations—Peter, the Papacy, Christ’s famous pun—that English “stone” lacks. How to render proper names can give rise to head-scratching dilemmas. Hence, in Castilian writing, Roman and foreign names are routinely Hispanicized; not so by Anglo scribblers.

Book titles, too, lead to quandaries. Should it be *A Hundred Years* or *One Hundred Years*? *Loneliness* or *Solitude*? Differences between Portuguese and Luso-Brazilian are touched upon. And obscenities offer thickets of their own; Spanish *hijo de puta* and *cabrón* are hopelessly archaic as “whoreson” and “cuckold”; the only possibility is today’s “son of a bitch” for each. In a memorable episode, when in 1976 a chapter from García Márquez’s *Autumn of the Patriarch*, with its foul-mouthed dictator-protagonist, was under consideration at *The New Yorker*, the Anglo-Saxonism “shit” (for *mierda*) brought alarm and prompted many a high-level meeting among the editors. (At the time that posh magazine still had a policy of not printing vulgarisms.) In the end, though, truthfulness to the text prevailed: as a wry Rabassa notes, the mighty Colombian fabulator and his impish *yanqui* squire for once had “broke[n] the shit barrier at *The New Yorker*” (102).

Refreshingly unacademic and bereft of pompous pedantry, Rabassa’s remembrance nonetheless comes with its own cache of learned references, if lightly worn. The late-blooming author casually juggles a myriad of allusions from centuries past, some of it on occasions recondite and obscure. (“Now who is Mama Lucy?” this less-than-informed reviewer wondered.) Hence, reflecting on the range of linguistic hues that might get lost in language transfer, he reflects, “we would have to be certain birds”—a glance at the fact that avian creatures can see a broader spectrum of colors than we mere humans can. There are some in-jokes: only readers who have trod Rabassa’s special field will recognize “Petch Peden” as Margaret Sayers Peden, the well-seasoned new translator of Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo*, among other Latin American works.

Title and subtitle of Rabassa’s autumnal book are in themselves a complex suite of multiple allusions. *Treason* of course evokes that old (untranslatable) Italian pun, *Traduttore, traditore* (“Translators, traitors”); but the full titular phrase echoes a legendary and apocryphal exhortation, attributed to American revolutionist Patrick Henry in 1765 and enshrined in high-school US history textbooks: “If this be treason, make the most of it.” The subtitle, in turn, builds on the long-established English *mistranslation* of the name of Freud’s farewell work, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* [The Uneasiness in Culture], while the misspelled *Dyscontents* plays on “dysfunction/dysfunctional,” quasi-technical terms applied rather to social groups, to unhappy families in particular.

Rabassa gently bemoans the professional woes and mild indignities endured by translators, who generally earn zero royalties and whose names are routinely omitted from book covers and advertising. Associations have sprung up, although the protections they offer are uneven and subject to slights from the powers that be. (When I had a brief stint Englishing a Spanish novel a couple of decades ago, an information packet from PEN International admonished us greenhorns that, for publishers, translation is “work-for-hire,” but also that, in countries such as Japan, translators enjoy a certain regard. . . .) Rabassa might also have mentioned some notable cases in which translation has been undertaken by creative writers: Scottish poet Edwin Muir co-translated Kafka with his wife Willa; Neruda and Vallejo have been made available to Anglophone devotees by the good graces

of fellow lyrists Robert Bly and James Wright; and Nabokov caused a notorious ruckus with his ultra-literal rendering of Pushkin's *Onegin*. In other latitudes, Borges recast Faulkner and Woolf; Cortázar—himself a salaried translator for UNESCO—prepared an edition of Poe; and the leading novelist in contemporary Spain, Javier Marías, translates from the English and indeed won a prize for his version of *Tristram Shandy*. In a distant US era, Allen Tate—poet, New Critic, and former Agrarian—refashioned French-Symbolist verse for US anthologies. In today's more academicized milieu, by contrast, translation can be looked upon slightly askance and may not necessarily earn a young professor a promotion. On the other hand, developing a theory of translation might be taken seriously enough, and translation workshops are now a sometime feature of the literary-studies curriculum.

In an oft-quoted quip, García Márquez once praised the Rabassa version of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as better than the original. More broadly, for English speakers the world over, Rabassa will long be associated with Latin America's "Boom" of the novel, much as, until recently, Victorian lady Constance Garnett (1861-1946) ministered as England's go-between for Russia's great authors. Rabassa, needless to say, is a superb translator, but, just as Garnett has done for countless North American students who've devoured Dostoevsky in inexpensive paperback editions, Rabassa too serves as the gateway for many Anglo readers and writers, young and old, who have been nurtured and inspired by the "other" Americans since 1967.

The "Boom" (quotation marks always, no one really knows why) is itself a remarkable phenomenon, comparable in many respects to the miraculous literary flowering that occurred in a backward nineteenth-century Russia. Moreover, that Boom continues to replenish itself via new voices such as Antonio Skármetta, Fernando Vallejo, and the late Roberto Bolaño, to name just a few. The "world republic of letters"—Pascale Casanova's highly suggestive phrase—has been vastly expanded thanks to the wealth of innovations and fresh visions of the Latin Americans (and their dedicated, skilled translators). Meanwhile, those of us involved with Iberian studies have gained immeasurably. Rabassa's very real talents as transmuter might not have blossomed had Cortázar et al. not happened along. In my own case, the "Boom" provided an alternative to the standard path of working toward a degree in "English." As I note in my memoir *Overseas American: Growing up Gringo in the Tropics*, during my student days at Berkeley I was often asked, teasingly, "Gene, why are you in Spanish? Is there any stuff worth reading?" Such a question, in our time, is no longer a possibility.

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ESSAIS / REVIEW ESSAYS



COMPARATIVE POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES AND THE CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN EMPIRES

A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures—Continental Europe and its Empires. Eds. Prem Poddar, Rajeev Patke, and Lars Jensen. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008. 688 pp. 978-0748623945.

A comparative study of empires allows for a sense of perspective. All too often nations who have embarked on empire have borrowed from others and have wished to occlude or deny those who went before or who were rivals in imperial expansion. These empires can also develop an ideology that they are doing a favor to peoples brought into the empire against their will. To some extent, grammar can oversimplify, and it is not as though nations or empires are coherent and unified and that there is not dissent within them. There is sometimes an accidental aspect to empires. It is not as if a ruler or a council or a legislature sits down and says, “Let’s start an empire.” States can expand for reasons of trade, defense, and culture. Often cultural exchange follows trade routes, and conflict has implications for the literary and cultural worlds.

Comparative methods are important for the study of colonialism, postcolonialism, and empires partly because states have their own traditions and while these are vital, they can also lead to a focus without perspective (See Pagden for a brief but excellent introduction to empire). No one could do without key scholarship in the areas of a given state, nation, or empire, because the knowledge of specialists brings so much to any study, but to see the world from one point of view can be limiting. Comparisons allow for connections and can decenter the debates on the expansion and contraction of European empires. Colonization and decolonization have various vantages. Although the British Empire was the largest and most powerful of the European empires, others were potent; and the Russian and Soviet Empire was the last great one to fall. Since 1815, the Anglo-American world has been quite influential, although not without its rivals. Some argue that the United States is an empire and others that it was the first agent of decolonization in the First British Empire.

In the English-speaking world especially, with the steady rise of English over the past two hundred years or so as a major language, and particularly in the twentieth century, it is easy to be lulled into the naturalness of a relatively recent development, and to veer away from the study of other cultures. Temporal as well as spatial comparisons are crucial because Portugal and the Netherlands were

once great powers although they are relatively small states, and a good part of this history happened centuries ago and owed much to their expansion and their overseas empires. In fact, except for Russia, which still rules over a good portion of the territory into which it expanded (and in this respect is much like the United States), most of the former European empires have small and not hugely populous homelands. This trend of a small state's expansion into an empire and then its shrinkage back to a small polity also happened to Athens and Rome in antiquity. There is an ebb and flow in human affairs.

By comparing empires, we can better understand the colonial in the postcolonial. The Scandinavian expansion was something that pre-dated Iberian voyages out into the Atlantic. The Portuguese experience in Africa occurred before Columbus landed in the western Atlantic (see Campbell). Much of the colonization was what today we would call multinational. Italian bankers and mariners were keys to the expansion of other states and empires in Europe. Captains of different nationalities sailed for other states; Henry Hudson, an Englishman, for instance, worked for the Dutch. If we compare Native go-betweens, we see that La Malinche and Squanto help us to understand aspects of mediation, dilemma, and translation in different contexts. Those who defended the Natives against European exploitation or saw them as potential Christians to be saved were from different states. The Spaniard Vitoria and the Dutchman Grotius were instrumental in the beginnings of modern international law. Las Casas, Montaigne, Léry, Roger Williams, and John Eliot all defended the Native Americans or used them as a way to criticize Europeans. The worlds of these European empires were connected by sea and land routes, so that to speak about one part of the world and not about another by the seventeenth century is only a matter of focus and not because the empires can be separated. To understand the postcolonial without the colonial is an improbable task. Whereas the postcolonial can be utopian and forward-looking and so anxious about the drag of the past inherent in the colonial, it coexists with the colonial in a productive tension. The political project might wish to escape the past, and although it should not be in thrall to it, it would be surprising if it could get beyond the history that made the colonial experience, which in turn helped to create the present world, which may in part, at least in the form of postcolonialism, have a longing or desire for something better. This tension between looking back and looking ahead has been a dilemma of culture for a long time. It was so in the colonial period and it has continued to be so in the age of decolonization or neo-imperialism or postcolonialism, depending on how one views the present predicament.

These issues go to the heart of the political, economic, social, and cultural situation of the contemporary world. *Postcolonial Literatures* is significant because it gives us analyses of the continental European empires that can be used by comparatists to help form useful comparisons among postcolonial literatures and cultures. This is a vital contribution to Comparative Literature and other comparative fields. The editors are to be commended for this project, a complementary volume to a *Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (Edinburgh

University Press, 2005). This second volume gives a context beyond cultures in English. So much, then, depends on perspective, so the different cultures and languages treated in this volume decenter the notion of a world of English, as if the world were made for English.

Prem Poddar, Rajeev Patke, and Lars Jensen have brought together a set of contributions that is framed in terms of recognition or discovery and the shock that this process can bring, something that Aristotle, José de Acosta, and Walter Benjamin all discussed from different points of view in diverse times, places, and European languages (see Grafton 1-2). Recognition, in terms of western European culture, is framed in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Contrary to what practical people might say and think today, literary representation and its interpretation are at the heart of culture, politics, and the expansion of states and empires. The editors of this volume are also wise to insist on the historical having an important impact on the present, of the colonial in the postcolonial. This insistence on the study of the past is significant because it reminds others that the postcolonial has to be grounded and is not only a utopian way of seeing and interpreting. The editors wish to have readers recognize the importance of crossing linguistic and political boundaries and of guarding against oversimplifications or misrepresentations. In short, the editors wish to ground postcolonial studies in an historical awareness mindful of the literary and to provide readers with the work of scholars from around the world.

Beginnings are always difficult to decide. And so it is with European expansion and empires. The editors could have started with the Viking expansion, or with the spread of Italian influences in culture, navigation, and finance, or the movement of Portugal to Africa and the eastern Atlantic islands; but they decided to go with the more common starting point during the past two decades, the year of Columbus's landfall in the western Atlantic. They also see the age of decolonization, which ends the great age of European imperialism as beginning at the end of World War II. While this is true in the broad sweep of things, it elides the decolonization of the Thirteen Colonies and the Latin American colonies of Spain and Portugal in the final decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth. The case of Haiti also qualifies this frame. Perhaps the final surge of decolonization does occur after 1945, but colonization, imperialism, and decolonization are all subject to uneven development in the empires of Britain and the Continental states of Europe. The editors are aware of the challenge and hope in this volume to find comparisons and contrasts in the heterogeneous field of colonization and decolonization among these empires. The book also focuses on significant themes like migration, modernization, and mass violence. The elision of violence from national and imperial histories is something that needs many a watchful eye. The typology of past and present, or double image or relation, is important because, as R. G. Collingwood saw, a little differently from Benjamin, the reader of history is part of the embodiment or re-enactment of its meaning. The same could be said of all readers, including those of literary texts, except one could make the distinction that Aristotle does in *Poetics* that history represents events as they happened and poetry can diverge from that frame.

To make informed comparisons, it is crucial to build on specialist knowledge of the cultures and literatures of individual states and empires.¹ Comparison allows for other perspectives, whether from the vantage of the expanding or invading peoples or the local populations or somewhere between. Comparison beyond the realm of English-speaking cultures and literatures permits a more intricate view. Although I will follow the structure of this volume according to the order of national cultures and literatures as presented there and although I admire much in the book, I would say that the structure might be more historical in its movement, that is, to proceed from Denmark and Scandinavia through Italy, Portugal, Spain, Britain, and France to more recent empires. Each empire will have its own historical logic, and the internal division might reflect this sub-structure because one of the arguments of the book is that it is important to localize and historicize each empire as well as to provide an implicit framework for comparison.

Still, there are some good moves that help to decenter the usual narratives and the emphasis on the larger states and empires. Smaller languages and states also find their way into this mosaic. Belgium, which itself was created in 1830 from territory ruled variously by Spain, Austria, and France, became a colonial power and reflected the tensions within the class of the French-speaking ruling elite and the workers. Leopold II had to contend with this internal strife while realizing that Belgium, despite its prosperity, did not have the capital to develop an area eight times itself in Africa (See, for example, Emerson; Pakenham; Hochschild; Ewans; Olson). He turned to the international market and granted leases and also had to try to colonize a heterogeneous place in the Congo. The Hutu-Tutsi divide in Belgian Africa developed as a result of the internal divisions within Belgium as well as from colonial policies. The anti-colonial resistances in the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi were all different according to colonial histories because the first was the private domain of Leopold II until 1908 and the second and third were under German control from 1890 to 1919. From 1885 to 1958, ten international exhibitions, which included colonial sections, took place in Belgium. They promoted the African colonies, justified a Belgian presence there (particularly to suppress slavery), and sought to bring civilization.

Cultural production was part of this colonization, for instance comics like Hergé's *Tintin au Congo* (1931). Historiography and literature have explored colonization and decolonization. Although from Martinique, a part of France, Aimé Césaire represents independence in *Une Saison au Congo* (1966). V. Y. Mudimbe examines, for example, the tension between faith and politics in *Entre les eaux: Dieu, un prêtre, la révolution* (1973). In a formal sense, Belgium only became an empire in 1908, which was about the time empires were already, although few may have suspected it, on their way out. Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1902) may well have fictionalized an aspect of Leopold's private control over the Congo, which was recognized in the Berlin Congress of 1884-85. Other authors, like Mark Twain, Booker T. Washington, and Arthur Conan Doyle, denounced Leopold II's regime in the Congo, which the Belgian government itself was not interested in having as a colony. Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost: A*

Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa (1998) is a recent reminder of abuses in Leopold's Congo, which were connected to the rubber boom and the reign of terror against Congolese workers. The decolonization of Congo into Zaire has had its share of problems as discussed by Bolya in *L'Afrique, le maillon faible* (2002).

The Belgians played both sides in the conflict between the Tutsis and Hutus in the intricate relations between both groups before and after the independence of Rwanda, and this conflict culminated from April to July 1994 with the murder of about a million Rwandans, mostly Tutsis. The export of this conflict and genocide to the Congo resulted in even more deaths. Belgium tried to stop this conflict through its diplomacy. As in any human endeavor—and colonization and decolonization are all too human—ambivalence and contradiction played their role.

The Vikings had a long history of colonization before the editors' starting date of 1492. Denmark has a protracted colonial history despite its relatively small area and population and, like many other European states, undertook internal colonization that included the standardization of language and the suppression or subordination of dialects. Although Greenland and the Faroe Islands are the colonies that often come to mind when discussing the Danish Empire, Denmark also had colonies in sub-tropical and tropical zones, such as the Danish West Indies, where they were involved in the slave trade until 1848 (For a history of Scandinavia, including Denmark, see Derry). In the Danish colonies in the Caribbean, only a few of the settlers were Danes, and most were Dutch or from other European backgrounds, and creolization occurred. The islands were sold to the United States in 1916. Rivalry with the Dutch from the early 1600s allowed the Danish to establish charter companies, and these largely disappeared or were absorbed by the British in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. The changes in Danish history—especially defeat at the hands of Austria and Prussia in 1864, the loss of Schleswig and Holstein, and the shrinking of the Danish state—affected historiography and a retrospective reading of Denmark in a more minor key. The Danish Empire had small settlements in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia but was centered in the Baltic and North Atlantic and began receding in about 1800. Still, it shares with other empires involvement in slavery and with other northern states and with empires like Britain and Russia (and their successors the United States and Canada) the issue of conflict with, and colonization of, the Inuit.

In the "rediscovery" of Greenland, from 1605, the Danish kidnapped Inuit and took them back to be displayed in Denmark. The interest in anthropology and ethnology tailed off in Denmark when home rule was established in Greenland in 1979. Greenland had been explored by Norwegians and Icelanders in the 980s and that settlement died out about 500 years later. The Norwegian-Danish realm sent out Hans Egede, a pastor, in 1721 to convert the Inuit population, which had migrated to Greenland in the 1200s. The German occupation of Denmark from 1940 to 1945 cut Greenland off and meant that the influence of the United States was felt more strongly and weakened the connection with Denmark. During the 1960s, as part of the international human rights movement, Danish authors like

Thorkild Hansen represented empire in a critical light (see *Slavernes kyst* [The Slave Coast], 1967). Other authors wrote fictions of empire, most notably Karen Blixen (*Out of Africa*, 1937) and Peter Høeg (*Miss Smilla's Sense of Snow*, 1994). These works help to remind the world of the Danish Empire and its traces.

The French Empire, which is well known, was vast and diverse and had many phases, so that to speak about it is to describe an intricate and changing empire. That means that pre-contact culture and historical context are important for the study of the expansion of France. *Noirisme* and *negritude* are keys to understanding. The decolonization of the French Empire could be violent, as in Indochina and Algeria, and writers, like Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant, found a way to represent these critical times in various parts of the French Empire. Glissant wrote about *créolisation* as a way toward flexibility, change, variety, and inclusion. Frantz Fanon was critical of French representations of Africa. Anti-colonialism was a feature of the French Empire from early on and, although it changed its nature, persisted into the period of decolonization, especially after 1945. Jean-Paul Sartre was a crucial figure in this trend.

Internal colonization within France occurred before and during the expansion of France externally. It is also notable that this volume discusses the French in North America, including figures like Jacques Cartier in the 1530s and 1540s, and in India, citing key people like Joseph-François Dupleix in the mid-eighteenth century. The French established permanent posts and settlements in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans in the seventeenth century, but, something not explored in this collection, there is also the important exploration and settlement in Brazil in the sixteenth century as well as in Florida, as represented by Binot de Paulmier de Gonneville, Nicolas Le Challeux, and Jean de Léry (See Lestringant; Hart). After the defeat of the French in the Seven Years War, many French colonial motives were in reaction to British interests. The French preferred to give up Canada instead of the riches of the Caribbean colonies; they supported the independence of the thirteen Anglo-American colonies; they developed Indochina partly in response to the British presence in Hong Kong; their scramble in Africa was in competition with British influence there. Not that there was a coherent, unified, and equally applied imperial policy in the French Empire or any of the other European empires, but these were the propensities and outcomes in the rivalry between France and Britain that occupied much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Important writers emerged in France to write of French colonization and decolonization in different parts of the world. Montaigne, Diderot, and Verne explored otherness in the encounters between the French and the world beyond. More recently, Marguerite Duras has represented the French colonies in Indochina. Maryse Condé has written from Guadeloupe about transatlantic migration, and Dany Laferrière has explored people from the Caribbean moving to North America. Linguistically and culturally, French has had a disproportionate effect on other states in Europe and elsewhere. Neo-colonialism, as Sartre defined it in the 1960s, does not require direct political control, and French cultural hegemony, although not what it was, is still a force to be reckoned with.

The German peoples have also been keys to the story of European expansion and decolonization. German polities or people were significant in the expansion of Europe from the start, given the role of the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburgs. In *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1552), Bartolomé de Las Casas mentions Germans in Venezuela. This collection is more interested in the time after German unification in 1871 when Germany had formal colonies (1884-1918), although, among other things, it notes the shifting attitudes of German writers over the course of the Crusades, calls attention to the slave privileges of the Welsers and Fuggers of Augsburg and the interests of Brandenburg in Africa in the seventeenth century, and mentions Black Germans in the eighteenth century such as the philosophy professor from Ghana, Anton Wilhelm Amo and the Ethiopian courtier in Vienna, Angelo Soliman. The reluctance of Bismarck to devote government resources to colonization was something that Wilhelm II overturned from about 1890 onward (see Stürmer).

Travel literature, including work by Goethe, Karl May, and others, receives some attention in the volume. Gustav Frenssen's novel, *Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest* [Peter Moor's Journey to the Southwest], (1906), represents the German destruction of the Herero and Nama in Africa. In 1919 the German National Assembly voted overwhelmingly against giving up its colonies as part of the Treaty of Versailles. In the 1930s, the Nazis turned their attention to a colonial expansion into central and eastern Europe, and they seem to have had some plans for colonies in Africa. The connection between German genocide in its colonies in Africa and later Nazi atrocities is something explored in the German historiography of its state and empire and something that Hannah Arendt called attention to in the 1950s. The role of colonialism in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is also a subject of debate.

The Italian Empire fought the Germans in World War I but was allied to them in World War II. In the modern era, Italy began its empire with the occupation of Eritrea in 1890 and continued with Somalia in 1908 and Libya in 1912. Imperialism intensified with Benito Mussolini from 1922 to 1943, so that Italian liberals as well as fascists had a hand in this empire (See Woolbert; Rodogno). Between 1945 and 1947, left and right often supported the idea of restoring the colonies to Italy. Long before this, as any reader of Virgil, Caesar, Tacitus, and Shakespeare would know, Rome was a great republic that became an empire, first through internal colonization of Italy and then of much of western Europe and the Mediterranean. This double image, as it would also be for the Greek-speaking world, of the classical past and the present complicated the Italian push to empire. Moreover, the Renaissance Italian states were vital intellectually, financially, and technologically to the expansion of Portugal, Spain, France, and England, which grew more intense after the decline of Genoa and Venice. Thus, the Italian Empire had to contend with, while trying to use, the typology of empire.

In terms of literature Tommaso Marinetti praised the invasion of Ethiopia in *Poema africano della divisione 28 ottobre* (1937). Travel literature about the Italian empire grew between the First and Second World Wars, often involving a rediscovery of the greatness of the Roman past and could also exalt violence.

In 1935, for instance, Arnaldo Cipolla represented imperialism in *Balilla regale*. Ennio Flaiano's *Tempo di uccidere* (1947) is set in an Ethiopia occupied by Italy. Antonio Gramsci's work examined the differences between southern and northern Italy, and this examination of topics like hegemony and the subaltern came to influence postcolonial studies, particularly through Edward Said. After the British and Irish, the Italians emigrated in the largest numbers from Europe, so their diaspora is influential culturally in many countries that they did not formally colonize. Some Italian politicians saw the colonies as a way of settling overseas Italians and other Italians in an empire and thus as a means of preventing a drain of the nation. There were also immigrants to Italy from many countries who also contributed to Italian literature and culture. A postcolonial Italian literature of colonialism and decolonization is intricate even though the Italian colonies in the modern era were few, poor, and short-lived.

Unlike Italy but more like Portugal, the Netherlands was a state with a small population but a crucial influence on western Europe's expansion into the wider world. The Spanish sack of the great financial center of Antwerp in 1585 led to the northward movement of Protestants and capital. The Revolt of the Netherlands meant the end of the Spanish Low Countries and the emergence of a great financial, naval, and colonial power from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Along with Italian finance and navigational know-how, the skills of the Dutch contributed much to the making of the modern world and to the course of empire. (For a wonderful series of volumes, see Fokkema and Grijzenhout, especially volume 5, *Accounting for the Past: 1650-2000*, which is of particular interest for the sweep of Dutch history). The Dutch had colonies in Brazil, Indonesia, the southern cape of Africa and elsewhere, and the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) was a powerful force from 1602 to 1799. The Dutch lost some of their overseas empire in the Napoleonic wars, but they expanded in Indonesia. For instance, the novel, *Max Havelaar* (1860), represents the plantation system there. World War II ended effective Dutch rule of Indonesia, which was made formal in 1949.

The collection covers many important aspects of the Dutch Empire. The volume includes a discussion of literature, which also takes into account early works like van Heemskerck's *Batavische Arcadia* (1637) and François Valentijn (1666-1727), the VOC historian. The editors also account for what I have called elsewhere alternative critique or the opposition from within, that is, an internal criticism of imperialism or colonialism. In the Dutch tradition, Admiral Sir Laurens Reael questioned some of the VOC's work in the East. Jacob Haafner in the Enlightenment and Multatuli in the nineteenth century, along with Roland Holst in the twentieth are just a few examples of the voices raised up against the tide of Dutch expansion and colonialism. Elisabeth Maria Post wrote an anti-slavery novel, *Reinhart of Natuur en Godsdienst* [Rinehart or Nature and Religion, 1791-92]. Mina Kruseman's *Een Indisch Huwelijk* [An Indies Marriage, 1872] represented women in the colonies. *De roep om Merdeka* [The Call for Freedom] is a collection of texts critical of colonization in Indonesia. Comparative narratives of empire and of the Caribbean have studied the context of the Dutch colonies and

former colonies (See D'haen; Arnold).

The volume also discusses other Europes. The Jewish diaspora, the expansion of Russia (see Lieven), the Swedish Empire (see Stoye, esp. 108-09), and the Ottoman Empire and Turkey (see Stoye, ch. 10; Goffman) are addressed briefly and serve as a context for the empires on which the editors have chosen to focus. This emphasis decenters empire according to a western European focus and in terms of nation as well as reminding the readers that Europe was also colonized, as in the case of the Ottoman Empire, and leads the discussion to the Iberian powers, which were themselves part of Muslim or Moorish states.

Portugal, which had defeated Muslim forces within and divided itself from Spain, was an early Atlantic power whose seaborne expansion opened up Africa, South America, and Asia to European colonizers (See Peres; Boxer; Disney). The Moors invaded Portugal in 711, reaching the Pyrenees in 732, and suffered their last defeat in 1272. Moorish architecture and music and Arabic words are part of Portuguese culture to this day, so that defeat, internal reconquest, and expansion have a complex form in Portugal, as they do in Spain. Gomes Eanes de Zurara (c. 1410-74) wrote chronicles about the expansion of Portugal. Pedro Vaz de Caminha's account of the "discovery" of Brazil in 1500 is a key text about Portuguese exploration. Camões *The Lusiads* (1572) is an epic of that early phase. Another significant text that involves the contact between a Portuguese traveler and other cultures in Africa and Asia is Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Travels* (written before 1580, published in 1614). From 1580 to 1640, Portugal and Spain were joined under one Crown. By 1807, during the Napoleonic wars, the Portuguese court transferred to Brazil. When the king returned to Portugal in 1821, the next year his son declared Brazil independent from Portugal. From the Napoleonic wars onward, the British Empire would influence affairs within Portugal and its colonies. For instance, just as the French had helped secure the independence of the Anglo-American colonies, the British helped to make certain Brazilian independence. From about 1550 to 1850, Brazil received about forty per cent of all the slaves shipped from Africa to the New World. In the later twentieth century Portugal reluctantly gave up its colonies, which had resorted to armed struggles, and became a liberal democracy that joined the European Union.

Literary and historiographical representations are rich in Portuguese. Sometimes a literary typology or double image of past and present occurs between colonization and decolonization. Jerónimo de Mendonça wrote *Jornada de África* about the death of the king, Dom Sebastião, in a battle in North Africa in 1578, and Manuel Alegre's eponymous novel of 1989 uses Mendonça's history to help represent the war of independence in Angola about four hundred years later (For more on Portuguese-speaking Africa, see Chabal). There were alternative or oppositional voices among women writers as well, for instance a *mestiça*, Noémia de Sousa (1923-2003), author of a volume of poetry, *Sangue Negro* [Black Blood]. New works being produced in Portuguese attempt to find a liminal space between Portugal and its former colonies, and some of them try to go beyond this opposition.

Like Portugal, Spain was an early and great power in the expansion of west-

ern Europe into the wider world. Spain experienced conflict between the invasion in 711 by Moors and their expulsion in 1492 as part of the *Reconquista* or Reconquest. The expulsion of the Jews and Columbus's landfall in the western Atlantic both occurred in 1492, and Fernando de Magallanes reached what were renamed the Philippines in 1521 (See Duviols; Thomas; Maltby). Spain became a global empire and the great power of Europe in the sixteenth century and claimed to be a universal monarchy. One instance of the reach of Spain was the economic and cultural connection between Acapulco in Mexico and Manila in the Philippines, which was especially important and can be partly traced through the galleon trade. Each place took the colonial influences and made them their own.

Violence, genocide, and death from disease undermined the foundations of Native cultures in the New World, cultures that had different forms of writing as can be found in the *Amoxltli* and the *Popul Vuh* (see Brotherston). There were also alternative voices in Spain, often in the church, as figures like Antonio de Montesinos and Bartolomé de Las Casas suggest in the New World (see Arias and Merediz). Writers native to the colonies also came to produce literature that represented the debate over decolonization and independence, such as José Rizal in the Philippines. Struggles with internal colonization in the former colonies of the Spanish Empire coexist with the effect of the economic and cultural power first of Britain and France and then of the United States. Even though the independence movements of the early nineteenth century and then the Spanish-American War of 1898 led to the formation of many new states from the former colonies, Spanish and other outside influences (some of which helped the revolutions) qualified the autonomy of the nations. Within the countries, elites did not always extend liberty to all members of their societies. The indigenous movement in Central and South America is an attempt to resist neo-imperialism and to find alternative histories that do not see experience in Latin America in terms of European norms alone. *Indigenismo* and *mestizaje*—exploring the indigenous and mixed nature of the cultures—became key discourses from the beginning of the twentieth century. Writers like Manuel Gamio in Mexico and Franz Tamayo in Bolivia were representatives of this movement. La Malinche (born c. 1496), who met Hernán Cortés, represents the figure of a go-between, translating within indigenous cultures but also to and from Spanish in a political, social, and military context. Spanish, like Portuguese, French, and English, has spread to many parts of the world as a result of empire, and those who contested and contest the debate over empire often do so from different sides using these languages that originated in Europe. Empire is often ambivalent and contradictory.

This collection is a fine contribution to the field and should be of great interest to comparatists. All I have been able to do here is to pull out some of the main threads in a book with many contributors. The editors have done well to bring together talented experts on a wide array of topics. As someone who has worked on the comparative study of empires for quite some time, I have been pleased to read a volume that contributes work that, although structured according to separate empires, encourages readers to make comparisons on the basis of an analysis

of individual cases. If I had one wish, it would be that the structure within the sections on each empire had been more historical and chronological. It is better to begin at the beginning after the introductions in each empire and then see the typologies between the colonial and postcolonial, to understand the historical underpinnings to the age of decolonization and the anxieties over a new phase of globalization. However that may be, this collection relates the colonial and the postcolonial in Continental Europe and its empires in productive and intricate ways. Those inside and outside the field can learn a great deal from this historical companion.

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Note

- 1 As there are many fine specialists who have contributed in this book, I have decided not to name them in order to avoid a plethora of names that might be distracting to readers. They can assume that from here on, I am drawing on the contributors and giving just a few examples of the valuable work they have done to make more intricate our notions of the Continental European Empires. I have also refrained from page numbers and excessive notes for the sake of readability.

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ACHEBE'S CHI AND THE SPECTER OF MARX:

Two Hauntologies for Teaching the African Novel in American Classrooms

Teaching the African Novel. Ed. Gaurav Desai. Options for Teaching 24. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009. ix + 427 pp. 978-1603290388.

The Igbo concept of Chi, variously translated as “personal God” or “guardian angel,” takes center stage in Chinua Achebe’s essay, “Chi in Igbo Cosmology” in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), in which the reader is reminded of the proud wrestler who, having thrown every challenge, wrestled in the world of spirits, collecting laurels and not heeding advice against hubris until he is met with his own *Chi*. The indomitable wrestler laughs at his thin-as-a-rope, pitiful contender, who then effortlessly knocks him down and smashes him to his death. Chinua Achebe’s literary *Chi* looms large in this collection, with *Things Fall Apart* (1958) remaining unchallenged by other contenders, the Ghanaian novel *Marita; or, the Folly of Love*, by A. Native coming first (1888) but looking like a decrepit elder.

Gaurav Desai’s ambitious volume about the circulation of African novels in the US academy over the past four decades is traversed by various myths of origin for the African novel. Contributors to the volume repeatedly quote Simon Gikandi’s 2001 essay, “Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture,” because Gikandi credits Achebe not only with the invention of the modern African

novel but also with the invention of “African culture.” Desai further links the birth of the African novel with “the sociology of consumption” based on “the rise of the European bourgeoisie” (4), but the theories of F. R. Leavis and Ian Watt have long been found obsolete.

Even though Desai acknowledges that his tome has “an unmistakable North American orientation” (10), the only novel to actually “travel” outside the North American classroom is *Things Fall Apart*. The South African-based, Nigerian critic Harry Garuba accordingly tells us of his experiences teaching Achebe’s novel at the Nigerian University of Ibadan and two South African universities, those of Zululand with its Black student population from rural backgrounds in northern KwaZulu-Natal and the historically white University of Cape Town. Achebe endures even in the face of nihilists like Togolese Koffi Essoui who claims that “African literature is something that does not exist” (qtd. 53).

Like all myths of creation and origin, there is at first primordial violence and a severance from a powerful matrix. That is possibly why the African novel’s first phase is nationalistic in the late 1950s and the 1960s, to be then marked by disillusionment in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by a preoccupation with gender and queering in the 1980s and 1990s, and an exilic consciousness contributing to the “unwriting” of the nation in the post-1990s. The various “methods” outlined in the first Part—Theories and Methods—closely follow this four-tiered development: “claiming history” (Eleni Coundouriotis), political critique and resistance (Tejumola Olaniyan), gender and the increasing “sexualization of space” (Odile Cazenave), and translation (Lisa McNee).

Of these four contributors to Part One, Olaniyan is the most concerned with origins, advancing two theories for the dominance of political critique and resistance in African fiction. On the one hand, “the colonial origin theory” holds that modern African fiction is as old as colonial rule in Africa (Beti, Laye, Kane, Conton all expressed anticolonial dissent), and the corollary to this temporal circumscription is the belief that the greatest damage to African economies and social institutions has its origin squarely in colonialism, as illustrated in Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1981). On the other hand, “the indigenous origin theory” reclaims the autochthonous agency of African political art as expressed in Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Ngugi wa Thiong’o. However, Olaniyan’s argument about macropolitics being a prime shaper of the African novel is marred by his effort to annex the micropolitical realm of informal everyday transactions to explain novels like Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1992). It is indeed too facile to read the eating disorder of one of that novel’s characters as the micropolitics of interpersonal relationships, when her alimentary delinquency may simply be the result of her rebellion against her Anglophile upbringing or Shona patriarchal norms. Cazenave’s essay also toys with the myth of origins, without, however, attempting to identify the first African woman writer: is it Nigerian Flora Nwapa, Kenyan Grace Ogot, Marie-Claire Matip, Thérèse Kuoh-Moukoury, or better still, Algerian Marguerite Taos Amrouche whose *Jacinthe noire* was published in 1947?

Achebe's pronouncements on the language issue also limn the volume's attention to language in an American context that is infamous for the relative monolingualism of its average student population. As Jarrod Hayes laments, "literatures in French and Arabic are simply less likely to be studied" (131). Also, students have not developed sufficient proficiency in an African language to make the reading of African-language novels in the classroom worthwhile. As a result, Desai was not able to include an essay on the teaching of such novels.

One of the four signposts Desai uses to outline the debates around the definition of the African novel is Chinua Achebe's 1973 plea in Halifax, Canada, for bending the plasticity of English to his own uses. His position implicitly gave the lie to Obi Wali's riposte on the "The Dead-End of African Literature" at the historic Makerere University conference of June 1962, which initiated the ongoing debate about what language African writers should use. Achebe's talk became such a barometer for gauging language use that Louise Bethlehem, in discussing post-Apartheid South African fiction, deems Oswald Mtshali's statement on the English used by black South African writers to be so apt as to make it "possible to position him near Achebe" (224).

Achebe's plea for stylistic innovations triumphs over the other three signposts, one of which is Ngugi wa Thiong'o's dead-end theorization in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) of his turn to peasant culture and his resolve, following his farewell to English, to have "Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way." The third signpost—Christopher Miller's reconsideration of "literature" in light of the necessary interface of orality with literacy in *Nationalists and Nomads* (1998)—is, however, a many-headed challenger that would be hard to floor. The last signpost—Eileen Julien's *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (1992)—which warns against reading "traces" of oral traditions in the novel as signs of African authenticity is no serious contender because she forgets that the ear is shaped like a question mark.

In general, because the scholars approaching language in this volume are not consummate Africanists, there are some like Lisa McNee and Brenda Cooper who do not do justice to the complexity of language use in the African novel. If Africans are indeed "lost without translation" (Omotoso), McNee, who otherwise has the merit of intuiting that "all literary works are translations without originals" (110), is lost without the appropriate jargon to approach texts such as Shaaban Robert's poem "Kiswahili" (1947), Ngugi's *Matigari* (1987) in the English "flattened" translation, and Cameroonian Werewere Liking's 1989 song-novel *L'amour-cent-vies*, translated as *Love-across-a-Hundred-Lives*. She is indeed at pains to identify such processes described in depth by Bill Ashcroft in *Postcolonial Transformation* (2001), Lawrence Venuti in *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995, 2008), or in my *African Palimpsest* (rpt. 2007), which in 1991 introduced relexification, loan translation, calquing, tagging, cushioning, and contextualization as strategies of linguistic decolonization. Shirin Edwin comes closest to the task when she discusses Arabic and Wolof in Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (1979), but her incursions are limited to searching for keywords in Islamic West African texts. Brenda Cooper uses my notions of "metonymic gap" and

“cushioning” (250, 253) but fails to explain how the harnessing of metonymy by migrant writers like Bandele, Adichie, and Aboulela concretely affects the use, misuse, or abuse of language. American students, sensitive to professorial expectations into the ear of the other, could benefit from more in-depth analysis of the language of the African novel, especially at the graduate level.

Even though Christopher Miller is the great absent contributor, his ghost or “Mask” is rattling furiously in Christopher Wise’s essay, which is at the heart of Part Two on “Regional Imperatives, Thematic Cartographies.” Wise’s essay is flanked by Zahr Said Stauffer’s plea for a “globalizing syllabus” (126) that would suture “Arab” with “African” in the novel, where language would function as an organizational principle similar to “la Francophonie,” and Jarrod Hayes’s curricular reflections on the uneasy and exceptional position of the Maghrebian novel and of the Maghreb, whose rhizomatic cultures, by bridging Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, offer the pedagogical opportunity to question the European “invention of Africa” (Mudimbe). Also notable in this unit are Shirin Edwin’s imbrication of Islam and African culture and the concurrent disimbrication of Arab culture and Islam; Dosinda Garcia-Alvite’s rehabilitation of Equatorial Guinea; Fernando Arena’s plea for inclusion of Lusophone African fiction; and Peter Kalliney on East African fiction (Gurnah, Vassanji) and globalization theory.

Wise’s highly original essay approaches the African novel by way of a comparison with indigenous African traditions and successfully conveys the “dynamic orality-aurality of African literature” (155) in the Sahel zone. In this region encompassing Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Senegal, the Mande concept of *nyama*, which makes of a word an occult power, is recirculated as “the Soninke term *ñaxamala*, the Wolof *ñeeno*, the Ffulde *nyeenyo*, or the Toucouleur-Ffulde *nyaama*” (167). As such, *sahélité* best describes the integrity and resilience of traditional cultural systems in that zone. Wise foregrounds the role of the Mande epic griot in his accounts of the life of Sundjata Keita, Askia Muhamad, and El Hajj Umar Tall in that the seemingly “inert objects” (158) the griot conveys are given life and “wetness” through his aspirated breath. The Mandinka word for autonomous fluid indeed finds an unmistakable Derridean echo in the written ink of the scribe, as in amulet writing, which involves the transcription onto a parchment washed in a vial of a Qur’anic sura. This essay and its corollary classroom situation are the best antidote to convey to American students, who are bombarded by the media with pictures of an impoverished African continent in the throes of agony, the grandeur of the libraries in Timbuctu, Djenné, Ouadane, and Kano. It should instill in the chirographically bound student a decent respect for the spoken words as living copies of, for instance, the Songhay-Soninke scribes whose writings are mere *mus’haf*, or “prosthetic copies of a copy” (160), or for the Burkinabé drum *zabyoiré*, meaning in Mossi drum language “performed phrase.”

However, some of Wise’s conjectures need to be qualified. Wise likens the griot’s performance at name-giving and circumcision ceremonies to the mohel’s ceremonial performance of the *milah*. In all fairness, it must be said that in most West African societies, circumcision is often dangerously supplemented by exci-

sion, both procedures being covered by the same word, as I have shown elsewhere. Also, Derrida's *Circumfession* (1990), which Wise invokes, does acknowledge that, in El-Biar, Algeria, his family referred to circumcision as a "baptême," a euphemistic word used out of fear but also a translation since Christian baptism was an "alternative rite" replacing circumcision (See Zabus, *Between*; "'Beyond'").

Wise imagines that with the increased use of Internet technologies, West Africa will enter the era of electronic media as "a 'verbomotor' society" (157). In the meantime, Cora Agatucci has introduced African novels in a Web-enhanced survey course at Central Oregon Community College—HUM 211 Syllabus-Outcome A (314)—but at times she sounds like the computer Hal in *2001 Space Odyssey*.

Apart from Wise, most contributors approach the novel as a national allegory or a realist import by the European architects of the novel form. The "national allegory" argument comes from Fredric Jameson, the acknowledged *Vertreter* of Marxism in today's American academe. This comes as a surprise in a context like the American one, where cold-war tensions have led to the marginalization of Marxism, but it may seem less surprising if one considers that Marxism was central to African thought from the 1930s to the 1950s. Besides Achebe's *Chi*, this other "hauntology" is that of Marx (Derrida 4, 10).

Marxism is one of the four "umbrella categories" in approaching the African novel that Olakunle George identifies in his opening essay, alongside formalism with its Leavisite protocols of close reading; Afrocentrism, with its infamous Nigerian troika of "Bolekaja critics" (Chinweizu, Jemie, Madubuike) whose cultural-nationalist approach at times made them sound like the HUAC in the heydays of McCarthyism, watching out for the slightest Eurocentric reference; and, last, poststructuralism or deconstruction with Jacques Derrida as its main figurehead, whose celebration of *bricolage* with its implicit critique of origin George deems relevant to the teaching of African novels as "acts of language" (31).

Marxism, the red herring of Africanness, infuses the volume so deeply that Nicholas Brown can herald Marxist analysis as "inherently pedagogical" in identifying "what the literary work does" (37) in a materialist way. African Marxism in the texts of Chidi Amuta, Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Biodun Jeyifo, Grant Kamenju, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o has indeed proven useful if one regards modern societies as structured not by mere difference (gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, class, and so on) but "by a fundamental antagonism" (49) such as inheres in the basic relation between colonized and colonizer, black and white, Third and First World, or center and periphery. Even if one responds sympathetically to the wrongs inherent in plundering Africa for its raw materials, Brown goes very far indeed when he emphasizes the exploitation of African knowledge by First World interests or "cultural imperialism" (Paul Hountondji) in the areas of pharmaceuticals, Paul Simon albums, Hollywood movies, anthropology, and even literary criticism. The irony lies, as he himself notes, in the fact that this very volume on teaching the African novel is intended for fairly orthodox classroom instruction to a First-World audience.

More than Frantz Fanon, the Martinican Marxist and psychoanalyst who joined the Algerian liberation movement in 1954, Fredric Jameson gets the upper

hand in the debate. Jameson's statement in "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital" (1986) reads thus: "all third-world texts are necessarily . . . to be read as . . . national allegories" (qtd 48). It was met with Aijaz Ahmad's fierce denunciation but with Neil Lazarus's defense. Yet to be fair to Jameson, Ahmad, as Brown argues, has elided "to be read as," thus overlooking that Jameson's dictum is "an imperative directed at First World readers: this is what Third World literature can do to us" (48). Interestingly, Jameson is, throughout the volume, partly (and partially) quoted so that one never gets the full picture.

However, the phrase "national allegories" is enticing enough to warrant its statistical recurrence. Olaniyan quotes Jameson more fully: "all third-world texts are necessarily . . . allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national *allegories* even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (qtd. 77). The Greek *allegoria* or "speaking otherwise" entails the use of irony, as in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969), Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* (1980), and Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* (1981). However, the novel that Olaniyan analyzes the most in his classes is Sembène's *Xala* (1976), which intimates through the character's "xala" ("impotence" in Wolof) on the night of his wedding to his third wife, that the African state is impotent and "unproductive" (in its Marxist sense in *The Communist Manifesto*) in the neocolonial era.

Jameson resurfaces in Zahr Said Stauffer's essay on the African Arab novel, which, while acknowledging the Jamesonian postulate, warns against the insufficient theorization of when diverse authors are interrelated by being put in the same "globalization" basket (123). Jarrod Hayes, for his part, concedes that "allegory (that which obtains when a narrative at the literal level tells additional stories at other levels) offers a way to teach multiple and contradictory stories in a single text" (133). In his discussion of Maghrebian novels, Hayes quotes from the same Jameson passage but adds that which is often elided: "Third-World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory" (qtd. 142), which allows him to introduce non-normative sexualities, as in Algerian Rachid Boudjedra's *La Répudiation* (1969), Nina Bouraoui's *La vie heureuse* (2002), Assia Djebar's *Ombre sultane* (1987) or Moroccan Tahar Ben Jelloun's *L'enfant de sable* (1985). This queering indeed disrupts the "national allegory" because it goes against the heterosexual reproduction of male citizens. Neville Hoad in "Sexuality and African Literature in the Classroom" completes the picture in his discussion of Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples*, written in Afrikaans in 1993 and translated into English by the author, where the "national allegory" is given a humongous reaming: "The white fathers are fucking and fucking up their sons, first literally and then by sending them to die defending the indefensible in Angola" (347).

What is cruelly missing in this otherwise dense and articulate volume, which is lent gravity by its proximity with *Teaching Nineteenth-Century American Poetry* (2007) and *Teaching North American Environmental Literature* (2008)

in the “Options for Teaching” MLA series, is the racial politics of teaching this subject in the US classroom. Surely it matters in a country with a history so painfully branded by race whether the instructor teaching the African novel is white or African-American or an African-born teacher who is teaching in the US. Chinua Achebe, whose Chi was in harmony with him, declared to an audience at Makerere University College, Kampala, in August 1968 that an African writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa is like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames (qtd. 222). Desai may be the absurd man of the proverb, for, while extending “North America” to include Canada and Israel, his unwillingness to include discussions of race is a serious drawback for the claims that this volume is trying to make. However that may be, he can be commended for providing such a dense compendium and allowing the din of ghostly anxieties to be heard.

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LITERATURE IN A MATERIALIST AGE

Virgil Nemoianu. *Postmodernism and Cultural Identities: Conflicts and Coexistence*. Washington, DC: Catholic U of America P, 2010. xii + 392 pp. 978-0813216843.

Virgil Nemoianu’s *Postmodernism and Cultural Identities* is a big, sweet-tempered, mess of a book. Nemoianu is the mildest polemicist you will ever meet (apart from a few obligatory wild-eyed swipes at postmodernist nihilists), but he has an unfortunate tendency to drop names where arguments are needed and offers huge generalizations where only careful explication will serve his needs. In the course of a mere seven pages, the reader is told: “major literature has *one* common theme: it is the theme of emancipation and growth” (234); “As a matter of fact, it is not impossible to maintain that the whole of literature is *primarily*

about memory, from Aeschylus to Proust" (240); and "Let us therefore agree on the assumption that the best way of understanding literature is to describe it as the field of human discourse that seems to concentrate on this phenomenon of existential defeat more systematically, attentively, and more meticulously than other domains of human knowledge" (241-42). Such sweeping statements only raise the resistance of this reader while proving singularly unhelpful to anyone actually trying to understand a work of literature. Even if, although Nemoianu never deigns to show how, these three characterizations of what literature is or does could be considered synonymous (or intricately entailed one by the others), the notion that they adequately describe the whole field is preposterous. I would have said, as Nemoianu does himself just two pages prior (232), that we value literature precisely for its diversity, for the fact that it stages an engagement with a wide range of concerns, beliefs, values, and possibilities. Nothing is foreign to it—which means that almost nothing correct can be said about literature *tout court*. Where Nemoianu merely invokes Proust's name in a gesture toward supporting a huge claim, an actual engagement with Proust's work would greatly complicate the possible relations between a fixation on memory and a sense of "existential defeat." And it is in such details that what literature has to offer lies.

But let me put aside my irritation at Nemoianu's slipshod argumentation and attend to what he is trying to do. This book is a collection of essays—and suffers for that. Nemoianu is apt to look for any argument in a storm, and thus contradicts himself mightily throughout. Furthermore, he is very fond of *tu quoque* accusations, so that, for example, the advocates of multiculturalism become the true enemies of diversity, while his own defense of canons is also the best means toward preserving variety and defusing Eurocentrism. One result of proceeding this way is that Nemoianu very often appears to cede the ground of values to postmodernist adversaries; he seems to accept democracy, equality, progress, individualism, pluralism, and a host of other liberal values—and to simply be arguing either that postmodernists go about trying to achieve those goods in self-defeating ways or, in a more wishy-washy and ultimately perplexing way, that we should reserve some place (perhaps in the arts) in our postmodern world where what our current values negate can reside. Even here, of course, his concern with the remainder, with what history has consigned to the trash heap, seems more continuous with the concerns of Benjamin, Lyotard, and Derrida than he is prepared to acknowledge. But Nemoianu lacks an account of just what impact this preservation of the overlooked has. Modernity has discarded the "divine right of kings" and slavery. Just what status does Nemoianu ask us to accord these lost values? A novel like Edward Jones' *The Known World* tries to recreate the world of slavery, but surely, even as we applaud that artistic endeavor, we don't want those lost values to have any purchase in our current world. So what does the imaginative occupation of a lost world do for us? Nemoianu's vision of the humanities and of literature often appears a wistful attachment to lost causes, a notion reinforced by his ending his book by erecting a walled garden populated by the writers he cherishes, "a place of tranquil retreat and defense" (334) against the depredations of the contempo-

rary world. In cultivating one's garden, he hopes to have discovered "a mode of spending in mild and modest nobility one's life" (334). Shy about recommending that these lost causes be reinstated in the world at large, he can experience them in isolation in the garden.

Far be it from me to mock such an aspiration. The question of how to live one's life with even a modicum of self-respect amidst the compromises enacted daily in our nasty world is hardly trivial. And, as I have already suggested, I find Nemoianu's "mildness" and "modesty" appealing. In the midst of his sweeping generalizations, he usually resists the temptation to claim for literature more efficacy than it actually has. And if that position entails the melancholy of the champion of lost causes, better such wistfulness than the belligerence more characteristic of today's self-described conservatives. Nemoianu's is the modest conservatism of Edmund Burke, the sense that we are better off, in most cases, doing nothing because we are more likely to muck things up than improve them by our deliberate actions. Unfortunately, that leaves history in the hands of the passionate ones convinced of their rectitude—and sends our melancholy skeptic back to his garden and his library.

Nemoianu's diagnosis of what ails our contemporary world stems from his "Christian humanism," a position he adopts, in part, to make "the (intellectual) world safe for religion" (334). "The main problem" of contemporary existence ("on a worldwide scale") is "a lack of balance between the material evolution of mankind and its ideal and spiritual evolution" (36). Secular materialism has triumphed—and we are worse off for that. Everywhere in human history and on the contemporary scene we can see the persistent human longing for transcendence. But our world today does not offer any satisfactory means for satisfying that longing. Religion and the arts are scorned and marginalized. Nemoianu's project is to restore the spiritual search for transcendence to its rightful place among ongoing human concerns and activities. His frankly religious view of the arts is straightforward enough. If we define transcendence in simple, humanistic terms as the effort by each self to connect to sources of meaning and value that are not self-generated, then it seems fair to claim that the arts (in many instances, although I would insist not all) represent that effort. Thus, the marginalization of the arts and humanities in contemporary society is, for Nemoianu, continuous with, in fact part and parcel of, the marginalization of the religious. In fact, he goes so far as to insist that "persecution" is a completely appropriate term to describe what currently faces the religious person and the humanist.

How to assess this claim? On the one hand, it is ridiculous to assert that, in present-day America at least, religion is on the wane or persecuted. More convincing, I think, would be a fine-grained explanation of how it is that a fervently declared religion exists side-by-side with an equally fervent materialism. If the balance between the spiritual and the material is askew, that's not because religion has been banished. Something more akin to compartmentalization than to outright repression appears closer to what is actually happening. Still, on the other hand, Nemoianu is surely right that in certain intellectual quarters we (the intellectuals)

have not discovered any way of talking about religion and the spiritual that feels adequate. And surely that is partly true because the vast majority of intellectuals (including humanists) have very little feel for transcendental longings. Nemoianu has every right to feel a fish out of water in the contemporary academy—and to claim that the academy fails to value the arts for the right reasons even as he too often mistakes what he deems the wrong reasons for a nihilistic refusal to value the arts at all. In sum, the relation of the arts to transcendence is an important topic that we currently lack even the beginnings of a good way to talk about and to study. So Nemoianu is to be thanked for bringing this awkward lacuna to our attention.

Nemoianu's own ways of approaching transcendence are less satisfactory. He asserts throughout his book the alignment of the beautiful with the good and the true. But he never says anything specific about how this connection works—or even what “beautiful” means. As is already obvious, I find such huge terms as “beautiful” and “good” and “true” unhelpful. I don't know what they mean or what to do with them apart from concrete instantiations—and then I am inclined to say that “beautiful” and “good” and “true” only bear “family resemblances” across those different instances. In short, claiming that the beautiful aligns with the good and the true in any general way says nothing. The only grounds for such a sweeping claim, it seems to me, is faith—and that doesn't help someone who lacks faith. If Nemoianu has more to offer on this topic beyond an appeal to faith, he doesn't deign to offer it in this book.

The more concrete analysis he does offer centers around “continuity.” Modernity brings with it, as Marx and many other observers have noted, the relentless assault of the new, with the accompanying dizzying disorientation of losing “tradition” (as represented by and embodied in rituals, practices, communities, conventions, and institutions). Nemoianu insists that this point *“cannot be doubted: that the dynamics of ‘modernization’ were abrasive in nature, that they harmed and hurt a good many people, at least in the short run, sometimes in the long run, and that this faster and faster change was accompanied by losses and by pain”* (225; in italics in the original). Still, Nemoianu is not a paleo-conservative who wants to return to the pre-modern. “I am not ready to declare modernization bankrupt and, implicitly, I am not ready to advocate a return to a more primitive, archaic, or traditional mode of existence and production (as both the Left and Right sometimes suggest, though for different reasons)” (242). It would seem, like liberals everywhere, Nemoianu wants to sort through the effects of the Enlightenment and of modernization, and somehow separate the good from the bad. (Let me hasten to add that I, as an unapologetic liberal, endorse this project. The oddity is finding a non-liberal like Nemoianu ending up in the same place.) We are not going to turn back the hands of time, and we are not going to experience an utterly transforming revolution. We need to work from where we are and with what we have to make a better world.

And what is that work? Here's where Nemoianu and I part company, because for him the pain on which he focuses is primarily spiritual. Where I, materialist that I am, think immediately of poverty, back-breaking work, and preventable

diseases when I think of pain, Nemoianu thinks of the ways that the violent break from the past leaves people disoriented, lacking the resources to maintain a sense of who they are and what they value. People in modernity are uprooted, deprived of a “continuity” with their past. Here, in another guise, we find the same defeat of transcendence, that same inability of contemporary selves to connect to sources of value and purpose that exist outside of their selves.

The arts, on Nemoianu’s view, provide such continuity; they are, in his term, “counter-progressive.” They stand athwart the march of progress, of modernization, memorializing that which is being passed over. They call our attention to what is being lost. What is unclear is the extent to which “the lost” can serve as sources of value and purpose. Yes, the arts, as Nemoianu envisions them, can offer us “fragments to shore against our ruin,” but the danger is that the arts merely become elegiac, a site for the melancholy, dispirited lost soul to fish among remnants that offer little purchase on how to live a life in the present. The conservative dilemma is always what to do besides lament (or, in a more aggressive mood, rail against) the changes that have created the contemporary conditions he deplors.

In short, the arts must be made more active, “performative” in the jargon of our day, if they are to prove more than just a futile protest against the way history has unfolded. So, not surprisingly, Nemoianu, who already resembles his post-modernist adversaries in his focus on the lost, now joins them in proclaiming the creative power of the word, its ability to do things. With the loss of continuity, “a key issue would be the tenacious building of bridges and connections between the present, the future, and the past. My contention is that *the effort of establishing continuity is tantamount to actually establishing it*” (243). So much for “existential defeat.” Just to try is to succeed. For at least this moment in his text, driven into a corner, Nemoianu bestows magical efficacy on the arts. Again, I can only surmise that faith must underwrite this assertion, a faith that envisions the transcendent as waiting out there for us, ever willing (like the most tender-minded teacher) to reward heartfelt effort. For skeptical me, I need more. What kind of efforts are we talking about? And how do such efforts connect to the notion of the “beautiful”? And what does success mean: providing a certain kind of consolation for the disoriented self or actually creating a different kind of society, one that locates selves vis-à-vis others and institutions in different ways? Does the effort work its magic through the psychological effects of having done something, or does the effort actually make some impact on the world beyond the self? Details, details, details.

Obviously, part of me thinks Nemoianu is guilty of vague, airy-headed nonsense, trading in vaporous generalizations that get us nowhere. But I also want to respect his project to the extent that I do think he is trying to come to terms with a real phenomenon that does resist accurate characterization, namely the search for transcendence and the persistent engagement of the arts in that endeavor. But illuminating thought about this important issue requires more care, more attention to fine-grained detail, than Nemoianu displays in this book.

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MAPPING LITERATURE ON AND ACROSS BORDERS

Claudia Sadowski-Smith. *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States.* Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2008. 190 pp. 978-0813926780.

Rachel Adams. *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009. 310 pp. 978-0226005522.

As the titles indicate, these two studies inhabit and challenge borders, emphasizing both transnational transitions and national or local divisions. The idea of re-mapping a complex transitional space appears at least metaphorically in Claudia Sadowski-Smith's book and literally in Rachel Adams's. The authors move across cultures, borders, and fields exploring the productive in-between spaces where hybrid messages are produced. These messages challenge both an all-absorbing concept of globalization and nationalistic divisions, situating themselves between *Globalization and the Line* (the title of Sadowski-Smith's 2002 edited book).

Building on Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 seminal study, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, and on postmodern cultural geographers David Harvey, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja, Sadowski-Smith foregrounds the literary and cultural work produced by border communities in response to US globalist tendencies. Canada's position on the northern border is only apparently better, with its status as a relatively independent "middle power" restrained by US ownership of one third of the country's exports. Border literature valorizes the counter-emphases on regional multiculturalism, transnational solidarity, American Indian pan-tribalism, and Asian American pan-nationalism. The hybrid nature of much of this literature is illustrated at an aesthetic level with trickster figures, composite narrative form, and magical realism often used as expressions of resistance against the dominant traditions. As Sadowski-Smith argues, some of these features are "rooted in the precolonial realities of the Americas and they have become a cross-cultural trope in US ethnic writing" (9); but they have also "contaminated" the culture of the north: trickster figures populate also postmodern US fiction (Barth, Pynchon) and elements of magic realism appear in Tony Morrison, Alice Walker, and Joan Didion, among others.

Sadowski-Smith contrasts the concept of borders and borderlands in Canada, where they are tied to a search for a national identity, and in Mexico, where the border with the dominant US neighbor undermines national identity and "Mexicanidad." However, even these distinctions break down when specific authors who cross ethnic and national frontiers are considered. Their strategies of self-identification vary from chapter to chapter. The first chapter focuses on the political, cultural, and literary effects of borders and border-crossing on Chicana/o literature, which is often innovative, "a form of symbolic border crossing" (23). Some of the work discussed, for example Miguel Méndez's *Peregrinos de Aztlán* (1974) and Alberto Ríos's short fiction, refuse to be assimilated either into the Chicana/o canon, or into some global concept of literature, remaining unabashedly "local"

(25), mapping both sides of the border in a fragmented oral style (Méndez) or in a mix of magical realism with the “social realism of the border corridor” (30).

The second chapter, focused on the border texts of Asian-American writers, complicates the earlier discussion of narratives of border-crossing, interplaying a global (trans-Pacific perspective) with a “hemispheric” one (68). Later on, in Chapter 4, Sadowski-Smith acknowledges the warnings of Gregory Jay, who sees in the hemispheric perspective a form of academic imperialism, extending the concepts of American Studies south of the border. Yet she finds the hemispheric perspective useful in replacing the American Studies focus on the nation-state with an emphasis on cultural zones including border areas (103). The second chapter proves the usefulness of this perspective with the work of Edith Maude Eaton, the first North American fiction writer of Asian descent: her stories about border crossing literally crossed the border themselves, when the writer, confronted with a lack of publishing opportunities in Canada, sent them to small publishing outlets in the US. She finally crossed the border herself, moving to the West Coast. Her literary and journalistic work, rediscovered when Asian American studies were institutionalized in the mid-1970s, draws attention to the economic, cultural, and gender roots of ethnic discrimination in Canada and the US, while also trying to emphasize the author’s Euroasian or “cosmopolitan identity (59) as a defense against such discrimination. At the end of this chapter, Sadowski-Smith considers briefly the work of Karen Tei Yamashita as an example of further repositioning, with Yamashita working at the intersection “between Asian and Latin American borderlands” and between “borderlands” and urban areas (62).

Chapter 3 focuses on the literature of the indigenous borderlands, often neglected in US border studies. The two authors discussed, Leslie Marmon Silko and Thomas King, are said to “transform US boundaries into sites of hemispheric pan-Indianism” (72). Thus, Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* defies established categories of identity: she expands definitions of indigeneity by emphasizing her characters’ mixed-blood descent while describing their common tribulations along the militarized US southern border. Silko’s narratives draw on outlaw and trickster stories, replacing official historiography with the mythology of pan-tribal border struggles, placed against “Mayan notions of time and recycling rather than a progressive march of history” (82). Thomas King, on the other hand, focuses on the native populations that use the Canadian-US border as a means of escaping the racial policies of both countries. His stories emphasize the connections between “notions of tribal nationhood and struggles for border crossing rights” (89).

Chapter 4 explores the “view from the South” (8), focusing on border fiction from Mexico but also the fiction of the Mexico City-based Carlos Fuentes. Fuentes’s *The Crystal Frontier* highlights new forms of *mexicanidad* emerging in the US Mexican diaspora, which define ethnicity “independent of the nation-state” (100). This particular emphasis has received mixed reviews, critics praising the novel’s aesthetic innovations while questioning its attempt to posit a form of nationalism unattached to any particular nation-state. Another author discussed in this chapter, Debra Castillo, hones in on gender relations on the border, with the

men assigning women stereotypical roles and women fighting back by developing “a new type of female consciousness” (107).

Chapter 5 returns to writers focused on the “world’s longest undefended border” with Canada (119). In addition to the work of Thomas King, discussed in Chapter 3, this section focuses on the work of Clark Blaise and Guillermo Verdecchia, two writers with complex identities that straddle cultures and frontiers. Verdecchia’s work as a playwright and actor emphasizes the performative nature of his identity as a Canadian citizen of Argentinean origin, with his home on the border. Several other Northern border writers are discussed in a way that calls into question conventional notions of national identity. However, Sadowski-Smith is careful not to overvalue the “Canadian particularities” (136), even though Canada’s articulation of alternatives to empire is praised for allowing a certain degree of ethnic and racial diversity (137).

Well aware of a growing skepticism towards hemispheric studies, Sadowski-Smith proposes an “alternative inter-American framework that focuses on North-American borders” (17), but in dialogue with the fields of Chicana/o, Asian American, American Indian, Latin American, and Canadian studies. The type of study she illustrates is not only interdisciplinary, but also regionalist, as an alternative to both narrow localism/nationalism and all-absorbing notions of globalism. Her book foregrounds the “multiple histories and cultures of the borderlands with Mexico and Canada, which have too often been ignored by studies that focus on a particular racialized border subject” (139). It also brings back texts that have fallen between the cracks, or have been ignored by global or nationalistic market interests. Yet there are some limitations to this approach: one is of language, the book examining only work written in or translated into English. The other is of methodology: the discussion is rich in contextual information, but when a particular work is considered more closely, the focus rests primarily on its cultural and political implications, with less attention given to formal or poetic aspects.

Rachel Adams’s approach in *Continental Divides* is likewise broadly interdisciplinary, bringing together perspectives from cultural studies, inter-American history, and social sciences. She starts from a similar effort to “reorient” herself in a field that she always found difficult to navigate (ix). She focuses on maps and mapping as instruments of political integration but also division as they continually redefine the American cultural imaginary. Traditionally, the political map of North America has served as “a template for organizing the study of culture into separate, nation-based categories” (6). By contrast, Adams is interested in the “coexistence and interpenetration of diverse cultures and languages with loosely configured territory that encompasses multiple regions and nation-states” (7). She tries thus to advance an “alternative version of continentalism that can serve as a flexible, dynamic model for comparative cultural study” (17).

Like Sadowski-Smith, Adams takes advantage of the “transnational turn” in American literary and cultural studies (18), which has expanded the definition of the discipline by including in it black, trans- and circum-Atlantic, Pacific rim, hemispheric, borderland, diasporic, and other extensions that challenge the na-

tion-based paradigm. But she goes further, including in her study hybrid works in multilingual traditions that challenge the boundaries of national literature and language. In an effort to reflect “the complexities of North American experience” (21), Adams’s book starts similarly to Sadowski-Smith’s, focusing the first two chapters on borderlands and the literature that reflects the Indian and the Black North American experiences. The following chapters broaden this perspective, examining the north-south routes of American modernism (Chapter Three); the crossing of multiple borders of class, language, and nation in Jack Kerouac’s work (Chapter Four); detective fiction from Canada, the US, and Mexico focused on border crime (Chapter Five); and the link between Canada and Latin America in Guillermo Verdecchia. Together these chapters “sketch out visions of many possible North Americas” (27). They also aim to “set an agenda for future programs of study and research premised on flexible geographies,” “multiple linguistic and cultural literacies; a deep knowledge of history; and a commitment to looking across, if not necessarily eroding, national borders” (27-28).

Chapter One focuses on the “indigenous transnationalism” in the works of Thomas King and Leslie Marmon Silko, as it negotiates the “divisive, centrifugal forces of modernity that have dispersed North American Indians” (35). King’s and Silko’s literature reflects both the partitioning of native American tribes by reinforced national borders, and the effort of these tribes to set up new transnational coalitions. King’s novel, *Truth and Bright Water* (1999), foregrounds a history of interconnections across the border, but one that the present generation has difficulty in retrieving. Similar problems attend the southern US-Mexico border featured in Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), which cuts across a cultural mix of populations. However, evoking the Mayan codices and historical Almanacs, Silko’s novel manages to retrieve a cross-cultural vision that ties together many characters across vast temporal and geographic spaces. The Almanacs, which tell of the original migration north of the native populations during the Spanish conquest, are later revised and appended with the experience of other tribes, becoming a “collective story of Indians in the Americas” (55). Mass migration, the “Mexicanization” of specific places like Tucson, and new ethnic alliances continually challenge the southern border. But while Silko’s novel suggests that the efforts of nation-states to police their borders are doomed to failure, it also avoids romanticizing both the pre-conquest history and the recent transnational coalitions that are often upset by violent tribal rivalries.

Chapter Two challenges the traditional view that the north (including Canada) was the direction pursued by fugitive slaves, emphasizing the fact that Spanish Florida and Mexico were equally important avenues of escape. Already the work of the nineteenth-century author Martin Delany problematized Canada as a place of refuge in *Blake* (1859-62), turning his hero back towards Cuba to participate in an international rebellion. Blake’s fictional journey was borne out by the historical experience of blacks who crossed the border south, receiving land in sparsely populated areas in Mexico or who joined the Florida Seminoles. However, the attempt to retrieve these experiences is made difficult by the absence of stories by

or about individuals who fled across the US-Mexico border. By contrast, there is a rich archive created by runaway African Americans and their abolitionist supporters in the US and Canada (77). However, in recent US fiction the flight to Canada appears more rarely. Concurrently, Canadian fiction has approached more critically the role that Canada has played in race relations. Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood* (1997) describes the disappointments that attend a fugitive slave in Canada, Cane I, and his descendents; and Lori Lansens's *Rush Home Road* (2002) is concerned with the story of flight from slavery but also with the recovery of that story generations later through the voice of women who are the true repository of history. The chapter ends with a discussion of John Sayles's film, *Lone Star* (1996), and the "cross-ethnic neo-slave" narratives (92) of Gayl Jones and Guillermo Sánchez de Anda who bring back the neglected history of blacks in the southwestern US and in Mexico. The film, for example, suggests parallels between the story of the Black Seminoles and the struggles of Mexican Americans, both of which cross the US-Mexico border (though in different directions) in search of a better life.

Entitled "Women of the South Bank," Chapter Three focuses on the "intersecting lives and careers" of Katherine Anne Porter, Anita Brenner, and Tina Modotti, and the impact of 1920s Mexico on their art. Porter, the only US author of her generation to spend a significant portion of her career south of the border, was directly attracted by Mexico's political and artistic experiments. She praised the work of Mexican Indian authors, much of it neglected at the time, and in her 1922 story, "María Concepción," emphasized the rich subjectivity of an Indian woman. By contrast to Porter who sought "purity in indigenous people and arts," the Mexican-born and Texan refugee Anita Brenner "affirmed *metisaje* as Mexico's richest cultural resource" (122). She used her own hybrid (Jewish-Mexican) identity to write about of Indians, workers, and other oppressed groups. Her book about the Mexican revolution, *The Wind that Swept Mexico* (1943), mixed print narrative with a visual essay composed of 184 photographs, which ends contradictorily, by arguing for Mexico's independence and isolation from other continental cultures. The last figure in this chapter, Tina Modotti, with whom both Porter and Brenner collaborated on certain projects, was described by her contemporaries as a feminist heroine, a promiscuous seductress, and a hardened Stalinist—a "Mata Hari for the Comintern" in Kenneth Rexroth's words (133). Adams tries to demythologize her, situating her back in the trans-American and interartistic community that inspired her most creative work.

In Chapter Four, Adams takes Jack Kerouac out of the narrower canon of US literature, emphasizing his continental scope. The writer's own hybrid origins—French-Canadian but also Iroquois—encourage his protagonists to move through a "capacious America," representing "many different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds" (153). The move away from the US, as in the trip to Mexico described in *On the Road*, allows his characters to explore a broader world but also themselves, diving into the "untamed bacchanalian reaches of the unconscious" (163). North and south become mutually enlightening, evoking and defining each other.

Kerouac's "multicultural, multilingual visions of America" (187) are expanded further through the work of two Québécois and Mexican writers, inspired directly by him. Victor-Lévy Beaulieu's *Kerouac: A Chicken-Essay* (1972) reinvented Kerouac as an expatriated Franco-American, a Québécois writer in exile. By contrast, in Jacques Poulin's *Volkswagen Blues* (1984, trans. into English 1988), Kerouac features as the classic voyageur driven by wanderlust, turning "québécoitude" into "américanité." Adams offers in the end an even more interesting intertextual association between the Beat movement and the late 1960s "La Onda" movement in Mexico. The Onderos' writings follow improvisational procedures like Kerouac's, experimenting with form and language, though their social and political satire is stronger.

Chapter Five focuses on the erosion of borders and its effects in the multicultural crime fiction of the Canadian John Farrow, the Chicano Rolando Hinojosa, and the Mexican Paco Ignacio Taibo II. All three authors belong to literatures that have developed an interest in detective fiction more recently. Farrow underscores the "Canadianicity of his detective novels" (195), but the crimes he describes have both local and international motivations. The proximity to the United States suggests that collaboration across borders is the best approach, but this approach often fails or backfires. The Chicano writer Hinojosa challenges the clichés about cross-border crime, writing fiction focused on the drug trade in the Rio Grande Valley. In an attempt at interculturality, the Mexican detective marries an Anglo woman and collaborates successfully with an Anglo partner in confronting the legal and illegal power structures that control the borderlands. Finally, Ignacio's detective fiction addresses the corruption of Mexican society in ways that speak to a larger audience. The resolutions are often problematic, solving only the superficial conflict but leaving the deeper social causes unchanged.

Chapter Six focuses on the work of the Latino-Canadian Guillermo Verdecchia, discussed also by Sadowski-Smith. By associating Canada and Latin America, his work destabilizes the position of the US as the mediator of continental relations. His collage play, *Fronteras Americanas* (1993), emphasizes through its character called Verdecchia the need to view Canada as a part of a continental perspective that would include both Central and Latin America. The autobiographical voice learns to "live the border" and put different cultural voices together, in a new synthesis. In Verdecchia's collection of stories, *Citizen Suarez* (1998), Canada's borderlands offer a refuge to characters from different Latin American countries while also confronting them with "exile to the edge of the world" (qtd. 235).

By deterritorializing traditional borders and presenting an integrated hemispheric vision (239), Verdecchia's work is a good final point in the analyses attempted by Sadowski-Smith and Adams. At a time when the idea of transnational cooperation may seem controversial in the minds of some Canadians, US citizens, and Mexicans, especially after the NAFTA effort at economic integration, Verdecchia's vision erodes borders, fusing Anglo, Latin American, and Chicana/o styles and sensibilities (Adams 245). Yet this new continentalism is not entirely free of tensions, remaining caught between—to evoke the titles of the books I have dis-

cussed—"Border Fictions" and "Continental Divides." At its best, it can establish new circuits that encourage "constant, multidirectional exchange of populations, ideas, and values" (247) without leading to "homogeneity, standardization, or totalizing synthesis" (246).

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FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

***A History of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. xi + 352 pp. 978-0521852555.**

What is "criticism" and what is "feminist literary criticism"? Plain and Sellers generally presume we understand the meaning of both terms. Since literary criticism, theory, and history are interdependent, they need to be understood as a system; in this case, "criticism" covers all three. This practice may actually be productive: I will argue that the rich capacity of texts, whether prose or poetry, creative or analytic, to institute a theory of writing complicates the distinctions on which systematic understanding rests.

Similarly, "feminist" in this volume sometimes seems simple and sometimes exceedingly complex. At the outset, the editors state that the feminist critical project was to undo "the hegemony of universal man" (1)—envisioning a large social struggle, into which questions about literary practices and theories blur. Their definition implies a global, comparative, and historical approach to texts, some of which might not be considered "criticism." Surprisingly, Susan Gubar's postscript weighs abandoning the phrase "feminist literary criticism" altogether, suggesting that in the field of Western literature (if not economically or globally), the battle has been won (336). Already in 1938 Virginia Woolf had proposed to burn the term "feminist" as a "dead word" that had lost its social function in an England where women could vote and earn a living (69, 336). The centrality of Woolf to this volume points to its primarily anglophone, Western, academic orientation. The editors' somewhat loose and even contradictory uses of their title may therefore deliberately open up their introductory history of "feminism" for "a new generation of students" (1).

The multiple meanings attached over the last 50 years to "feminism" have shaped the three parts of this collection. Twenty contributors trace the evolution of thinking about female figures in literature and about women's writing—that is, the binary laid out in 1979 by Elaine Showalter as "feminist critique" versus "gynocriticism," a distinction cited by several contributors such as Susan Manly and Chris Weedon (47, 282). Many of the earlier "pioneers and profeminists" discussed in Part I of this collection (including Christine de Pizan, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Simone de Beauvoir) focused on the misrepresentation of women or gender in works by men. Over time, the question of a style apt for works by women

comes to the fore: in defiance of norms of femininity, Wollstonecraft advocates rationality instead of “soft phrases,” and Mary Robinson chooses “undecorated” expression. Despite their intended universalism, these ironically prepare the twentieth-century turn toward formal analysis of gender and Virginia Woolf’s interest in developing a “woman’s sentence.” In one of the richest chapters in the book, Jane Goldman exposes the contradictions in Woolf’s unanswered questions about feminism. In 1916 she declared “I become steadily more feminist” but by 1929 she feared that *A Room of One’s Own* would draw attacks as feminist or “Sapphist” (69), and by the thirties, she reoriented her concerns as a woman toward citizenship in “the whole world” (70). Closely examined, each representative figure discussed in these pages could trigger such complex and rewarding inquiry.

Part II reviews identity debates engaged by second-wave feminism, anchored by a strong overview by Mary Eagleton, whose reader, *Feminist Literary Theory* (1986), gathered many of the authors analyzed here, from Woolf onward. To some extent the middle chapters carry the burden of providing a narrative bibliography of critical subfields to serve students in a women’s literature course. This assignment inhibits close engagement with epistemological or esthetic difficulties raised by the critics they discuss, since the linear historical format tends to foster useful simplifications. Part III leads into an overview of theoretical speculations about textuality as well as sexualities; these chapters address affiliations of feminism with poststructuralism, theories of the body, and postcolonial, psychoanalytic, and queer criticism. Tellingly, while Arlene Keizer in the second part backhandedly acknowledges contributions to “black feminist criticism” by “fellow travellers,” i.e., those like Barbara Johnson who are not black (160), Heather Love in her essay on queer theory in the third part praises Eve Sedgwick for recognizing the “volatility” of desire and identity (311) and draws together the many voices asking with Annamarie Jagose, Terry Castle, and Bonnie Zimmerman, “What is a Lesbian fiction?” (175). Contributors to the middle section trace debates over universalism and particularism between white middle class feminists and black feminists, or between heteronormative and lesbian feminists; in contrast, the third section paints an absorptive, diversifying feminism that has grown through its integration of deconstruction and other theories of subjectivity.

How innovative is this history? As a whole, the volume tends to reproduce a canon of representative feminist thinkers (who were often creative writers as well) that mirrors not only the table of contents in Eagleton’s early book but the selections and balance of essays in other early anthologies such as Showalter’s *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory* (1985); Hirsch and Keller’s *Conflicts in Feminism* (1990); Warhol and Herndl’s *Feminisms* (1991); or Gilbert and Gubar’s reader, *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism* (2007). The result is a scrapbook of family snapshots tracing developments and debates about women writers and the representation of gender over the last thirty years in English. It mentions no French author between Pizan and Beauvoir, or between Beauvoir and Hélène Cixous. Apart from Chris Weedon’s excellent chapter on anglophone postcolonial critics like Gayatri Spivak, the volume notes

almost no continental or non-Western writers. We will not find Gisela Ecker, Sigrid Weigel, Rosario Castellanos, or Silvia Molloy, nor will we find the rich development of nineteenth-century women's critical practices in tandem with the explosive growth of periodicals, many aimed at and edited by women, from Sophie von La Roche, Therese Huber, and L.E.L. in the romantic period to Clara Zetkin, Maria Ivanovna Pokrovskaja, or Matilde Serao at the beginning of the twentieth century.

For a comparatist, this historical vacuum remains a problem left unaddressed by the editors. Nearly 2,000 years of criticism seem to have been devoid of women's writing. To be sure, Adams's 1266-page double-columned anthology of *Critical Theory since Plato* (1970) incorporated informal genres such as letters, literary biographies ("lives"), and "responses" as well as prefaces and treatises, but not a single woman's work. Though Longinus cites Sappho the poet, we may search in vain for references to female literary critics in ancient times. The Folger Collective wondered in first undertaking their recovery project, *Women Critics 1660-1820* (1995), whether women had been found unfitted for the role of critic by their lack of classic education, or perhaps by the gossip, sentiment, and cat-tiness attributed to the sex. The standard explanation rests on the importance of orality and scolarity: women come late to the table, the door opened for them by a Protestant emphasis on universal literacy, the development of print vehicles in the eighteenth century, and the rise of the bourgeoisie leading to declarations of the rights of woman. Accordingly, René Wellek included a number of women in his eight-volume *History of Modern Criticism*, starting with the celebrated Germaine de Staël, whom he considered one of the founders of comparative literature, with her essays on fiction, on Rousseau, *On Literature Considered in Its Relationship to Social Institutions* (1800), *De l'Allemagne* (1810), and her Künstlerinroman, *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807). Staël contrasted the situation of women writers under monarchy to those in a republic, compared Northern to Southern cultures, German to French, and centered her novel about a woman poet on oral rather than written performance. Corinne served as model for Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, as well as for George Sand's representations of women artists. And Staël above all prepared for twentieth-century feminism by her attention to the social and political conditions of women's literary production and reception. Undoubtedly, then, the nineteenth century could have provided this volume with an array of active and recognized women author-critics including George Sand, whose influence on writers in England, Spain, and America was vast.

I would perversely argue, however, that there is evidence of women's critical thinking wherever we find women's words. What if we look at poetry attributed to women? Texts of self-defence, of competition and rivalry are just the kind of site where one may discover something like a theory of practice as a woman writer. Typical writerly gestures, I think, are the self-conscious, contrarian opening lines of "Sulpicia" in her "Complaint: On the State of the Nation and the Age of Domitian," addressed to Calliope and recorded in perhaps the first century CE: "Muse, grant to me the weaving of a little tale of peace / in the meter that you use when

you celebrate wars and heroes.” The poet proceeds to relinquish shorter feet, satire, and light verse, in order to tackle her unusual “little” theme in the masculine form to which the female muse is ironically accustomed. Similarly, we find in Atukuri Molla, a sixteenth-century Varasaiva mystic whose poetry has been translated by Susie Tharu, a distinct, ostensibly modest, version of the *Ramayana*. Writing in Telugu rather than Sanskrit, she chose a spoken form rather than inherited poetic forms and obscure vocabulary: “I am no scholar / distinguishing the loanwords / from the antique stock” (Tharu 96). Working at the boundary between the oral and the written, Atukuri Molla laid claim to the value of traditional forms and the theme of Rama’s wife Sita, kept alive by female poets.

That Atukuri Molla was a mystic is no accident, since a spiritual calling has fed many women’s decisions to write. In defiance of prohibitions on women’s speech, medieval women like Marie de France found justification for their eloquence in speech from God. Such recourse to divine inspiration channels the passion expressed in the spiritual texts of German women such as Hrotswitha von Gandersheim and Hildegard von Bingen, as shown by Susanne Zantop in “Trivial Pursuits?” (1990). The thirteenth-century mystic Hadewijch of Brabant drew her authority from her spiritual visions of union with the “Knight of Love.” Such self-authorizations might be considered female variants on the chain of inspiration that Plato describes (more skeptically) in the *Ion*. When challenged about their right to write, women have even regendered their divine sources. Julian of Norwich used maternal imagery for “our precious Mother Jesus,” who nursed her writing.

Certainly we may expect prefaces to justify women’s conception of writing. But once women take pen in hand to make a living, they also put tongue in cheek. Could it be their irony that has veiled their critical statements? If we look at the working-class Elizabeth Hands’s two witty poems about the publication of her short epic *Death of Amnon* (1789), we find an elegant critique of bourgeois esthetic pretensions and hypocrisy. Hands quotes insulting comments by ladies about a “servant maid” who has written a volume of poetry, as they drink tea served by invisible hands. She mocks judgments based on identity that propose a mop or a broom as an appropriate subject for servants rather than a Biblical theme “so much out of their sphere” (ll. 10, 34). Anna Barbauld takes an opposite tack in her mock-heroic lyric “Washing Day,” which celebrates the conflict between washerwomen and the elements, before it closes on the metaphor of a bubble that brings together themes of vanity, modernity, and the female imagination. In a more serious vein, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* embeds a major theory of epic that could be tailored to a woman’s ambitions. The poet satirizes British conventions of femininity in learning and subject matter in Book I, and in Book V responds to Wordsworth’s *Prelude* (published six years before) with a lengthy discussion of subjects proper to a modern epic: not mythic heroes twice the height of a man, but the throbbing moment with all its flaws and passions. Poets, she writes, “should exert a double vision” showing the “double-breasted Age” from both near and far (Bk V 366, 399). Through the gendered bodily metaphors

of her alter ego Aurora, Barrett Browning stakes the claim of women to write socially engaged poetry as well as the lyrics of passion.

We face a chicken-egg problem: although we need a literary history of women's writings before we can construct a "feminist" criticism, only a feminist perspective or theory enables us to imagine the retrieval of women's writings. Dolores Romero López's 2007 collection of six centuries of Spanish women's writing, for example, will bring a major building block to any comparative construction of women's literary history. Inevitably, one of the most common expressions of interest in theorizing the future of writing by women is a catalogue of women's past writings—a kind of literary *heroides* that recounts aesthetic rather than erotic feats. Yet herein lies a snag. As Margaret Ezell complained in *Writing Women's Literary History* (1993), we tend to read the past in order to mirror the present. Barrett Browning wrote that she was searching for her grandmothers, just as Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* saw women thinking back "through our mothers" in order to find a "sentence" shaped to express women's experience. Late twentieth-century American feminism caught in its historical net those individualist, bourgeois, Western fish that would feed its own ideological goals; it tended to neglect women writing in other circumstances and with other social values.

No collection like that by Plain and Sellers can be complete. Future work in this field could develop historicized approaches to the particular manifestations of feminist criticism linked to the rise of periodical literatures, or to the endangerment of feminist criticism in times of war and national trauma. Reaching back to medieval debates over the use of vernacular, historians might weave a comparative account of theories of gendered language and of the expression of gender in different linguistic cultures, including the fascinating case of *nu shu*, a Chinese women's language now nearly extinct. Even in fields where much work has been done, we can anticipate broad comparative histories—devoted to theories of gender and genre, for example, in the gendered assignment of oral forms. We might ask why feminist approaches have been particularly productive in certain fields such as reader-response. The debate over feminism and canonization remains acutely alive. In 2009, *Critical Inquiry* published an explosive exchange of letters concerning the selections of female authors in the Norton and Longman anthologies over the last two decades. The questions about the control of cultural capital that are confronted by Plain and Sellers and their colleagues may thus seem familiar because they are sempiternally fertile.

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OUVRAGES COLLECTIFS /

COLLECTIVE WORKS



Discontinuities and Displacements: Studies in Comparative Literature. Ed. Eduardo F. Coutinho. *Beyond Binarisms*, Vol. I. Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano, 2009. xi + 486 pp. 978-8578200145.

This volume, the first of three consisting of papers originally presented at the meeting of the AILC/ICLA in summer 2007 in Rio de Janeiro, contains contributions that represent a multiplicity of nationalities and interests and as such testifies to the importance of ongoing research in comparative literature on an international scale. Ranging from the densely theoretical to close readings of particular texts and from literary to cultural in focus, and written in English, French, or Portuguese, the papers are grouped into five headings: “The Origins and Transformations of Comparative Literature,” “Imagology and the Role of the Intellectual,” “Literary Historiography, Folklore (*sic*) and Narratives of European Exploration,” “Studies of Authors, Genres and Literary Movements,” and “Studies on Translation.”

In the first section of the book, comparatists from France, Egypt, Brazil, and the US discuss one of the perennial subjects of comparative literature: the history and current state of the discipline itself. Hugo Dyserinck, for some time an important figure in the field, appropriately opens the volume with “Les origines de la littérature comparée et le problème du point de vue supranational.” As if in opposition to current globalist views of the field, Dyserinck reminds us of its European origins, arguing that Etiemble’s attack on “eurocentrism” risked destroying the “supranational” view that European scholars were in the process of creating. That view was of course a European one, epitomized for Dyserinck by Ernst Robert Curtius’s *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948), one of the first books to succeed in expressing a “European thought” that maintained cultural neutrality toward Europe’s various languages, cultures, and nationalities. It is only at the end of his essay that Dyserinck suggests that comparative literature, while always bearing the *cachet* of its European origins, has the potential to open up to a universal vision. Biagio d’Angelo and Florian Klinger, in their respective essays, take up a related topic: the perpetual “crisis” of comparative literature. Both reflect on the dialogue between the scholar and the writer-critic, and, in Klinger’s case, the role of Kant’s notion of judgment. Both accentuate the fruitfulness of crisis: for Klinger it is the core of activity in the humanities.

Although Douwe Fokkema discusses the Chinese writer Gao Xingjian and the Brazilian Guimarães Rosa in making the argument that the transcendence of binarism is characteristic of all great literature, the papers in this first section are primarily focused on Western European concepts, thinkers, and writers. The second section adds the discussion of Croatian literature, the Polish reception of William Carlos Williams, and Chinese fiction and drama. The title of this section, however, links together two themes that have very little to do with each other; thus some of the papers are on imagology and others on the role of the intellectual. Two quite different essays on

the topic of the intellectual are of particular interest. Jeffrey Di Leo's provocative "Intellectuals in the Corporate University" argues that since there has been a decline of the public intellectual in the United States, the term "corporate intellectual," reflecting the rise of the affiliations between corporations and universities, should now be established. Di Leo seems to suggest that there was once a golden age of public intellectuals in the US without telling the reader when or what this was. In any case, the new corporate intellectuals within the university would consider the market value of their ideas, as well as their intellectual content, thus expanding communication beyond the university. While this brief paper merely sketches an idea that demands to be fleshed out, it should spark some discussion. Li Xia, in a refreshingly well-written essay on literary representations of Chinese intellectuals in post-Mao fiction, considers fictional intellectuals in the context of the decline of both Eastern and Western public intellectuals. He contrasts "Gao Xingjian's solipsistic, self-oriented . . . position of the artist" (120) (a judgment that seems to me unduly harsh) with the view in Mo Yan's 1992 novel *The Republic of Wine*. For Mo Yan (who also appears as a character in his novel), literature has the almost religious potential to bring light into darkness, to unite spiritual awakening with political and social critique. Far from espousing corporatism, Li Xia emphasizes that the duty of the Chinese literary intellectual is to oppose China's rampant consumerism.

In the third section, scholars from Croatia, Slovenia, and Belgium discuss problems of literary history and historiography, a Brazilian scholar writes on Celtic resistance in Scotland, and a Polish scholar argues for the interconnectedness of pan-European folk literature. Jonathan Hart, from Canada, looks at European identity from the vantage point of European narratives of exploration and contact with other cultures from 1415 to 1945. Analyzing examples of the treatment of cannibals and of independent women, or Amazons, Hart demonstrates how explorers superimpose classical mythology on their narratives of encounters with Others. Such carry-overs help to create what Hart calls "the translation of empire" (190) or the myth of an endless European empire, yet always threatened by possible fall or chaos. From a different point of view, Sylvie André, who teaches at the French university in Tahiti, discusses European appropriations of Polynesian art forms, arguing that they have been characterized by ethnocentric condescension. However, she praises Paul Zumthor's insights in *La Lettre et la voix* as well as André Breton's *Art magique*. Both initiate performance-based research on "primitive art" as opposed to an ahistorical reception. André calls for continued exploration along these lines by scholars of comparative literature.

The essays grouped under "Studies of Authors, Genres and Literary Movements" represent more traditional types of comparative studies, yet even in their comparisons and juxtapositions of two writers from different cultural traditions, they tend to move beyond binarism. John M. Kopper's "Subverting Teleological Discourse in Contemporary Cultural Studies: Lessons from Poplavsky and Jarry" shows how the fin-de-siècle French and the early twentieth-century Russian poets use blasphemy to create a "perpetual counterterm" to their societies, exploding traditional paired opposites, and ultimately exposing the failure of any social organization. Ken Ireland's close reading of the thematic and stylistic affinities between Thomas Hardy and Gustave Flaubert, speculating about the influence of Flaubert on Hardy, represents a well-done traditional comparative study. Tatsushi Narita's essay on T.S. Eliot, Bergur Rønne Moberg's on a Danish-Faeroese novel *Barbara* (1939), and Danica Cerce's on the Slovenian novelist Drago Jancar, represent studies of single authors within a

wider cultural context.

The most coherent section of the book, and the one that offers the most divergent set of essays focusing on a single problem, is to my mind the last grouping, "Studies on Translation." Since the publication of Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone* in 2006, the theory and practice of translation, once a poor step-child, has moved to a leading position in comparative literature studies. This section gives a comprehensive view of some of the major directions in world-wide translation studies. Sathya Rao from Canada, in "L'Érotique du traduire: au-delà des binarismes en traduction," takes up the major theme of the conference while attempting to deconstruct the current binary paradigms in *traductologie*—seen as ethics and politics—with an "erotic" approach. Drawing on Levinas's approach to the other through the caress, Rao proposes thinking about translation not in polarized terms but rather in a "vast continuum of modes of relation." Rather than developing this theoretical notion, however, Rao devotes the second half of the essay to the more specific problem of translating "erotic" literature, in particular the 2001 French novel titled *La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.*, focusing on problems particular to translating this type of literature. Although both parts of the essay make interesting and innovative points, I found that they did not really fit together and felt disappointed that the theoretical "erotic" approach to translation was not more developed. Pier-Pascale Boulanger, also from Canada, partially mines this theoretical vein in "The Censorship of Love in Translation Studies" by focusing on the figure of the translator as lover, beginning with the eighteenth century and including references to George Steiner and Gayatri Spivak. In tropes representing the translator as lover, the original author may appear as a "warming mistress," and the act of translating as an "erotic dynamic." Arguing that ideological approaches to translation have succeeded in censoring the role of the body, Boulanger calls for a return of the body, and of pleasure, to the theory and practice of translation.

Christo Lombaard of South Africa takes an approach that is at once highly scholarly and political in his "Translating Human Rights between the Secular and the Spiritual—Two Recent Attempts." Basing his argument on his own translations of Biblical texts from Hebrew, Lombaard argues, against current anti-religious movements in South Africa, that foundational statements advocating human rights can be found in the Bible, if correctly translated. In "Traître de soi-même: Le dilemme de l'Auto-Traduction" and "Voices from the Void—Pseudotranslated Dialogue in Narrative Texts," Hans-Georg Grüning, who teaches in Italy, and Brigitte Rath, from Germany, take up two specific problems in translation: that of the author who translates his or her own texts and the translation of dialogue that is represented as being in another language but that in fact is not. Recalling the old word play *traduttore traditore*, Grüning agrees that translators necessarily betray and, drawing on specific examples of what he calls "auto" and "hetero" translations, concludes that self-translators are more daring in their betrayal than translators of others' work. Using examples from Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim* and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Rath shows how these writers evoke in English a "translation" of Urdu and of native American languages for which there is no original.

Several of the essays develop trends in translation studies stemming from Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility*, ones that emphasize the cultural impact of translation and the various (visible) roles of the translator. In his "Confucius as an English Gentleman," Qian Suoqiao, who teaches in Hong Kong,

demonstrates how Gu Hongming (1857-1928), as the first Chinese to translate Confucian classics into English, not only attempts to overturn Western prejudice against Chinese culture, but also resists imperialism. Unlike Edward Saïd's anti-imperialist strategy however, Gu's includes an alliance with Matthew Arnold's belief in culture as "the best that has been thought and said," arguing for the inclusion of Confucius in this group. Allying himself with Arnoldian "culture" against modern economic materialism, Gu endeavors "to make Confucius and his disciples speak in the same way as an educated Englishman would speak. . . ." (379), thus taking considerable liberty with the original text. Peter Hajdu takes a more wide-ranging view of the cultural role of translation in his interesting discussion of the importance of Latin and the Roman classics in Hungary. In part because of Hungarians' desire to affirm continuity with Western Europe's medieval past and in part as an act of resistance to German becoming the official language of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Latin was the official language of Hungary until 1844. Education in Hungarian schools continued to emphasize translation from Latin into Hungarian, but this was according to Hajdu a "source-oriented" type of translation, one which retained much of the Latin syntax and periodic sentences. The goal was not to produce a readable and smooth Hungarian text, but rather to remind students of the original and to emphasize the cultural importance of Hungarians' knowledge of Latin. This practice of course ceased under communism, when a break with Western culture and "elitism" was emphasized. Although it was not re-instated after the revolutions of 1989, classical antiquity continues to be represented in Hungary as "the harmonious world of eternal beauty," evoking nostalgia for pre-communist, pre-modern Hungary.

Karen Thornber's work on the role of translations of Japanese in "semicolonial China" and "colonial Korea" further develops the relation of translation to empire. Cheryl Toman, in her analysis of "Werewere Liking's Franco-Bassa Fusion in Literature," argues that Liking's work illustrates the formerly colonized writer's strategy of dominating, rather than being dominated by, the colonial language. Paula Mendes Coelho, through an analysis of Maria Gabriela Llansol's translation of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* into Portuguese, argues for the importance of the concept of "hospitality" in translation. Drawing on Benjamin's ever-seminal essay regarding his own translation of Baudelaire and on Antoine Berman and Gabriel Saad, Mendes Coelho sees translation as a particular instance of hospitality, or of welcoming a foreigner into one's home. Llansol's "appropriations," "incorporations," and "updating" of Baudelaire make of her a *mère porteuse* (surrogate mother) whose "hospitality" gives life once again to the original. While the metaphors in this interpretation may at times seem a bit fantastic, Coelho opens up yet another possible research avenue in translation studies.

All of the essays in this last section in fact re-affirm the importance of various approaches in translation studies to literary history and literary cultural studies. The multi-national and multi-generic authors and topics, as well as the wide spectrum of scholarly interests in comparative literature represented in this volume attest to the continued vitality of the discipline.

In closing, I need to raise some questions about the editorial policies involved in producing this volume. If the idea was simply to collect and reproduce the papers as they were given at the conference, then the book fulfills its mission. If, however, the notion was to create a collection of essays in and on comparative literature for a wider readership, then the book suffers from a lack of editing. No one would expect that

all contributors would write in flawless English, but a reader has the right to expect that an editor would correct the more glaring errors. Several of the essays in English suffer from these problems. Those in French are less affected, primarily because most of them are written by native speakers. My minimal competence in Portuguese prevents me from commenting on the essays in that language. Why did the editor not have associate editors specialized in English and French working with him? Also, although his brief "Foreword" gives a clear idea of the volume's scope and purpose, a more comprehensive introduction would have been welcome. The affiliations of the contributors are provided with the essays, but information on their scholarly interests would have been useful in further promoting the fruitful exchange of comparative research on an international scale that the volume aims to encourage.

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***Crossings and Contaminations: Studies in Comparative Literature.* Eds. Eduardo F. Coutinho and Pina Coco. *Beyond Binarisms*, Vol. II. Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano, 2009. xi + 439 pp. 978-8578200152.**

This edited collection, the second volume in a series of three, brings together a number of the papers presented at the "Beyond Binarisms" eighteenth triennial convention of the International Comparative Literature Association, held in Rio de Janeiro in August 2007. The collection has been edited by the organizers of the conference, Eduardo Coutinho and Pina Coco. They explain the theme of the conference and of the overall series of papers as being one of overcoming Comparative Literature's traditionally binary perspective "that has considerably limited its scope" (ix). More recently, however, the editors acknowledge, "the binary schema which for so long prevailed within the core of comparative studies has been reevaluated and its excludent [sic] character has often been replaced by an inclusive view that has come to consider alternative forms of expression and to recognize their differences" (ix). Given the large number of contributions in this volume from Asia and Latin America, this new paradigm of comparatism has become accepted globally. (As I write this review, the final preparations are underway for the nineteenth triennial in Seoul, South Korea. It will be interesting to see what the program for that brings, not to mention post-conference collections of papers such as the present one.)

This second volume of *Beyond Binarisms* contains exactly fifty pieces, written in the four different official languages of the conference (English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish), and divided into three broad categories: 1) Literature, Arts, and Media; 2) Human, In-Human, Post-Human; and 3) Globalization and the Digital Age. The first two categories each take up nearly 200 pages each, the last a mere 50 of the overall 439 pages. Each of these three sub-topics can be seen as a form of "crossing and contamination." Twentieth-century literature and media predominate throughout the volume, with a handful of contributions on nineteenth and eighteenth-century European literatures, and nothing from before 1750. American (North and South) and European literatures predominate, with just two contributions on African literatures and only one on Asian literature (Dorothy Wong's piece on postcolonial Hong Kong in fiction), though Japanese anime is an object for comparison in several articles in the second section.

Furthermore, the readings contained in the papers are frequently transnational in terms of comparing the home nation of the scholar with his or her object of study.

About half of the papers are devoted to a single author or work. For example: Maria Cortez of the University of Aveiro (Portugal) tackles Austrian Elfriede Jelinek's *Der Tod und das Mädchen*; Marcelo Souza Ribeiro of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil) reads the American imperialist fantasy *Tarzan of the Apes*; Eri Ohashi of Oita, Japan, reads Flaubert's *Saint Julien*; Magali dos Santos Moura and Izabela Furtado Kestler, both faculty members at universities in the state of Rio de Janeiro, interpret Goethe; Aino Tsuyoshi of Saga University compares Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *L'Eve future* with the anime *Ghost in the Shell*; and so forth. Daniela Spinelli reads not the writings of Gustave Flaubert and Henrik Ibsen, but their critical apprehension by Peter Szondi and Georg Lukács. As might be expected, this movement beyond binarism and the confines of geography is perhaps best represented in the third and last section of the volume, where only one of the six titles carries a specific author's name. (And indeed, the one exception, a reading of Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, does not really adhere to the theme of the section.)

This third section, then, is perhaps the most successful in fulfilling the ambitions of the volume. Stephan Packard explains how digital texts counter the principle of polytextuality, i.e. of multiple encodings of a constant, with that of hypertextuality, in which there is no constant text and the constantly shifting relations between textual elements constitutes the text's message (as in hypertext narratives or role-playing games). Alexander Mihatoviae addresses, with the help of Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, the now well-worn question concerning the impact of digital technologies on our perceptions of embodiment. Camille Marc Dumoulié takes another rather clichéd rhetorical path in outlining three ways in which capitalism controls desire—inscribing the body; pre-packaged violence in the media; and deployment of the virtual. Kathleen Komar examines the influence of computer-generated poetry on “our vision of how poetry functions and how we should interpret it” (432). Assumpta Camps of the Universitat de Barcelona takes a pragmatic turn in acquainting us with the recently inaugurated online journal *Transfer* that is dedicated to the topics of translation and intercultural studies. (Whether this journal is still functioning is unclear; the URL given on page 415 returned an error message.)

A few papers, for example that of Spinelli mentioned above, engage discursively in the comparison of a plurality of national cultures. In one of the volume's more original contributions, Gabriela Gândara Terenas tells how the Portuguese illustrated magazines of the nineteenth century reported on Britain almost exclusively through the mediated viewpoints of French authors (161-70). Terenas makes use of polysystems theory to explain this cultural mediation as a type of translation effect that also escapes the binary.

There is another, parallel collection within this comparative one: a substantial portion of the papers are on Lusophone literatures. They bear no trace of a comparative perspective—even of the positional kind noted above—and might as well have appeared in the proceedings of a conference on Brazilian or Portuguese literature. José Saramago's *A Caverna* is treated by Vanessa Cardozo Brandão, and the Portuguese writer Nuno Bragança's *A noite e o riso* (Night and Smile) by Clara Riso (no pun intended). There are no entries for Lusophone African literatures in this volume. That leaves Brazilian literature, art, and cinema, which are represented in at least ten of the articles. In terms of literature, the choices are almost exclusively canonical, from the novelists João Guimarães Rosa and Cornélio Penna, to Raduan Nassar. The most unconventional piece of literature treated is Fausto Fawcett's 1991

cyborg fiction, *Santa Clara Poltergeist*, which Rodolfo Rorato Londero compares with William Gibson's *Neuromancer*.

Dividing the number of pages by the number of papers, we arrive at the average length of nine pages, which corresponds approximately to the time allotted to presentation at a conference of this type. They are, then, papers rather than articles. Some authors devoted all their limited space to a reading of the text, resulting in a short works-cited list, while others have more extensive ones. The shortness of the papers contributes to a problem of contextualization of the works discussed. An example would be the cluster of three articles (all by professors at the same Brazilian institution) on Raduan Nassar's novel, *Lavoura arcaica* [Home-Made, 1975] that take up pages 111 to 136 of *Beyond Binarisms*. Only when we reach the third essay is some attempt made at explaining the importance and innovative features of Nassar's novel. Instead, theoretical and critical big guns are brought into position for analyzing the text before the reader is fully convinced that it will bear this interpretive weight. The following essay on Graciliano Ramos's *Memórias do cárcere* (1953) does a somewhat better job of situating this unique memoir by an important Brazilian writer.

I do not wish to be overly critical of these or other essays that fail to contextualize, nor to underestimate the difficulty of doing original work in the short space allotted to each essay. However, the reader should know that beyond language issues, there will be this obstacle to a full understanding of the critical discourse on these texts. Nonetheless, as a panoramic snapshot of comparatism, *Beyond Binarisms* fulfills its stated goal of giving the reader a truly globalized view of literary and cultural scholarship in the world today.

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Teaching World Literature. Ed. David Damrosch. **Options for Teaching 23.** New York: Modern Language Association, 2009. viii + 432 pp. 978-781603290340.

In recent work on world literature, it has rightly been observed that all formulations of the field are by definition perspectival—conceived from a particular vantage point for a specific use. In this regard the recent turn toward world literature itself appears distinctly an American phenomenon, and most clearly concerned with the business of teaching. The appearance of *Teaching World Literature*, edited by David Damrosch, is timely. The mandate of the MLA series to which this volume belongs is to offer a panorama of pedagogical practice in North America across a wide variety of contexts, from high school to graduate school, from community and liberal arts colleges to research universities. This panorama affords the opportunity to inquire if world literature coheres as a pedagogical project. To which I might add, if it is an American phenomenon, is it one worth experimenting with elsewhere?

The sense that world literature remains a contested field, caught between the conflicting impulses to assimilate cultural difference or engage it on its own terms, is a concern that runs through the book's five parts: "issues and definitions," "program strategies," "teaching strategies," "courses," and "resources." In his definition of world literature Zhang Longxi articulates the first impulse to stress the familiarity of literary themes across cultures by tracing the common metaphor of life as a journey via quotations from Dante, Khayyam, and Li Bai. As if in response to Zhang, Vilashini Cooppan asks fundamental questions of any project that seeks "a reassuring sameness to every story" such as "the universal presence of the journey theme" (38). Is this

not simply to recognize the familiar, shaped by the categories of European literature, in the unfamiliar? To domesticate foreign literatures and geographies? To indulge in the romantic promise of an instant understanding of the other? A world literature that leaps like Superman over distinct geographies and histories seeking sameness will not do, as most contributors concur with Cooppan. But which method could do justice to an ethical preoccupation with not domesticating cultural difference?

Emily Apter sees promise in the literary world-systems theory of Franco Moretti, commonly referenced in the volume as representative of world literature projects in general. Moretti's theory borrows from evolutionary biology in visualizing the diffusion of literary phenomena from core to periphery via graphs, maps, and genealogical trees. It insists on the value of the distant reading of data (pertaining for instance to the dissemination of translations) in capturing broad international patterns of cultural consumption and influence. Despite the risk of flattening or homogenizing differences, Apter stresses the potential of literary world-systems theory to enhance non-Western area studies in comparative literature. Lawrence Venuti, in turn, insists that the teaching of texts in translation necessitates a qualification of Moretti's theory, "one that enables literary texts from the periphery to destabilize a core literature" (95). Contributors are attentive to the manner in which the adoption of such a "macro" systems approach would redefine national literature as a subset that requires something larger, "something like world literature," for "its full contours to emerge" (306).

At a moment when several US institutions are introducing courses and programs in world literature, Damrosch's volume is particularly useful in identifying the paradoxes that are likely to continue to shape the passage from theory to curricular strategy. In comparative literature programs the research protocol that requires the study of each text in its original language, Oscar Kenshur notes, has slowed down the addition of courses in world literature. Hence the underlying paradox for the teaching of world literature in the US academy: the scholars who ought to be best qualified to compare literatures globally may be discouraged by their disciplinary formation from doing so. A related paradox, Caroline Eckhardt adds, is that even as universities are increasingly persuaded of the need to teach world literature at the undergraduate level, American graduate programs do not yet offer training or degrees in the subject.

Teaching World Literature offers promising experiments in programming that might suggest workable compromises. In contexts of unusual diversity and multilingualism such as California's, Kathleen Komar ventures, comparative literature may want to overcome its unease with different levels of linguistic competence in the classroom. Komar describes undergraduate classrooms at UCLA where all students benefit from reading short texts in bilingual editions and other texts are read in the original or in translation in accordance with their linguistic ability. Jane Newman details the reorganization of the undergraduate curriculum in comparative literature at UC-Irvine around three modes of comparison: genre, history, or intertextuality. Comparison and specialization need not be at odds. The key, for Newman, is to emphasize "the dialogues between [the] continuities and the specificity of their various locations" (132). At the graduate level, one of the most promising compromises of this kind is embodied by the new doctoral program in literature at Notre Dame outlined by Collin Meissner and Margaret Doody. While the program reaffirms that disciplinary expertise is rooted in the mastery of a national language and tradition, all students are required to take a methods course in which they are encouraged to develop cross-cultural research projects.

Teaching World Literature expressly aims to redress the predicament described by Tobin Siebers that “[f]or all the talk of multiculturalism today, there is very little genuine multiculturalism going on, especially in the classroom” (qtd. 267). The editor’s own contribution reflects a threefold concern with the inclusion of minor literatures: minority writing within national traditions, the “kleine Literaturen” of smaller countries, and works from national traditions relegated to a minor status by global literary markets (194). Damrosch’s selection of essays for the sections “Teaching Stories” and “Courses” addresses the challenge of weaving into world literature minority perspectives inclusive of indigenous, feminist, and queer writing, notably the case studies by Elvira Pulitano, Margaret Higonnet, Joseph Massad, Nikolai Endres, Ellen Peel, Eric Sterling, and Carol Fadda-Conrey. The volume qualifies the optimism of these inclusive visions with the caveat that multiculturalism and world literature compete as models for greater inclusiveness in the American academy. A student quoted in *Teaching World Literature* mourns the “ironic loss” that occurs when a domestic canon of minority texts is established at the expense of foreign language expertise, with the ensuing risk of a “monolingualism at odds with the international aspirations of the field” (126).

As a manual for a more inclusive pedagogy, *Teaching World Literature* offers innovative strategies for presenting literary phenomena as genuine acts of cultural transmission. The task of weaving women’s voices into world literature has been made more viable, Higonnet notes, by upending traditional hierarchies of genre in the West, making space for lyrics and diaries concerning faith, love, and loss, “themes central to much of women’s writing” (233). New anthologies of world literature recuperate in oral literature the ceremonial function of women’s storytelling from bridal songs to graveside laments, and revisit modernism from the perspective of women’s writing of World War I. Rather than reifying the study of world literature, Thomas Beebee suggests, teachers should strive to lend the quality of problem-solving or laboratory work to their assignments. Beebee proposes that students re-imagine a literary text in a different genre or medium, and debate or parody its central claims. The challenge, in this respect, is to keep these assignments grounded in specific cultural and historical contexts.

The volume’s fundamental preoccupation with seeking research and teaching protocols that can do justice to the cross-cultural scope of world literature resonates outside the US context, as illustrated by the new program in world literature at Simon Fraser University in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver. Greater Vancouver, which like greater Toronto has a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than New York or Los Angeles, possesses the diversity and multilingualism that Kathleen Komar identifies as fertile for curricular experiments in juggling language protocols in the classroom. In the suburb of Surrey, two thirds of the population are first or second-generation immigrants: one in four are from South Asia and one in six from China or East Asia. Bollywood jostles Hollywood in the suburb’s multiplexes, and this East/West cultural fluency would appear ideal for the expansion of comparative literature beyond what *Teaching World Literature* identifies as its “traditional German-French-English configuration” (103).

Yet unlike New York or Los Angeles, Greater Vancouver does not possess established institutional strengths in comparative literature, posing challenges to the adoption of the compromises that contributors to *Teaching World Literature* favor between national and world literature and the protocols of original-language study and translation. Simon Fraser has an autonomous world literature program but no

national literature programs beyond English and French and little foreign language instruction, while across town the University of British Columbia boasts strong area and language study but no undergraduate program in comparative literature (and a graduate program that is not currently admitting students). The trend in British Columbia toward expanding university enrollment by upgrading two-year colleges to university status reinforces the likelihood that most students will encounter world literature as Global English with little or no foreign-language texts in the original or in translation. The disconnect between the cultural diversity of everyday life in the city and the institutional frameworks available for literary study exacerbates the gap Beebee identifies between literature as a genuine act of cultural transmission and the reification of its study in the academy.

The new program in world literature was introduced to connect with the cross-cultural make up and curiosity of the population. In designing the program, my approach was to productively engage the tension between the projects of world literature and multiculturalism, drawing from both scholarship and a survey of students conducted in readying the first pitch for the program. In conceiving of world literature as a field, as a Brazilian working within the field of world literature in North America, I was indebted to the work of Roberto Schwarz, Eduardo Coutinho, Franco Moretti, and David Damrosch, and the latter's definition of world literature as the movement of literature across time and space was particularly useful in the program's implementation. Student contribution to curriculum design, an ideal advocated by Jane Newman in *Teaching World Literature*, was instrumental in the program's privileging of cross-cultural inquiry as an operating principle. Students expressed a desire to learn about other cultures, not to have to choose in their first year between tracks in Western and non-Western literature, and not to be boxed into researching only their heritage cultures. At the level of curricular design, there was a concern with avoiding Eurocentric frames (such as Renaissance or Enlightenment) for the comparison of Western and non-Western texts (cf. Lawall, 17-29).

Considered within the context of the preoccupations with diversity and language protocols in *Teaching World Literature*, the experience of this program suggests that world literature can offer a viable programmatic fit in a highly diverse environment. At its institution, the new program has attracted to literary study a strikingly more diverse student body in terms of cultural background and intellectual and professional ambition. A continuing concern is the challenge outlined by Komar, Kenshur, and Beebee to seek disciplinary protocols and assignments that might do justice to cultural specificity in teaching literature in translation. While the absence of sufficient foreign-language instruction prevents an adherence to original-language protocols, 80% of majors and minors pursue foreign-language study and many study abroad though they are not required to do so. Like Komar and Beebee, faculty complement readings with exercises in translation, conversations with authors and translators, and problem-solving and creative assignments. This evidence would suggest the value of curricular experiments that tolerate and build upon different levels of linguistic competence in the classroom.

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***Modernités occidentales et extra-occidentales.* Eds. Xavier Garnier and Anne Tomiche. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009. 201 pp. 978-2296101159.**

In this thematic issue of the quarterly *Itinéraires: Littérature, textes, cultures* (number 3 of 2009), nine authors reassess phenomena of modern culture in light of their spread around the globe. Several reviews of books on modernism/modernity published between 1990 and 2009 are appended complementarily. The main essays are grouped in three loose divisions whose headings underscore that we should explore key terms in the plural: “Les modernités en régime mondial: configurations géoculturelles,” “Les modernités: entre continuités et ruptures,” and “‘Histoires littéraires’ de modernités: mises en phase et déphasages.” The editors’ joint Introduction provides an indispensable framework for approaching such a formidably variegated picture. Tomiche and Garnier invite the reader to engage in a program of cultural mapping with both spatial and temporal dimensions. They point to “une concurrence de modernités à l’intérieure de la sphère occidentale” (12) and call for careful attention to the phasing, degrees, and kinds of modernity elsewhere. They invoke a variety of postmodern theoreticians (e.g., Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari, Jameson, Bürger, Foucault, et al.) to demarcate a boundary-line for our retrospection on Eurocentric topics and on modernist traits highlighted in a select plurality of specific extra-European cultures. The emphasis in the Introduction, as in the chapters, is mainly sociological, but a good deal of cultural history is adduced for context. The question that emerges is whether the transformation of life in big cities, the exponentially increased circulation of information, and today’s widespread consciousness of being involved in a global dynamic have extensively eroded older distinctions (e.g., between metropolitan centers and peripheries) and may have given birth to a “modern subject” even in complex older societies outside the Eurocentric zones. If the problem of the subject already experienced in Europe appears elsewhere, we should expect to witness newer contests, in a variety of local manifestations, between “non-hegemonic” forms of modernism (e.g., liberation of the individual) and “neo-imperial” forces (e.g. the will of the state to shape lives). This tension may become a commonality worldwide in the twenty-first century.

Tomiche restates the basic propositions in her opening chapter, asking whether “Les modernités littéraires sont-elles une affaire occidentale?” Sorting through rival theories, different proposed intra-European starting moments, purported key formalistic attributes, and alternate groupings of iconic writers whose work is supposed to constitute modernism, she goes on to rehearse the well-known truism that imperial nations like Britain inevitably developed an international interface with many other cultures and became as much recipients as exporters of cultural goods. While some critics hold to an anti-diffusionist thesis in certain instances, a larger number promote the theses of hybridity and indigenization to explain the new cultural mixes which appear in immigrant nations that were founded by European nations and in decidedly non-European former colonial outposts. Tomiche cites Brazil in more detail to illustrate how the culture of a specific sizeable newer country exhibits multidirectional relations. The work of Charles Scheel, *Réalisme magique et réalisme merveilleux* (2005), looking at North and South America and several parts of Europe, is useful to support Tomiche’s view that no simple model of one-way transference reigns in the larger modernist era. Similarly helpful is Michael Valdez Moses, *The Novel and the Globalization of Culture* (1995), demonstrating why non-European writers found this

narrative vehicle which had evolved in modern Europe to be eminently serviceable for their purposes, too.

Unlike in the volume where they are intermingled, I shall comment briefly first on the basically European and then on the extra-European chapters. In "Les avant-gardes françaises de l'entre-deux-guerres face aux civilisations extra-occidentales" Guillaume Bridet offers an abundance of materials illustrating conflicting views in the early twentieth century on how to respond to epochal crisis and the ways in which authors interpreted contact with diverse peoples overseas. Among the more important themes is Europe's deeply rooted Rousseauesque sickness, the persistence of hatred for their own civilization on the part of many intellectuals, which the trauma of World War I only reinforced. Outreach to non-European cultures thrives alongside fear of excesses of Western reason that supposedly resulted in disaster and a loss of human essentials. France produces defenders of the European spirit (e.g., Valéry) and a humanistic internationalism (e.g., Gide, Rolland) as an alternative to communism. But notably the surrealists militate for the overthrow of Western values, and orientaling suits their program. Despite their repudiation of materialism, they cultivate alliances of convenience with communism (e.g., Breton). French intellectuals continue this sort of flirtation with everything seemingly opposed to Western norms even during exile in World War II. Countless examples of attraction to the exotic, of escapism, of going native, and very few instances of thoughtful disillusionment over the all-too-human deficiencies in many corners outside Europe indicate that more than anti-colonialism, fascination for myth and the power of myth, and/or serious engagement in anthropology are at work. Adding to Bridet's excellent survey, one could cite such later phenomena as the general seduction of members of the *Tel Quel* group who went as worshipful pilgrims to China during the Maoist Red Guard rampage, and the Maoist affectations of many academics during the events of 1968. A grotesque avatar of Rousseau, not Voltaire, indeed triumphed in the last third of the century.

To profile fundamental differences between Anglo-American and French approaches in chronology and literary history, William Marx presents a case study of the interface between "Traditions et modernités: Eliot face à la temporalité française." Examined are Eliot's relationship to the *Nouvelle revue française* and his realization that it favored theory over practice of "classicism," whereas, albeit he participated in modernist critical discourse, his objective was to reincorporate the European cultural heritage in modernist forms. Culturally conservative Eliot and journals like the *Criterion* represent confidence in constant transformation, as against the Gallic postulate of epochal rupture. Anne-Rachel Hermetet's chapter on "Florence 1926: *Solaria* et la question de la modernité" is similarly a case study centered on a prominent journal. By focusing exclusively on literature and avoiding political commentary, *Solaria* managed to skirt the perils posed by the newly installed fascist dictatorship in Italy and to maintain a vibrant pan-European program. Whereas its predecessor *La Ronda* emphasized fragmentary forms, the distinctly French-oriented *Solaria* privileged the novel and promoted awareness of major figures such as Proust, Gide, Joyce, Woolf, and Svevo in a European context. The Jung Wien group and key journals (*Moderne Dichtung*, *Moderne Rundschau*, *Freie Bühne*) figure large in Karl Ziegler's chapter on "La 'modernité viennoise': de la réception du naturalisme à une 'mystique des nerfs.'" He discerns the first basis for Austrian modernism in the reception of naturalism in the 1880s and 1890s, strongly reinforced by developments in the theater, with marked influence from Berlin and Paris. The second phase occurs when forceful

tastemakers like Bahr promote an overcoming of naturalism and shift interest to new waves (symbolism, neoromanticism, decadence, impressionism, expressionism) in the ending nineteenth and beginning twentieth century.

The extra-European chapters are devoted to a selection of geocultural territories which differ strikingly in their size, history, and degree of internal complexity. This adds all the more weight to the general argument of the editors that a plurality of modernities has evolved as of the new millennium. Khalid Zerki goes “Aux sources de la modernité marocaine” to understand the country’s “double consciousness” and offers helpful comparisons to the Maghreb (i.e., the “West” of Islam) at large and to the Levant. The theme of experiencing alienation in resistance to colonial rule, but then awareness of the benefits of acculturation to aspects of the Western system, is juxtaposed in Maghreb literature to fear of stagnation in the bigger international context. Hence identity discourse plays an important role. The enormous Sub-Saharan area with its plethora of indigenous and imported colonial languages, its variety of ethnic groups, and range of societal forms is probed by Garnier in the chapter “Modernités littéraires en Afrique: injonction ou évidence?” His objective is to determine how African vision may have been changed for better or worse through the new technical possibilities of distributing writing. Garnier traces the themes of culture shock versus opportunity, of cultural loss and cultural rediscovery, of the interplay of historical, ethnic, and individual identity across a diverse set of authors. Prominent in African post-liberation literature is depiction of problematic phenomena such as dictatorship, burdensome bureaucracy, and shifting chaos. (These features, the reviewer notes, could profitably be compared with analogues in Western Hemisphere and East European literatures).

Claudine Le Blanc draws attention to the pioneering role of the nineteenth-century Bengal essayist and novelist in the chapter “Bankim Chandra Chatterji: les ruptures intérieures de la modernité indienne.” Concentrating on Chatterji’s seminal essay *Sâmya* (“Equality”) and novel *Krishnakânter Uil*, Le Blanc shows the elaborate Janus-headed interrogation of Indian as against Western thought and institutions. In Chatterji’s works we witness the drama of seeking to reconcile two enormously complex heritages, without succumbing to their deleterious aspects and while striving for authentic independence. Emmanuel Lozerand treats a very different situation in the chapter “La littérature japonaise au 19e siècle: Deux ou trois récits d’une autre modernité,” when the far more homogeneous Japan opened decisively to European and American influences in the Meiji period. While popular taste for older types of fiction persisted, the philosophic concept of the “beautiful” became established and a new sense of *bungaku* evolved, “literature” as in the West (not limited to Sino-centric study of the classics). Virtual simultaneity in the reception of a bundle of Western impulses from romanticism to naturalism, modified by some anti-Western resistances, is a well-known feature in the start of Japanese modernity. Interesting is that these stimuli also prompted efforts to rediscover the Japanese cultural story in its own right. Lozerand offers some excellent general cautions and questions regarding the extant global plurality of modernities, but does not go beyond noting that the West has a monopoly in the writing of universal or global history.

The reviewer, however, finds it curious that scholars as in this volume, who are themselves involved in contributing to global history through the medium of an imperial language, do not explore the proposition of Western dominance further. On the one hand, the contributors dutifully reference the tremendous dis-

rptions and adjustments that Europeans (a category that currently includes the populations of offshoot immigrant nations) have caused or necessitated in a variety of cultures—not least, in Europe itself. On the other hand, for the most part (Bridet and Tomiche are exceptions), the contributors rarely question the truth status of the cited claims made in Eurocentric territories and elsewhere regarding the values in play as cultural goods which are being assimilated, resisted, modified, ignored. They eschew making any “final” judgments, and only secondarily discuss “formal” matters. Hence the main emphasis on “genetic” questions—i.e., on the source or beginning of telltale phenomena and their movement—lends this volume its strong historical character. But while the volume *Modernités* properly carries what in a kind of shorthand the reviewer will call the Rousseauesque burden of modernism and postmodernism, it generally ignores the alternate strands of Western culture which the Rousseauesque tendency is only capable of problematizing. Apparently literary scholars choose to ignore or are unaware of dissenting scholarship such as the anthropologist Robert Edgerton’s globe-straddling *Sick Societies: Challenging the Myth of Primitive Harmony* (1992), which resolutely demolishes the truth claims of the Rousseauesque tradition. With a few exceptions, we hear no substantive francophone critique challenging negative views of the modern West and scant representation of positive views generated in the West. The implicit message seems to be: Europa condemnanda (et delenda?) est.

Because the topics treated in this collaborative thematic volume clearly bear on the AILC/ICLA’s own efforts to promote international, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary approaches to literary studies, it is appropriate to mention—in extreme abbreviation—related research by teams of comparatists that can be read profitably in conjunction with *Modernités*. The AILC/ICLA series, *A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, began with *Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon* (1982), shortly followed by *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages* (1984), which encompassed the so-called New as well as the Old World. The two-volume *Les avant-gardes littéraires au 20e siècle* (1986), I: *Histoire*, II: *Théorie*, is distinctly global in reach. *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1986), also in two volumes, covers a broad spectrum of the subjects and problems which bilingual and often polyglot indigenous writers in that region coped with. *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice* (1997) considers the contemporary situation in its global diversity, and the two-volume *Modernism* which followed in 2007 strives for the same standard of breadth. Several subseries and single volumes are devoted to complex regions relatively neglected by comparatists in the past—e.g., *A History of Literature in the Caribbean* (1997 ff.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (2004 ff.), *Comparative History of Nordic Literary Cultures* (in preparation), and so on. The great merit of *Modernités* is the collective determination to accept the need for collaboration by teams of experts in order to break out of older constraints and to achieve greater adequacy in investigating literary life and cultural interactions in a global context. The chapters in this collection offer intelligent intensive studies which reveal the new dynamics of the age.

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***L'Écriture réinventée: Formes visuelles de l'écrit en Occident et en Extrême-Orient.* Ed. Marianne Simon-Oikawa. Études Japonaises 3. Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2007. 167 pp. 978-2846541589.**

The eight stimulating essays in *L'Écriture réinventée* are the proceedings of a colloquium held at the Maison franco-japonaise in Tokyo. Initial organizers of the gathering were Pascal Griolet, Maître de conférences de japonais à l'Institut National des Langues and Civilisations Orientales and author of numerous publications on the history of Japan's writing system, and Anne-Marie Christin, Directrice du Centre d'étude de l'écriture et de l'image (Université Paris 7-Denis Diderot), author of numerous works on the relations of text and image and on the history of writing. In her preface to the volume, the editor, Marianne Simon-Oikawa, Adjunct Professor in the Department of French Language and Literature at the University of Tokyo and the author of works on visual poetry in Japan and France, notes that reflections in the West on the relation of writing with the image have up to this point rarely taken into account that the West "possesses a particular system of writing: the alphabet." Arguing that this fact influences the interpretations that the West makes of the image, Simon-Oikawa goes on to write that "understanding the creations which the image has produced in the civilization of the alphabet invites us to compare this system of writing with others, and the culture that it has brought about" with the culture brought about by different writing systems, "in particular, those using the ideogram" (7). The essays by Anne-Marie Christin and Philippe Quinton discuss the Chinese ideogram in relation to Western forms of writing, but a total of five out of eight essays focus on the Japanese writing system in its various practices and in its relations with Western systems of writing. Japanese writing provides particularly rich comparisons in this context, based as it is on a combination of ideograms and syllabaries that lends itself to visual uses that alphabet-based languages can only rarely access.

The first five essays, dealing with topics from the second century CE to the 1990s, bring the reader to an awareness of the practices of writing in cultures that use the ideogram, in particular, Japanese, with one essay on Chinese. The first essay, by Claire-Akiko Brisset, demonstrates the "co-presence" of writing and image (11) in a painting in a twelfth-century copy of the Lotus Sutra, a "decorated sutra" (13) that was commissioned and offered to a Buddhist temple as a way of attaining religious merit. Mainly *kana* (one of the two Japanese syllabaries) done in cursive style have been "deliberately integrated" (18), using the practice known as *ashide* (23), into a painting of a devotee worshipping the bodhisattva Fugen. Brisset notes that the integrated characters were identified by the art historian Egami Yasushi in 1992 as part of a hymn sung in honor of the bodhisattva Fugen (20), in which, as the devotee, alone in a mountain forest, calmly intones a hymn to Fugen, the latter "deigns to appear" (21). The author argues that "the composition of the image and the placing of the written sequences" "lead . . . the gaze to decipher the written characters, as well as the images, according to a precise route, in a circular order . . ." (23). Thus, one starts in the trees in the upper lefthand corner, where one finds the words describing the devotee's location, alone and in a mountain forest; then "descends towards the person of the devotee," where one finds the words "while he is singing the Lotus Sutra;" and then "goes obliquely toward the right to the bodhisattva and *mie-tamae* [deigns to appear]" (23). As befitting a work commissioned to attain religious merit, "the pictorial heart of the image that Fugen constitutes is thus underlined by the order of reading of the motifs" (23).

Pascal Griollet explores the practice of writing in *kana* during the Edo period (1603-1868). The Japanese writing system, consisting of three forms of writing, assigned *kanji* (Chinese characters) and *katakana*, which required more education, to males, and *hiragana* (simple *kana*), which were the simplest, and required the least education, to females (26). During this period *hiragana* came to dominance due to the popularity of letter-writing manuals (*ōraimono*). Writing manuals, which used *hiragana* and were directed to girls, proliferated in response to the contemporary dictum, expressed in a 1692 work, that “the premier feminine art is that of writing” (qtd. on 27-28). “Writing,” in this context, meant the ability to offer highly rhetorical and flowery compliments to the addressee of the letter on the occasion of a particular season. Urban commoners interested in having their daughters educated turned to female writing teachers: *nyohitsu*, or “mistresses of writing” [literally, feminine brush], often women who had been in the service of the emperor or high-class courtesans of the “new pleasure quarters” (32). One such *nyohitsu*, Hasegawa Myōtei, author of twenty-some manuals of correspondence in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, was mistress of the *chirashigaki* (scattered writing) style, a “consciously disordered” (37), playful, and exuberant feminine writing style that marked her era (40). The author describes the “scattered writing” on a double page of one of Myōtei’s numerous writing manuals as “bunches of signs” [grappes de signes]—as, in fact, so decorative that it is “unreadable” (39). He notes: “If one wanted to give important information in such a letter, one would write it at the beginning, in very big characters, or tell it orally” (40); but in the flowery passages on the seasons written in “scattered writing,” “it is the gesture that counts, as if one offered a drawing, design, sketch” (40). Griollet calls this writing style “moving writing” (“écriture mouvante,” 25)—a free, elastic style that evokes dance (43-44). He concludes by noting that the “scattered writing” of women such as Myōtei, which “liberates the written from its submission to the oral” and which, “rather than giving itself to be read, offers itself to be seen” (50), gradually died out in the modern period, as the use of movable type both demanded and enforced a standardized mode of writing, and obligatory education and modern linguistic politics brought with them a normalization of the written language (50).

Jean-Pierre Drège gives a glimpse at the practice of copying texts of the Buddhist canon in China at several historical junctures from the second century to the mid-seventh century CE. Examples of where such texts have survived are Tayuk, near the oasis of Turfan in Chinese Turkestan (late third century); the caves of Dunhuang, in Western China (fifth century and later); and the caves of Longmen near Loyang, the second capital of the Northern Wei dynasty (fourth-sixth centuries). This is the period of the spread of Buddhism, which was made the state religion under the Northern Wei and also under the Tang dynasty (618-907). Drège treats both the mass copying of the Buddhist canon, or parts of it, for monasteries and libraries, and the copying of individual Buddhist texts for private purposes, as an offering to a temple. He gives a detailed description of how the copying of manuscripts was organized in different periods and locations, as well as of the actual processes of copying, discussing the materials used and indicating, when known, the number of copies made for particular venues. A significant aspect of the copying of Buddhist texts is that, while some copied manuscripts, in hundreds or thousands of scrolls, were given to monasteries and libraries and meant to be read and studied, others offered to a temple for the purpose of attaining religious merit, usually one per individual, were often only meant to be “preserved along with diverse objects and relics and not to be read” (60). This practice was wide-

spread both for hand-copied texts and, later, for printed ones.

Yuzuru Hayashi discusses the “abbreviated signature” (*kaō*), a signature used by males on official documents and letters in which “the name of a person is transformed into a design motif” (63). The author demonstrates how the practice began as a highly individualized form written with the brush, in the tenth century, arguing that the pressure to issue multiple documents in a short period of time, especially under the rule of the warrior class, and, eventually, from the early twelfth century onward, due to the use of printing, issued in increased standardization of the form, so that it approached the uniform nature of the personal seal. Based on his research in rarely discussed archival materials, Hayashi provides numerous illustrations of abbreviated signatures, which were handwritten, printed, or carved out of wood and used by distinguished military leaders, members of the ruling classes, and abbots of monasteries. While the abbreviated signature could usually be linked to characters of the name itself, and thus to the identity of the signer, in the extreme case of signatures of Zen monks, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the abbreviated signature was “not necessarily constituted by the characters of the name itself” (74), becoming a pure design, in fact, a logo, severed not only from writing but also from the identity of the person behind it.

In the next essay, Cécile Sakai, starting from the fact that the modern Japanese writing system combines three modes, each with normative usages within that system, explores how three groups of modern Japanese writers deviate creatively from this norm. She sheds light on the ways in which Japanese poets and fiction writers have yielded to “ludic temptations” (91) in their experiments with different strategies of representing speech through writing: the extranormative nearly exclusive use of *katakana*, a traditionally male syllabary; the extranormative nearly exclusive use of *hiragana*, a traditionally female syllabary; the mixing of Japanese writing and Western writing, which forces the reader to read both from up to down and sideways; and the writing of Japanese, instead of in its normative direction of right to left, in the Western style from left to right, the lines interspersed with English phrases. The illustrations show that each mode of playing with the possibilities of the Japanese writing system makes a different visual impression. Sakai argues that these experiments with writing, which all reflect in different ways on the nature of writing and its relation to sound, cultivate the numerous possibilities offered by the Japanese language, which exhibits a “creative heterogeneity unique in the world—and untranslatable” (92).

The last three essays demonstrate how Westerners have discovered and come to terms with writing systems based on the ideogram. Anne-Marie Christin points out that “from the sixteenth century, Chinese and Japanese systems of writing were relatively familiar to a certain number of Europeans” (95)—chiefly through the efforts of Jesuit missionaries to those countries. She describes how, both shocked and inspired by these new systems of writing and ignorant of how the ideogram functioned in connection with speech in its home situation, some thinkers, including Athanasius Kircher, Leibniz, Bacon, and Descartes, looked to the Chinese ideogram to provide a possible universal written language that would overcome the phonetic separateness of languages. She argues that only Leibniz was able to intuit the creative potential of a writing system based on the ideogram—though he did not understand that ideographic systems can alternately play the three different roles of logogram, phonogram, and determinative (105), or key (111).

Marianne Simon-Oikawa explores the ways in which twentieth-century French poets were inspired by the visual potential of the ideogram to create visual poetry us-

ing the alphabet. Apollinaire in the late 1910s created a modern visual poetry that he called “lyrical ideograms” (109), but he finally preferred the term *calligrams*, a term rooted in alphabetic writing and with a long tradition in the West, and he used his experiments with the visual calligram not as a way of overcoming the “insufficiencies of the alphabet” or as a rejection of logos (the word) but rather “against a clearly defined enemy: the rhymed verse” of the turn-of-the-century symbolist poets (112). A colleague and friend of Apollinaire, Pierre Albert-Birot, experimented with visual poetry, writing a poem, his first, which he called an ideogrammatic poem (115)—though it seems to Simon-Oikawa to belong more in the tradition of ancient Western figurative poems (116). The most original of the poets experimenting with the ideogram is Jean Tardieu, who wrote poems that he refers to as calligrams, in homage to, but transcending, Apollinaire. Published in the 1990s, these poems, interspersed with fragments from an intimate journal, juxtapose alphabet letters with ideograms (122) in ways that play with both writing systems. Interestingly, both Albert-Birot and Tardieu had some contact with Japan: the former knew and wrote haiku (117), and the latter had lived in Japan and was closely involved with the two most important groups of Japanese concrete poets (125)—suggesting that there might have been Japanese influence on his work. For Simon-Oikawa, the “reappropriation of the ideogram” on the part of these poets born in an alphabet culture “relies on the intuition that the alphabet also possesses visual forms that poetry can revive.” Therefore, in writing poetry using ideograms, these poets are attempting to “give back to the alphabet the materiality that it lost” (126).

The final essay, by Philippe Quinton, a scholar in the fields of communication and information technology, uses a comparison and contrast of the logotype, the visual sign of advertisers, to the ideogram in order to “view the logotype in a different way, to characterize its functions as a system and to situate it better within the problematics of identification” (127). In several detailed sections, Quinton carefully considers the questions of how the logotype, a form that “generates a writing specific to organizations” (146) and the ideogram operate as signs, and what they have in common with and how they differ from each other. He argues that the visual richness of the ideogram in different civilizations (Chinese, Japanese, Egyptian, and Maya) can serve as a source of inspiration to regenerate Western visual modes of writing, including the logotype (147). For the logo, the ideogram “upsets certain sedimented semiological convictions” and causes a “rethinking of the manner in which an organization writes itself,” or presents itself in terms of a design that is meant to be seen (147). Finally, he notes that, while the advertising logo, a modern ideographic form (129) that is “in close relation to the power of the modern gods that are brands and the market” (140), seems to be universal, in Japan its designs “profit from the particularities of ideogrammatic writing systems and their specific designs” (147).

This volume provides comparatists with invaluable insights into the practice and function of writing in Japan and China, in comparison with those of the West, and describes in illuminating detail how Japanese and Chinese writing practices have come together fruitfully with Western writing practices at certain junctures. Furthermore, the essays give ample proof, in the editor’s words, of the “bonds that unify, beyond civilizations, writing with the image” (9). The reader who has studied an East Asian language and culture, particularly Japanese—one who has become used to making connections between East Asia and the West for him/herself and others—will be privileged to savor in depth the nuanced thinking of the contributors to this volume. For this reader,

the volume provides a useful list of names and terms in Chinese and Japanese. For the reader who does not know any Chinese or Japanese, the authors have judiciously and graciously mediated unfamiliar material. The volume is adorned with numerous illustrations, and provides abstracts of the essays in both English and Japanese.

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***Nietzsche and the Rebirth of the Tragic.* Ed. Mary Ann Frese Witt. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2007. 255 pp. 978-0838641606.**

The title of Mary Ann Frese Witt's collection of nine essays is a bit misleading, at least for a reviewer whose main interests involve drama. Although this comparative study focuses on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), it also explores his later works. Moreover, although the ideas in this seminal study of classical Greek theater would lead one to believe that it would mainly prove relevant to modern theater, this collection also applies Nietzsche's first book to Yeats's poetry, Russian philosophy, a Holocaust novel, and a film by Godard. Thus, Witt's edited book is interdisciplinary in scope as well.

Witt's insightful and valuable introduction firmly establishes Nietzsche as a major influence on the symbolists, futurists, dadaists, surrealists, and expressionists; on such diverse writers, artists, and philosophers as Freud, Bergson, Richard Strauss, Mahler, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and de Man; and on playwrights Strindberg, Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, and Peter Shaffer. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Witt explains, Nietzsche was enamored with tragedy's origin in Dionysian rituals consisting of scenes of pathos or suffering accentuated by intense lyricism and the music of the Dionysian chorus. According to Nietzsche, the demise of this art form began when the Socratic notion of logos, which exaggerated the Apollinian tendency to the point of overturning it, introduced rational analysis instead of instinctual power and replaced choral songs with dialogue. Euripides contributed to this demise by emphasizing action, telling a story, and creating suspense in his plays, thus moving theater away from both the lyrical mode and the presentation of primordial suffering. Drama morphs from its origins in ritual to become an imitation of reality, which is anathema to Nietzsche. In essence, he argues for a rebirth in which tragedy returns to its origins as the lyrical expression of a protagonist's suffering.

This type of theater was close to closet dramas by Romantic poets like Shelley, Byron, and Goethe. However, what held the stage when Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* were the entertaining, well-made plays of Scribe and Sardou, melodrama, and realism. Thus his quest for a rebirth of tragedy that would reconnect with the spirit of myth and music was utopian in aiming to recapture a theater that was never popular with the masses. At the time of *Birth* Nietzsche saw the Dionysian spirit as dormant, and Wagner as the catalyst for its revival. Witt explains that in later works, like *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche rejected Wagner for pandering to the masses and focused on protagonists who surpassed any moral, or residually Apollinian, sensibility by affirming the "will to power," again privileging pathos over action.

Michael Stern's essay on Nietzsche and Strindberg is the densest in the collection. Arguing somewhat obscurely that Nietzsche's concept of the tragic hero reaches its fullest development in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Stern contends that here Christianity replaces Socratic rationalism as the cause for the decline of tragedy. The definition of tragedy is further refined in Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, becoming "the

idea of fate as a form of self-selection grounded by the will to power as an interpreting agency, and ironically as a pathos" (48). Stern posits that Nietzsche came to view himself as "Dionysus and Christ internalized as narrative, and the story of the self is metaphorically represented by the internalization of both positions by virtue of their agon" (49). Stern documents how Strindberg became acquainted with Nietzsche's writings and then discusses the former's autobiography, *Son of a Servant*, followed by his 1890 novel, *By the Open Sea*, and how these works relate to Nietzsche's notion of genealogy. Not only is this essay confusing and abstract, but, by stressing this reassessment of *The Birth of Tragedy*, tends to undermine many of the other essays.

In contrast, Witt's essay on Gabriele D'Annunzio's Dionysian women is compellingly argued and clearly written. D'Annunzio, an icon of Italian writing before Pirandello took center stage in the 1920s, was led by Nietzsche to abandon bourgeois drama and naturalism. In "The Rebirth of Tragedy" (1897), he supported Nietzsche's restoration of the religious spirit of tragedy, a notion that enters his novel, *The Flame* (1900) and his first play, *The Dead City* (1898). Witt then discusses *La Gioconda* (1898), a domestic drama with melodramatic overtones that fuses the Dionysian-Apollinian conflict. Judging from annotations in D'Annunzio's collection of Nietzsche's works, Witt finds that he was mainly interested in parallels between sexuality and tragedy and in the aesthetic, rather than the moral, significance of tragedy. She then examines Nietzsche's influence on D'Annunzio's effort to create modern tragedy in *Jorio's Daughter* (1904), *The Light Under the Bushel* (1905), and *More Than Love* (1906). Witt recognizes the difficulties in D'Annunzio's attempt to eroticize the Dionysian-Apollinian conflict and to infuse it with an aesthetic understanding that Nietzsche saw in ancient Greek drama. She concludes, "If he did not entirely succeed in effecting a rebirth of tragedy, he did pose the problem in new dramatic forms, leaving us with memorable figures of Dionysus in feminine guise" (99).

Also cogent is John Burt Foster's essay on Nietzsche's influence on Yeats's poetry. He begins with Yeats's enthusiasm for a rebirth of tragedy when he and his colleague Lady Gregory sought to establish an Irish National Theatre in politically polarized Ireland. Reading Nietzsche, Yeats became intrigued with tragedy's emotional impact on an audience, especially by making it aware of its "cosmic awareness" as "aesthetic listeners." Analyzing Yeats's early poems, Foster claims that "Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation" validates the Apollo-Dionysus interaction while "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing" shows the life-enhancing potential of tragic art. He then explores the Nietzschean concepts of tragic vision replacing a cosmic one, of terror at the core of tragedy, and of spectators responding to terror with emotional vibrancy in "Easter 1916," the autobiographical *The Trembling of the Veil*, and the late poems "Man and the Echo" and "Lapis Lazuli." Foster argues that Yeats, living in harsher times than Nietzsche (World War I and the Irish troubles) while facing old age as well, bore closer witness to life's realities. Yeats transforms the pain and pleasure of Nietzsche's Dionysian ecstasy into tragic joy.

In "Groundlessness: Nietzsche and Russian Concepts of Tragic Philosophy," Edith W. Clowes explains how concerns with tragedy in modern Russian philosophy relate to the Dionysian in *The Birth of Tragedy*. She begins with Lev Shestov's *Dostoevsky and Nietzsche: A Philosophy of Tragedy* (1902), in which Nietzsche's skepticism and pessimism are the starting point for examining metaphysical hopelessness in Dostoevsky's novels. Another notable Russian philosopher, Nikolai Berdiaev, who began as a Marxist, later adopted Nietzsche's vision to argue that humanity

was experiencing a transformation that combined Christian and Dionysian passions. Clowes then shows how the philosophy of Aleksei Losev, which is primarily concerned with resolving the dichotomy between music and philosophy, failed to understand Nietzsche's emphasis on the primacy of profound suffering in great music.

Bettina Kaibach's intriguing essay focuses on Czech writer Jirí Weil's last novel, *Mendelssohn is on the Roof* (1960), set in Prague during the Holocaust. As victims of the Final Solution, the novel's Jews are guilty at birth, a situation that recalls the blindness of the gods in Greek tragedy who persecute their victims with destructive energy. After Dr. Rabinovich in the Czech ghetto/concentration camp Terezin aids the Nazis to prevent his family's deportation, he is like a tragic hero in attaining a certain grandeur once he accepts his guilt and bows to his fate. In contrast, Richard Reisinger, who defies the Nazis by escaping from Terezin, causes other members of the ghetto to be condemned to death. Whether Jews bow to fate or resist it, they cannot do the right thing, leading Kaibach to argue that in Nietzschean terms the Holocaust cannot be grasped with moral categories, but only in light of tragic vision. Thus the Nazis, who like evil gods deceived the Jews into complicity, upset the "delicate balance between the Dionysian and Apollinian that is characteristic of all true culture" (154).

Geoffrey Baker's "Nietzsche, Artaud, and Tragic Politics," first published in *Comparative Literature*, is provocative and poignant. Nietzsche and Artaud, he argues, are models for a politically transformative art that works toward tangible political change. Artaud's distrust of empiricism and individualism coincides with Nietzsche's critique of Socrates, and both writers yearn to return to the pre-Socratic, ritualistic roots of tragedy. Each of them reacts negatively to mimesis due to its preclusion of myth and mystery, and revolts against a theater that values the logic of science and the dominance of language over the musicality of rhythm and dance and the power of gesture. However, Baker fails to explain how advocacy of "cultural transformation" relates to political change. Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and Nietzsche's critique of aesthetic Socratism evoke "the dismantling of subordinating epistemological structures" (178) en route to a wider cultural transformation. Thus they prefer to remold "the foundational structures of culture that enable and determine political formations" (180). Still, Baker does not clarify how Nietzsche, the self-absorbed classical philologist at the University of Basel with virtually no interest in government, or Artaud, the social isolate who broke with the surrealists after they gravitated toward politics, can turn their apolitical sensibilities into praxis.

Mark Pizzato's well-researched essay employs neuroscientific studies on the brain's left and right hemispheres to recontextualize the chaotic, instinctual passions of the Dionysian and the civilized, communal ordering of the Apollinian. The left side corresponds to prosocial identity, control, language functions, and formal analysis (the Apollinian), while the right governs the emotions and instincts (the Dionysian). With this contrast in mind, Pizzato explores Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938), its film version, and the television productions of 1977, 1989, and 2003, to demonstrate, with right- and left-brain choices by the main characters, the degrees to which the transcendent Apollinian ideals and disruptive Dionysian motifs figure in every adaptation. The research is closely attuned to the political and social changes of each historical period discussed. Most importantly, Pizzato's essay is the only one in this book to focus primarily on performance.

Ronald Bogue's essay on the music in Jean-Luc Godard's film, *Prénom Carmen* (1983), uses Deleuze's notions of how music functions in cinema, as derived from

The Birth of Tragedy. For Deleuze, music in film creates Dionysian images, while the Apollinian is represented by the visual. For Bogue the relation between music and visual images “is not one of correspondence, for the *direct* expression (music) and the *indirect* expression (visual images) of the Whole are incommensurable” (221). He goes on to demonstrate how the film’s visual images function differently from the Beethoven quartets interwoven throughout. He concludes that the film is no tragedy, “but if Nietzsche’s spirit of tragedy is that of the artist-creator, and if that spirit is also the spirit of music, then this film, like tragedy, is born of the spirit of music” (236). This essay will appeal most to readers interested in applying theory to film.

In its interdisciplinary scope, *Nietzsche and the Rebirth of the Tragic* breaks new ground in showing the wide range of Nietzsche’s influence. Readers interested in the theatre, however, may prefer a more structured approach focused on how *The Birth of Tragedy* (which deals, after all, with dramatic form) has influenced attempts to write modern tragedy and on how Nietzsche’s comments on music and ritualistic theater affected trends in modern drama.

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Literature for Europe? Eds. Theo D’haen and Iannis Goerlandt. *Textxet: Studies in Comparative Literature* 23. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 437 pp. 978-9042027169.

While the recent institutional and geographical changes within Europe have generated a considerable critical output in the political and social spheres, the literary field has not yet produced a genuine body of scholarship that revolves around European consciousness and its symbolization. However, the debate is lively, as can be seen from the growing number of symposia on the topic, among them the Research Conference on “Literature for Europe” held in the Swedish town of Vadstena in May 2007. Against the backdrop of the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and juridical complexity of the European Union, the participating scholars investigated the role of literary texts and forms in the construction of a European identity and tried to delineate new cultural policies for teaching and researching literature in the new European space. The ultimate result of this effort is the present volume edited by Theo D’haen and Iannis Goerlandt, which collects all the conference interventions and hence offers readers a thorough overview of the numerous questions and areas of inquiry around which the discussions revolved across space and time.

As the editors claim in their introduction, the main objective of the conference and the volume was to bring literature to the foreground as a powerful tool for a European policy and, in so doing, to “respect the diversity in unity of Europe’s many cultures and literatures” (7). This means not only to transcend rigid disciplinary and national boundaries in reconceptualizing literature on a European scale but also to avoid monolithic categories like European literary history in the singular. In this respect, a comparative method emerges as the most appropriate approach to open up the canon by overcoming the distinction between major and minor literatures and by actively promoting translation.

Of the two sections that compose the volume, the first, “Models for European Literature,” intends to throw light on the “for” in the book title as an indicator of future cultural policies. An article by Pascale Casanova, “European Literature. Simply a Higher Degree of Universality?” opens the section, highlighting the difficulties of

defining European literature, raising questions about its autonomy with respect to political constructions, and devoting attention to possible scenarios for the future of literary Europeanness. A recurring thought here is the lack of cultural and identitarian cohesion within the Europe of the past and, to a certain degree, in the present. The main unifying factor, in Casanova's view, is a negative one, namely, all the experiences of conflict between nations and cultures. At times, one feels that the essay generalizes too drastically without an adequate support from substantial examples to validate its claims or without acknowledging counterexamples of authors and texts that in fact do thematize and symbolize crucial aspects of Europeanness. The essay seems to endorse, without much investigation, the idea that Europe and the Europeanness of its literatures are above all an imaginary construction, that European reality so far has amounted to just a sum of nations as political and cultural entities juxtaposed side by side. According to Casanova, only in recent and still isolated cases can we witness the creation of self-consciously European literary heritages across national and linguistic boundaries, with an eye, on the one hand, to their position within the wider, worldwide literary space and, on the other, to their own internal power relations and asymmetries. Ultimately, for Casanova, the project of a European literary history can be legitimate only if it is informed by strategies of resistance to domination. In other words, what literary experiences share at the transnational level is the ability to map power relations and to oppose them, hence leading to a paradoxical vision of European literary unity founded upon a common experience of struggle.

Casanova's provocative critique warns us against the hypothesis of a facile and harmonizing transition from the national to the supranational via a simple extension of borders. Yet it may also be limiting because, in being prescriptive more often than descriptive, it risks neglecting constructive ways to conceive of literary Europeanness. Greater attention to context, to the diversity of visions and models of European consciousness in individual countries and within the literary and intellectual history of Europe could foster a more comprehensive and pluralistic perspective better attuned to Europe's own complexity and strategies of self-representation.

The question marks in the titles of several other contributions to the volume's first section seem to reinforce the open-endedness and discordances of Casanova's allegedly "denationalized" future of European literature. Be it with problematizing the myth of a European identity (Thomas Claviez, "What is a European? Letters from a European Americanist"), with the proposed connection between singularity and literature in the European genealogy of the idea of community (Vladimir Biti, "Toward a Literary Community?"), or with the tension between the positive connotation of national and minority languages and the resistance against immigrant literary and linguistic expression in the construction of Swedish multiculturalism (Satu Gröndahl, "Multicultural or Multilingual Literature: A Swedish Dilemma?"), we realize how treacherous and inadequate it is to anchor ourselves in crystallized definitions of Europeanness, and how the diversity underlying the alleged unity of Europe also needs to be taken as an attribute of its own conceptual foundations, which hence should not be seen as fixed forms but rather in terms of diachronic and synchronic fluidity.

From a similar standpoint, Robert J. C. Young's "English and the Language of Others" complicates the widespread polemics between the supporters and detractors of English as a *lingua franca* for Europe by emphasizing that English itself was born as a hybrid blend of European languages and that its extension has already for a long time been not simply European but global. Questioning the polarization between the

purity of linguistic traditions and a leveling globalism, therefore, Young rather presents English as “the language of translation” (168) *par excellence*, not only because it embodies different codes but also because it works as a mediator between different languages on a global scale, yet each time acting in a specific, hence local, framework.

Sigrid Weigel’s “On the ‘Topographical Turn’” discusses space as a more general theoretical concept in which Europe mainly serves as the geographical and intellectual basis for this recent scholarly debate. The spatialization of narrative, however, is itself of paramount importance to issues of Europeanness, for which, we could argue, it supplies the most determining element; hence, it would have been desirable to hear more about this aspect of the issue, too. Spatiality also provides a relational context for Kristina Van Haesendonck’s enlightening examination of Europeanness in contemporary Caribbean discourse, which underscores the ways in which Europe has been the object of either antagonism or imitation in European territories overseas. Space is equally central to Ottmar Ette’s reinterpretation of European literature as the object of TransArea Studies in “European Literature(s) in the Global Context” and to Stephanos Stephanides’s “Turning East,” where Cyprus, the easternmost space in the European Union, becomes the site for exploring literary and identitarian Europeanness through the idea of translation and transculturation.

A good counterbalance to Casanova’s claims comes from Françoise Meltzer’s “What is Wrong with National Literature Departments?”, which, after highlighting the persisting nexus of nation and culture in the academic environment and advocating for Comparative Literature as the most appropriate tool to transcend monolithic approaches to texts, also raises the question of the excessive demonization of what has been perceived as a Eurocentric past Europe, and, consequently, of scholarly research in fields that belong to or reflect such an allegedly problematic past. While dissenting from past ideologies of stable sovereign nations and cultures is important, it is equally crucial to avoid the opposite pitfall, that of neglecting authors or cultural trends that could throw light upon certain European strategies of self-representation but that may appear to be surpassed or incompatible with our contemporary mindset.

Attention to what Europe has already consciously produced about itself either as individual literary contributions or as patterns of Europeanness in various cultural spaces of the Old Continent justifies the second section, “The Cultural Work of Memory in European Literature,” which focuses on the literary construction of European cultural identity in the past as well as in a present no longer definable in terms of traditional national canons. With yet another symptomatic question mark, John Neubauer’s “Voices from Exile. A Literature for Europe?” challenges the idea that exile might serve as fertile ground for the development of the self-conscious literary Europeanness that the volume intends to explore. Rather, it provides evidence of an entrenchment that often kept exiled writers away from an identitarian and cultural Europeanization. While this evidence is very valuable in placing the exilic mentality in perspective, it might have been useful to devote some attention to the other side of the coin, namely, to past and present authors who in fact authenticate and live their Europeanness precisely by experiencing exile as a necessary or deliberate overcoming of their own national identity and heritage. The example of W. G. Sebald, in this respect, is very eloquent; and Gerhard Fischer’s contribution on the German author’s construction of a literary identity *ex patria* demonstrates the action of a double identitarian and narrative perspective upon a writer exiled from two home countries. What Fischer’s discussion could have developed more extensively, however, is precisely a

reflection on the specifically European nature of Sebald's hybridity.

Other essays in this section, such as "Did We Stop Reading Poetry?" by Wiljan van den Akker and Gillis Dorleijn, or "Spanish Literature and the Recovery of Historical Memory" by José M. González García, also do not address the Europeanness of their respective *foci*, despite their actual relevance for the objectives of the volume. Likewise, Lisbeth Stenberg's "Marginalization and Paradoxes of Identity Formation," on the gender and narrative struggles of first Swedish female Nobel Literature Prize winner Selma Lagerlöf, and Reet Sool's "On Literary Amnesia: Facing the Future," on the loss of collective memory in Estonian literature with its Sovietization after World War II, offer engaging case studies of very specific personal experiences or national contexts. Yet they do not explicitly highlight their connections to and implications for a larger inquiry into Europe's self-understanding. For its part, however Mara Cambiaghi's discussion of the multilingual and multicultural literary world of Italian writer Beppe Fenoglio and of his sister Marisa does present the two authors' exposure to different worlds and to their literary transpositions as examples of a "crosscultural dialogue" (251) that foreshadows the principles of current European cultural policies. Along similar lines, Anne Heith's treatment of the Europeanizing and regional elements that coexist in the fiction of Swedish writer Bengt Pohjanen provides a compelling reflection on minority politics in what she defines as a "Post-Western Europe."

For their effectiveness in connecting particular literary examples and wider theoretical considerations on the European consciousness and its strategies of symbolization, Monica Spiridon's "Literature and the Symbolic Engineering of the European Self" and Christopher Parry's "Constructing European Identity in Fiction" are arguably the section's most pertinent and thorough essays. Two interesting validations of many of their claims are offered by Helena Bodin and Nagihan Haliloğlu, who explore past and present facets of the liminal Europeanness of Istanbul and of the Byzantine world at the crossroads between East and West.

Literature for Europe? is a very rich text dealing with unquestionably complex and evolving issues that are not easy to depict in adequate detail. The cultural effects of memory in the Europe-building literary process is a useful and powerful framework, which however does not always respond successfully to the objectives that the book means to pursue. Similarly, the comparative approach initially recommended for the creation of a new and truly European common literary space does not emerge consistently in the essays. Perhaps more selectivity in the number and focus of the contributions could have resulted in a less dispersed work and in the construction of a more consciously European literary corpus. To a certain degree, however, we could attribute to this volume the same weakness that often comes to the fore in the very construction of Europeanness itself, namely, its still very uncertain contours and components. Taken individually and against the backdrop of specific national heritages they revise and problematize, the essays offer very valuable insights into identity and into cultural issues that emerged locally but resonate on a far wider scale.

If, as in Zygmunt Bauman's eponymous book, the adventure of Europe is still unfinished, and if, as in Jacques Derrida's *L'autre cap*, Europe has to acknowledge its own intrinsic alterity, after reading *Literature for Europe?* we can conclude that for literature itself and for its Europeanizing agenda the plural is a must if this medium is to respond to and shape a project constantly in the making, for which discontinuities and incompleteness are part of the game.

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***Identitate de frontiera in Europa largita. [Borderline Identity within the Wider Europe]* Ed. Romanita Constantinescu. Bucuresti: Polirom Press, 2008. 350 pp. 978-9734612345.**

This volume addresses a timely topic among scholars from the former East Europe communist bloc: identity building after joining the European Union. Its twenty-five chapters seek to portray how a “marginal” or “peripheral” culture like Romania’s might overcome centuries of misrepresentation. How might it try to redefine its identity within the new European context, after the erasure of traditional lines of demarcation and after the very idea of borders within the European Union has been called into question? This review will pay special attention to the book’s general approach and to its four most ambitious articles, while treating the rest of the book more briefly.

As its premise, reiterated in many of the articles, the book holds that due to Romania’s geopolitical location its culture has been associated by Western European readers/travelers with the orientalizing stereotypes projected onto the Balkans. These perceptions were disseminated especially in the nineteenth century by stories of exotic lands with fantastic beasts, authoritarian rulers, corrupt governments, and untrustworthy inhabitants. Part of a Western effort to legitimize itself as the “universal standard,” this perspective was promoted to defend the West’s shared identity under the aegis of the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment. Indeed, as Wolf, Anderson, and Goldworthy have argued, Eastern Europe was a necessary construct. It was “the Other,” against which the West could affirm its “rightful” hegemony and civilizing mission. With this situation as their starting point, the studies in this volume provide much needed historical perspective on the genesis and evolution of the concept of border and explore its connections with canonical Romanian cultural identity. The intent is to counteract the stereotypes and to determine how from its positions of marginality, periphery, and, most recently, placement on the frontier/borderline, Romania might simply become a culture in its own right within the European family.

This is an ambitious goal, as Romanita Constantinescu’s introduction acknowledges, even as she stresses the urgency of the task, which is supported by many East European cultural institutions. Yet despite its topicality, the editor sees this volume as an effort that, beyond the immediate circumstances, attempts to answer broad sociological and philosophical questions about modernity. Framing inquiry into modernity’s success or failure to “defeat history” in terms of borders, the author cites Foucault’s claim that although modernity managed to “defeat time; it is in serious trouble due to its inability to manage spatial issues as well” (11). The Kosovo episode is a perfect example of spatial mis-appropriation, since modernity was about to declare victory as a global paradigm, only to have to acknowledge its lack of a solution for territories still un-emancipated from their traumatic “history.” Accordingly, Constantinescu attributes to *border* the value of a symbolic marker of ethnic and political identity, which could start to address the complex issues associated with the simplistic administrative and political divisions of former Eastern European countries. Instead of seeing the border as a given, scholars should consider its liminal potential, which calls for re-readings of history and a reconsideration of those biased, affective maps which have guided the region’s cultural perceptions for so long. In this light, the so-far marginalized territories “with variable geography,” at the periphery of modernity’s traditional domain, like Romania, can provide illuminating case studies.

The book’s goal, therefore, is twofold: (1) to reposition the concept of border as

a self-reflective tool for investigating the potential of post-communist, global identity and (2) to bring to light misrepresentations of a borderline culture due to historical mis-appropriations of the concept, hegemonic practices, and marginalization of insightful literary productions that could have represented the area more accurately. Structurally, the volume vacillates between epistemological redefinitions of the border according to new historical readings of border-related practices (quarantine, illegal crossing by refugees), reconsiderations of the concept's semantic field due to new media appropriation (the idea of border on the world wide web), and analyses of mainly Romanian literary, visual, historical, and cinematic examples that support a more nuanced sense of borderline cultures.

As the title ironically indicates, the new, enlarged Europe, despite its promises to abolish borders, may still perpetuate borderline cultural identities on the basis of local specificity and difference. By reconsidering the border as a site of unique multi-ethnic creativity due to its liminal status of belonging equally to two or more cultures and yet to none, the book seeks to reposition Romanian culture. Rather than being a "minor culture" at the periphery of great cultures/empires, one condemned again and again to acknowledge its marginal status despite its efforts to imitate and "belong," the culture's capacity to make a distinct and original contribution is affirmed.

Studies like Michael Metzeltin's contextualize the border concept historically from its inception as a natural division between properties and communities, to its later role in defining the emerging nation states in the eighteenth century. More important, along with various forms of political and administrative division, Europe witnesses the rise of borderlines in mentality, determined mainly by religion, which strengthen or undermine formal political demarcations and inspire nations in struggles with each other. However, Metzeltin affirms a basic cohesion among the European nations, which supports the very idea of a European Union and should naturally determine its borders. This cohesion derives from and should be guided by Europe's shared though diverse cultural patrimony. Geostrategic and political considerations should come second to shared religious, philosophical, artistic, and scientific traditions, in whose name long-postponed rectifications of affective maps could be undertaken.

The precondition for such an undertaking would be to re-read the histories of the Union's partners with new eyes, to accept their own accounts of a common history and culture, accounts that the "West" has too often written for self-serving purposes, if not for mere entertainment. As a case in point, George Surugiu's account of the bridge over the river Ibar which unites Serbians and Albanians "naturally" divided by the river explores how two worlds so close to each other in many respects could become entirely antagonistic. In tackling the complex identity issues related to the Kosovo wars, this study speaks to a worldwide audience. As if to complement and further support this sense of a borderline which both divides and maintains contiguity, Alexandru Murad Mironov considers the Nister, the river forming the border between greater Romania and the Soviet Union after 1918. He studies the life and death stories of exiles and refugees who crossed this river from both sides in hopes of a better life, especially after World War II. The border as a special space with unique traumas and accomplishments is the topic of Bogdan Popa's study of the quarantine, perhaps the worst kind of liminal experience associated with border crossing.

Understanding *border* metaphorically as a cultural supra-determination of Romanian identity within Europe, Monica Spiridon studies the much-invoked relation-

ship with France. She holds that far from being a colonizing project dictated from outside, Romanian modernization was self-imposed; it deliberately imitated the values, mores, and policies of post-revolutionary France. Romania's politicians and young intellectuals believed that there they had found the prestigious, legitimizing model that would ensure their country's acceptance as "European." Spiridon states, "In [mid-nineteenth century] Romania the impact of Europeanism *à la parisienne* on the everyday life, on mentalities, and by and large, civilization, was overwhelming and unprecedented" (42). Criticized at the time, this effort was complemented in the twentieth century by a pro-German self-colonization. This was encouraged by the royal family, which was of German origin, and by intellectuals educated in Vienna, Berlin, and Giessen who embraced the idea of Mitteleuropa. Overall, far from passively absorbing the imperial Western imaginary, Romania chose to overcome its peripheral status by identifying with cultural models that emphasized Roman heritage and the main tenets of "European" modernity: belief in progress, the cult of reason, individualism, capitalism.

Such intentions, which dominated from 1848 to World War II, did not necessarily impress Western travelers. Though Bucharest was dubbed "little Paris" between the wars, it still bore signs of its Balkan/Oriental past, and this, along with its remote location, made it a perfect candidate for exoticizing/Orientalizing treatments. This is illustrated by Carmen Andras's chapter, which in exploring British travel accounts during this period discovers deep-seated ambiguity, which positioned Romania as endlessly vacillating between Eastern (Turkish, Byzantine) and Western models.

Marian Tutui's chapter refers to this tendency to portray Balkan countries as dystopias, though also promising adventures absent from the allegedly more civilized Western world. Novels like *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1915), *Rupert of Hentzau* (1916), and Agatha Christie's *The Secret of Chimneys* (1925) make enough references to Eastern Europe to enable educated readers to locate the settings, though such fictions were mainly for entertainment. In the long run, the success of these popular works, especially in US and French films as early as 1929, helped to perpetuate stereotypes and, implicitly, led to "narrative colonization." As Tutui notes, they generated an insidious modern mythology that outweighed newspapers or historical studies. Moreover, local literary and visual accounts could never counter this appeal due to language constraints, reduced circulation, and lack of marketing. Productions like Liviu Ciulei's *Padurea Spinuratilor* [Forest of the Hanged, 1964] or Mircea Veroiu's *Dincolo de pod* [Beyond the Bridge, 1975], which portray multi-ethnic communities living as cultures of the border, had little impact on Western audiences. Luckier in its distribution was Lucian Pintilie's *O vara de neuitat* [An Unforgettable Summer, 1994], starring Kristin Scott Thomas, which typified movies after 1989 in addressing historically rooted traumas and misunderstandings in areas of cultural confluence. Yet despite these advantages even its influence was relatively limited.

If movies might be more effective in challenging perceptions, literature is at least as important in reconstructing their history. Studies like Mircea Anghelescu's and Liviu Papadima's on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romanian meanings and customs associated with borders provide a well-informed perspective on the Romanian principalities' early perceptions of themselves. More modern examples range from French writer Panait Istrati, analyzed by Alexandra Vranceanu, to the more traditional Mihail Sadoveanu and Mihail Sebastian, discussed by Paul Cernat and Carmen Musat respectively. These chapters emphasize cosmopolitanism, the intrin-

sic value of local identities, and double-identity (Romanian and Jewish) as ways of avoiding ever-damaging dichotomies between “them” and “us.” Each of these studies seeks to demonstrate how Istrati, Sadoveanu, and Sebastian helped to rethink the border in terms of a cosmopolitan version of Romanian identity rarely promoted or even accepted by the official communist line and the literary canon.

From exile, Norman Manea, whom Anca Baicoianu treats with Salman Rushdie, offers the option of a plural, phantasmatic language, freed from the constraints of natural languages. In another innovative chapter involving borderline genres, Ovidiu Verdes discusses Liuceanu’s *Paltinis Diary*, showing how this philosopher’s “frontier text” subtly merges the fictional logic of narrative identity with an authentic life story. The discreet charm of liminality also attracts Laura Albu’s attention, while Laura Marin uses Maurice Blanchot to discuss this concept’s potential as “neutral” territory that avoids dichotomous thinking by cultivating “the middle.” Drawing on Jankelivitch’s study of nostalgia, Andreea Deciu explores the insidious, often uncontrollable mechanisms of this emotion that take over once a person passes the secure frontier of her/his country, only to reveal how well these feelings can be manipulated for political purposes by patriotic politicians when the motherland is in trouble.

Focusing on current efforts to create a “country brand,” via the hard-to-decipher catchword *fabulospirit*, Antoaneta Tanasescu examines the link between communal self-definition and limitation. If foreign observers have assigned a simplistic label to an area/country, its inhabitants might resist developing a succinct yet representative slogan, if only because slogans are by definition stereotypical. Multi-ethnic regions like Romania’s Banat and/or poets from multiple cultures like Danilo Kis and Ondrej Stefanko, as discussed by Adriana Babeti and Cornel Ungureanu, might be exemplars of borderline multiplicity, yet are largely unable to reach international audiences. Contemporary cinema as treated by Mirela Murgescu might stand a better chance due to the medium’s built-in transnationality. For Alexandru Matei, studying the border dialectic in Jean Echenoz’s texts, the transgressiveness of self-exile almost erases the differences between interior and exterior, fiction and reality, making the “real world” a projection of the personal one. In literature as much as in the visual arts, cinema, and the virtual space of new media, the continued survival of borders and borderline identity, despite the elimination of dividing lines by administrative measures, shows how deeply the concept is embedded in our representations. Efforts at annulment only lead to a symbolic reterritorialization that results in new mental borders.

In the end, far from exhausting the ways to approach this concept, this collection does what it claims to do: it provides a contemporary Romanian perspective on borders, in the hope that others from elsewhere (who for now will need to read these findings in Romanian) might be lured to consider not just the revolutionary implications of EU Europe’s “expanded” geographical frontiers but also the possible revelations to be discovered from life and culture in old Dracula’s land.

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OUVRAGES INDIVIDUELS / INDIVIDUAL WORKS



***'The Critical Path' and Other Writings on Critical Theory, 1963-1975*, by Northrop Frye. Eds. Jean O'Grady and Eva Kushner. *Collected Works of Northrop Frye*, Vol. 27. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2009. xliii + 492 pp. 978-0802096258.**

No literary critic or theorist within the Anglophone world enjoyed the esteem conferred on Northrop Frye during the early years—that is, the 1960s—when most of the essays and lectures collected in this volume were written. He was the recipient of innumerable honorary degrees, invited to present his ideas throughout the world, and, despite the many disagreements with his views voiced by others in the field, found every new pronouncement greeted with uncommon anticipation.

And then, by the early 1970s, the Frye boom, which had been set off by what still seems his *magnum opus*, *Anatomy of Criticism* of 1957, gradually subsided as the new enthusiasm for socially oriented criticism, gender studies, deconstruction, and, a few years later, the New Historicism, displaced the cooler, less rhetorically impassioned approach that Frye had offered. The time-span of these essays, as well as the full-length book brought together in this volume of his collected works, are coincident with this shift in the way he came to be viewed.

The editors in their introduction describe *The Critical Path*, the book contained within this volume, as a particular favorite of the author (xxxix). Its significance within the history of his career, as the subtitle, *An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism* indicates, lies in the fact that he here attempts to widen his range of concerns. Ever since the publication of *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye's critics, whether friendly or not, had remarked on the absence of a social dimension to his system.

The Critical Path addresses this absence with a new concept, what Frye calls the “myth of concern,” a term close to what we usually mean by “ideology,” but without the negative connotations often suggested by the latter. Examples of such myths are Christianity, Islam, Nazism, Communism, and the like. Opposed to myths of concern Frye hypothesizes a myth of freedom, but the latter does not receive nearly the attention he devotes to the power exercised by myths of concern.

In view of the centrality of mythology to his larger system of thought, it is significant that even when he seeks to venture “outside” literature—as his more skeptical readers had encouraged him to do—he still employs one of the key terms, namely, myth, that he had used throughout his writing to describe the ways that literary texts are related to one another. Indeed, as he writes about myths of concern in *The Critical Path*, one recognizes that the social phenomena he takes up quickly assume certain literary trappings. From my point of view, this is quite as it should be, for it demonstrates that, as with any serious thinker, his work maintains a high degree of coherence even when he expands his range of examples.

One may ask why he may have felt the need at this stage of his career to widen his perspective. The answer, I believe, is simple. Frye spent the spring term of 1969 as a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley, which was in the

midst of student protests against the Vietnam War. Here he was, a visitor from a foreign country not engaged in the war, witnessing this turmoil at first hand. I remember listening to him lecture on Blake in a hall to which he had been shifted because the regular class meeting place had been barred by striking students.

During Frye's stay in Berkeley an event occurred that supplied him with a key example of social disruption in *The Critical Path*. A small area at the edge of campus that had been dubbed People's Park by the homeless persons and drug addicts camping out there was claimed by the university administration, which was determined to build a new structure at the site. The young took to the streets in protest until the administration ultimately relented—to the point that today, after over 40 years, People's Park still stands intact—and with a new generation of homeless and/or addicts firmly in place.

For Frye, the student protests against closing the park marked “an absorption of the poetic habit of mind into ordinary experience.” He goes on to describe the literary archetypes enacted by the protesters: “Here a vacant lot with a fence around it became assimilated to the archetype of the expulsion from Eden, dramatizing the conflict of the democratic community and the oligarchical conspiracy in a pastoral mode related to some common conventions of the Western story” (100).

Frye's extended literary analysis of the People's Park incident, together with other passages that found their way into *The Critical Path*, appeared in a public lecture he delivered soon after at Stanford University, which, I might add, was affected at the time by the same political turbulence taking place at Berkeley. As a faculty member who helped arrange this lecture engagement, I encouraged my graduate students to attend—though they would have gone anyway since Frye customarily attracted crowds at any university in which he appeared.

Imagine my surprise when my students complained to me afterwards that they felt outraged by the lecture. As one of them put it, to reduce a serious political and moral act to just another version of pastoral was a sign that the speaker was unable to transcend the limitations of what they called his all-too-literary way of seeing the world. Nothing I could say to defend him—and I spoke as someone who had studied with him in 1951 and witnessed his first thoughts toward *Anatomy of Criticism*—was able to convince them that Frye's way of reading literature could also be a valid way of reading politics. At that point I recognized that the adulation Frye had enjoyed internationally for over a decade would now, under the pressure of external events, begin to subside.

Although I myself admire the People's Park analysis, I also realize that the book as a whole cannot be deemed one of his major efforts. Like all his writing, it is always readable and illuminating—yet the twin concepts of myth of concern and myth of freedom do not break significant new ground; the antithesis he sets up is a typical Frye dichotomy that presents diverse systems of thought as archetypal constructs engaging in a fascinating interplay with one another.

Similarly, the many other essays collected in this volume seem like footnotes, exemplifications, and afterthoughts of what *Anatomy of Criticism* had accomplished in an overpowering and sustained way. The occasions for which these essays were composed are witness to the stature that Frye had achieved in the intellectual world as a result of this earlier book. Two are contributions to *Daedalus* conferences; several were commissioned for literary encyclopedias; another two appear in handbooks for members of the Modern Language Association; another was his reply to papers

presented at a session of the English Institute devoted to his work (he was in fact the first critic to be honored with a session there). And others transcribe lectures that Frye was invited to give at universities throughout the world. The variety of topics he took up in these pieces displays his great range of interests—literary utopias, literature and law (in a lecture to the Ontario Bar Association), charms and riddles, among many other areas. One essay, “Expanding Eyes,” provides a valuable retrospect on his own intellectual development.

Even though Frye is no longer the formidable presence in literary criticism that he was in the mid-twentieth century, his work, after the passage of half a century, remains engaging to a greater degree than does that of any of the other contemporary critics. As someone who had read most of the contents of this book when they were first published, I found myself as absorbed in Frye’s world today as I was at the time I first came across these writings. And *Anatomy of Criticism* still stands for me as a classic of literary criticism on the order of Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets* and Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*.

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Silvia Spitta. *Misplaced Objects: Migrating Collections and Recollections in Europe and the Americas*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2009. xvi + 280 pp. 978-0292718975.

An impressive object itself in its massive materiality, Silvia Spitta’s book intensifies the meaning of “object” in the world. Though she tracks the phenomenon’s genealogy meticulously, her tracking does not extend to the elemental phase of the object as matter or as grammatical voice. Professor Spitta’s focus throughout her admirable book is on the social-historical materiality of the object. The pre-social life she presumes—that primal scene prior to a thing’s being thrown in anyone’s way as “object,” as the neuter past participle of the Latin *obicere*—remains unrecalled in immemorial shadows.

Matter, Spitta seems to imply, remains immaterial, until the object’s materiality is subjected, that is, until it is awakened by the transitive action of a grammatical and historical/social subject to which the object responds, thereby setting into motion a dialectic by which subject and object attain material relevance in their mutual, even if asymmetrical, relation as historical integers. By the time this point in the life of matter is reached, nothing is what it is “objectively,” ontologically, epistemically, except as it is affected by the repercussive consequences of an interaction, whether it is the action of the subject or the re-action of the predicate object. In this contre-danse subject and object take on agency, whether arrogated or imputed, presumed or conferred. In human history, arrogation and presumption are modes of action preconditioned by forms of self-privileging, usually founded on self-justification and laced with righteousness.

Imputation or conferral of a realized status in the world, what Aristotle referred to as *entelechy*, tends to be based on sympathetic magic or the miraculous. In US America’s history the process is called abduction and is integral to pragmatism, the US’s national philosophy, and, though it would eschew the magical and the miraculous, pragmatism’s *modus operandi*, as attested by history, redound precisely to this sphere of religiosity by enchanting the world as targeted object, regardless of the disenchantment that ensues for that world. Spitta points this out persuasively in

her chapter on the Southwest territories after the US's first preemptive war of choice in 1846 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, by which Mexico lost half of its national territory and the US increased its own by two thirds. Spitta's chapter is entitled "The New Mexico/New Mestizo Effect: Enchanted and Otherwise Enacted Spaces" and belongs to Part II: Migrating Icons and Sacred Geographies in the Americas.

Spitta's investigation of the life of objects spans across a broad register as she traces, historically, the self-privileging of certain human subjects and their vested relation to certain material objects, an engagement that alters the life of both subjects and objects by virtue of their interaction. The objects in question range from geographical continents to matchboxes that fit into one's hand, from material to social objects, from fetishized phenomena (certain artifacts) to politicized ideologemes (ethno-racial Latinity). The range of actions examined extends from rapacious colonialism to minute recuperation of imaginary possessions of the dispossessed. The engagements extend from multitudinous war to solipsistic onanism, from imperial kleptocracy to mystical union to narcissistic self-seizure. In any case, the predicate object exerts, as compensatory gesture, forms of possession that leave the possessor no less possessed than his/her object. In this historical plot, eloquently laid out by Spitta, though she does not use these terms, the subject emerges as the "post-dicate" of its action's predicate—a reversal of effect and cause the ancient rhetors defined as a process of *metalepsis*. In the annals of humanity we have ample demonstration of this process in the history of invasion, settlement, and colonialism, which repeatedly demonstrates how the colonists become re-defined by those they colonize, just as the objects of the mystic's reverence, or of his/her acts of faith, miraculously transform the subject of the *auto de fé* in marvelous metamorphosis.

Lavishly produced and eloquently written, Spitta's book rehearses this history of certain objects in the particular human history that pertains to the dialectical, albeit asymmetrical, encounter between the colonizing European world and the colonized American "New" World and the historical vestiges of that often-violent encounter. The book is organized in tripartite division, with each part corresponding, respectively, to: trans-located phenomenon as specimen of curiosity of the cabinet of wonders, or *Wunderkammern* (Part I: The Object as Specimen); itinerant procession of iconic catalyst for the sanctification of political agendas, whether colonialist or nationalist (Part II: Migrating Icons and Sacred Geographies in the Americas); personal recuperation of identity, imagined or otherwise (Part III: Found Objects and Re-collecting Subjects). The narrative corresponding to this ternary plot moves diachronically from the earliest sixteenth-century period of transatlantic exchange between invaders and colonized (Part I), passes through the nineteenth-century era of national struggles for independence (Part II), and reaches the modern twentieth-century epoch of cultural politics of identity of self-loss and pursuit of self-recuperation through artistic pursuit (Part III). This symmetry of trinitarian progression is recapitulated, in turn, within the book's three Parts, with each Part consisting of three chronologically progressive chapters, provided we take the Epilogue as the third chapter of the third Part, which temporizes with the narrative/scriptive present of the author's narration and our reading time.

Spitta's *incipit* suggestively captures the thrust of her argument and the itinerary of her own book: "The contingent, not-searched-for-but-found book, exhibition, or object sometimes gives rise to unexpected ideas" (ix). The author's gambit begs the question, the double question here being why "sometimes" and why

“unexpected”? All of our scholarly labors are per force contingent and, when contingency emerges as historical necessity, the only predictable result of the predicament, ironically enough, is the inevitability of the outcome that morphs the “sometimes” into consistency and robs the “unexpected” of any element of surprise. This tends to be the case, especially, when a “not-searched-for” book is as thoroughly and as admirably researched as Spitta’s. And what is found by her, and what the well-read reader finds, as a result of Professor Spitta’s diligent labors in the archive and its record, is of little surprise, if any at all. Thus, in being both true (at least well documented and true to the contingencies of the scholarly enterprise) and well wrought, Spitta’s book gives the lie to the Italian adage on the pursuit of objects and their stories, scholarly and otherwise (“se non è vero, è ben trovato”).

There is something pleonastic in the binomial “misplaced objects,” the title of this book. Matter becomes object by virtue of its subjection, and any such intrusion by a subject jostles the phenomenon into a place other than its own, wherever that may be. It is through this altered state/locus that phenomena attain to the status of “object.” Any placement, then, would inevitably be a displacement, and misplacement an integral characteristic of object-hood. The inexorable dislocation as defining instance of what Spitta offers as paradigm of “misplaced objects” in the first Part of her study refers to the intricate history of an object that, significantly, is the first illustration of her book—“Feather headdress.” This also happens to be the object of her eloquent Epilogue, thus, symmetrically closing the parenthesis that forms the narrative of the book. Emblematic of the fraught objectivity of objects in the transatlantic exchange between invading Europeans and invaded peoples of the American New World, the “Feather headdress” endures in history as symbol and as iconic representation, significantly enough now a reproduction or simulacrum, rather than a phenomenal reality present in its own right. The question of the phenomenal reality of objects and their presence in their own right pose intricately insoluble problems, as the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam pithily pointed out in his 1933 essay “Conversations about Dante”: “Things themselves we do not know; on the other hand, we are highly sensitive to their location.”¹ The intricacy of Spitta’s treatment of the topic, especially with regard to this particular historical object (purportedly the headdress of Moctezuma, the last Aztec emperor at the time of the conquest of Tenochtitlan by Hernando Cortés in 1521, now in Vienna’s Museum für Völkerkunde) and its vicissitudes, demonstrates that she is fully attuned to the subtleties of inexorable dislocation and the historical symptomatology of such displacement of objects in the cultural encounter of peoples across political frontiers and across oceanic geographies.

At the pivotal center of Spitta’s treatise lies the irony of decenteredness and translocation. The object at the heart of this ironic process is the errant mythology of the Virgin of Guadalupe, one of whose iconic contemporary representations, on the hubcap of a spoke-wheel tire, graces the book cover. Transoceanic, transbordered, and transnational *imago*, the deracinated Guadalupe emerges as paradigm of the rhizomatic, its unmoored ubiquity captured by Spitta in her mobile metaphor “Guadalupe’s Wheels.” The graphic and ekphrastic itinerancy of the Virgin of Guadalupe, now the matron saint of the American hemisphere, from Alaska to Patagonia, cuts across social class, language, political ideology, and artistic genre. Its migrant homelessness has been transformed into auratic immanence through which every locus and predicament of its (sub-)alterity becomes yet another instance/site of its altar. Of perpetually debatable aetiology, like all mythical figures, the indeterminacy

of its life world as object emerges as its strength and versatility. The un-decidability of its genesis turns this figure into an imminently serviceable standard and emblem of libratory action, politically and religiously renewed every December 12 by institutional mandate and multitudinous popular acclamation. Expedient symbol for libertarian and libertine alike, the Virgin of Guadalupe streams through life worlds with unfettered promiscuity and as myriad virtue, in real and in virtual time, true to the etymons of her original Arabic name (“hidden river”). Already a trans-culturated phenomenon starting with her name, the cultural syncretisms wrought by and in the name of this Virgin are legion, as Professor Spitta’s book elaborately, and graphically, illustrates.

The third Part of Spitta’s book might prove the most controversial, not because of any shortcoming necessarily, but because of the contemporaneity of its focus on those loci where present cultures seek their own definition and identity. The charge of essentialism is an immanent danger, particularly when the focus is on the life of objects. The peril of contamination from the scrutiny of objects to the objectification of those who coexist with the objects investigated is as real as the impossibility of having any *res* (“thing,” in Latin) without some degree of reification. And, even though as a scholar of Peruvian provenance in the US, Spitta partakes of the *Latinidad* she sensitively explores, as she herself points out, Latinity in the American context is neither universal nor settled and, thus, it remains susceptible to contestation. Any reality of this mode of identitarian existence, like any human existential condition, tends to be as volatile as the subject and subject-hood of the “Re-collecting Subjects” in the title of the book’s third Part. Thus, inevitably perhaps, the narratives of chapter seven, “Re-Collecting the Past: *Latinidad*’s Found Objects, Photographs, and Home Altars,” and of chapter eight, “Sandra Ramos and the Cuban Diaspora: *La vida no cabe en una maleta*,” are highly self-conscious and personal. The first of these is founded on the imaginary (the Ortiz-Taylor sisters’ *Imaginary Parents: A Family Autobiography*, 1996), while the second is grounded in the imaginative (the politically charged art of Cuban painter Sandra Ramos). Here, too, or especially here, in the most personal auto-ethnographies, the aura of the object contaminates its reality, if indeed the two could be differentiated from each other.

Inexorably, then, the aura insinuates itself into the most recondite recesses of Spitta’s book. Thus, the title of figure 8.9 on page 189, one of Ramos’s 1997 installations, morphs through a typesetter’s *décalage* from *Autorreconocimiento del pez* [Self-knowledge of the Fish] into *Aurorreconocimiento del pez*. It is doubtful that the mysteries of the auratic would permit even a most diligent proofreader like Spitta to catch such a felicitous infelicity that flouts some degree of impish independence in the life of objects, no matter how elegantly and eloquently (mis-)placed.

This is a timely and insightful book magnificently produced. If it has any drawback, it would be the impossibility of its being read in bed, lest one risk crushing one’s sternum, given the size and the heavy-stock gloss paper with which this book-as-object is made.

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Note

- 1 For a more abstract, psychologistic (Lacanian) treatment of location and the space of cultural traditions, see Bhabha. I have discussed the implications of Mandelstam’s state-

ment for the life of objects and for our scholarly enterprise as comparatists more fully in “Auerbach’s Scar.”

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Russell A. Berman. *Fiction Sets You Free: Literature, Liberty, and Western Culture*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2007. 270 pp. 978-1587296048.

Fiction Sets You Free is an account of the nature and macro-history of literature, an “inquiry into the foundations of a history of literature and its entwinement in the civilizational process” (127). It is a very readable book—well-written, learned, deeply engaged in its subject.

Berman opens with an outline of his argument and a defence of his perspective. Broadly speaking, he argues for the need for attention to the aesthetic specificity of literature and to how literature transcends times and places, and for a literary history that does not content itself with studying how works are determined by their period but remains open to the truly overarching perspectives, to literature’s overall role in the history of human societies. After this, a series of chapters takes the reader through the larger development of literature such as Berman sees it. He addresses the origins of language, the role of writing, the epic, and the role of religion, to end with two chapters on why literature is, in his view, by its very nature an ally of liberal democracy and the market economy. Discussions of literary examples play a significant part in most of the chapters.

For Berman, literature is defined by a special use of language, “a specifically imaginative language usage” (26). His macro-history of literature begins with the origin of language, which Berman dates to approximately 50,000 years ago—he supposes that oral literature came into being at the same time as language or soon after. Two other major breaking points in his macro-history are the introduction of writing from circa 5,000 years ago and, later, the establishment of what Berman calls “the world religions.” Berman considers that oral literature is under constant social pressure from the community in which it exists, and that writing importantly enhances the autonomy of the literary text, autonomy understood, here, as “the capacity of a text to resist reduction to an external reality, while aspiring to an internal formal coherence” (xi-xii). Religions, and sacred texts enshrining the sacred word, also play an important part in Berman’s macro-history because they are influential validations of the importance of the imagination: according to him, “the counterfactuality of faith stands behind and permits the imagination of literature” (128). Sacred texts therefore become instrumental in the process of autonomization which Berman regards as the most significant trend in the historical development of literature; the “autonomy of the work of literature, or rather the autonomy to which a genuine work aspires, is an imitation of the divine word” (129). Literature, shaped by this large civilizational process and also shaping it, has an important cultural role, since it provides a powerful model of autonomous individuality and cultivates imagination and innovation. Indeed, for Berman, autonomous individuality “becomes the motor of Western civilizational progress” (83).

Berman’s views and arguments appear questionable to me on a number of points. I find it difficult to accept that he treats literature, implicitly, as something clearly

demarcated, almost like a definite object or a definite individual, which can be confidently traced throughout its historical trajectory. In reality, "literature" is of course a vague term that different specialists and laypeople can fill, and do fill, with rather varying content no matter what period they are speaking of, but particularly when they are referring to the distant past. Arguably, the macro-history of literature, realistically conceived, consists of very many stories, and the choice of interpretation and emphasis will be a matter of the researcher's priorities and judgement, but there seems to be no place for this relativistic consideration in Berman's developmental sketch, where the history of literature appears well-defined, unified, and unidirectional. In addition, I also think of literature in a contemporary context as something more multifarious and ambiguous than Berman seems to do. Human imagination has many uses—and abuses—and so has literature. In my view, we cannot leave these complications largely out of sight without oversimplifying and thereby also trivializing the phenomena.

When it comes to method, I regret that Berman relies to such a large extent on sweeping generalizations that are being asserted rather than argued for. He can write, for example: "It is the amplification of imagination through the experience of literature that has motored the cumulative human aspirations realized as developmental progress" (150). *Prima facie*, it does not appear credible to me that imaginative literature has brought about an amplification of imagination that can in fact be regarded as the main cause of positive social change, which is what the sentence seems to say, and Berman makes no attempt to substantiate his claim via conventional historical argument: there is little of factual evidence for it and no real consideration of alternative explanations. The quoted formulation is far from being an isolated example; similar generalizations abound in *Fiction Sets You Free*.

What serves as Berman's evidence for his generalizations is, rather, his own considerations of the nature of literature and of the effects which literature supposedly will have on its readers, given that nature. For example, as we saw, Berman defines literature in terms of an imaginative use of language (a kind of language use that never receives a more concrete description). Imagination, in its turn, is characterized as "a cognitive independence from real-world limitations" (xi). Fiction is presented as one manifestation of such independence, and Berman appears to find it evident that there is consequently an intrinsic association between fiction and freedom: "Because the reader, understood as the addressee of literature, can entertain a fiction, suspend disbelief, and allow for imaginary alternatives to the status quo, this is a reader called to freedom" (152). But the supposed link between freedom and fiction appears tenuous, almost like a play on the word "freedom": is not the freedom of the imagination being conflated with political freedom? Anyway, the association between fiction and freedom rests on speculation, not on known facts. To the best of my knowledge, we have no empirical evidence to support or reject the large claim that fiction sets you free. Is the claim even plausible? The entertaining of a fiction is common to the reading of elite fiction, middle-brow fiction, and popular fiction, so the argument that the reader of fiction is a reader called to freedom should be valid across the board if at all, but is it really believable that all sorts of fiction set you free? Analogous skeptical remarks could be made about the link that Berman forges between literature and free-market capitalism and about many other of his generalizations along the way.

I have deep sympathy for Berman's interest in the big picture: in the understanding of literature as an art and in the creation of a broad overview of its history in its

social and cultural setting. We need to be able to see the wood and not only the trees (and I do not of course mean that statement as a denial of the significance of seeing the trees; by no means do I question the importance of the many other critical and scholarly interests that exist in connection with literature). Painting the larger picture will always involve a measure of idealization or visionary synthesis. To me, Berman's way of understanding literary art and its history does not really seem convincing, but I have no problem with the genre as such.

Besides making use of work in literary studies, Berman also draws on several other disciplines or discussions, such as cultural anthropology, the history of religion, classical philology, and the debate about orality versus literacy. This is good and helpful. Inevitably, however, many more fields of knowledge are relevant. There is much debate going on in philosophical literary aesthetics about the possible cognitive value of literature and the mechanisms behind it. Empirical literary aesthetics has a good deal to say about the effects literature actually has on readers. Characterization of a specific use of language would do well to relate itself to linguistic pragmatics and to linguistic theory generally. And so on. It seems to me that the analysis of literature's specificity and the interpretation of larger literary-historical processes demand of us that we assimilate insights and methodologies from many other disciplines. Achieving a deeper understanding of these matters is a challenging task, but a more sophisticated approach to such understanding should nevertheless be entirely within our reach and very well worth pursuing.

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Earl E. Fitz. *Brazilian Narrative Traditions in a Comparative Context. World Literatures Reimagined 1.* New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2005. ix + 303 pp. 978-0873525886.

The first book in "World Literature Reimagined," a series sponsored by the MLA's Publications Committee, Earl E. Fitz's *Brazilian Narrative Traditions in a Comparative Context* reflects the growing interest for Brazilian culture that has been developing in the US in the last decades. Aimed primarily at an American audience with little familiarity with the subject, the book offers a wide and meticulous survey of Brazilian literature, and complements it with an overview of the country's musical and cinematic traditions. The focus of the book lies, however, in its comparative perspective: Brazilian literature is presented in a parallel with North American literature with frequent references as well to its articulation with the Spanish American literary production. Highly informative, the book also includes a chapter on Brazilian literature in English translation, a Brazilian chronology, and an up-to-date annotated bibliography.

Based on E. Bradford Burns' argument, cited by Fitz, that "while the nations of the New World might not have a common history, they do share some common historical experiences" (8), the author begins his Pan-American study by tracing a cluster of similarities and differences between the histories of Brazil and the United States, focusing on issues such as the process of colonization in both places, the religious world view, the influence of the Enlightenment mainly on the Independence movements, the search for cultural identity, and the attitude towards miscegenation that has led Brazilians to assimilate extensively from Amerindian and African peoples. Besides, Fitz makes a distinction between Brazil and the

Spanish-speaking countries, and mentions the absence of cultural interchange that has usually characterized the relationship between these two contexts.

Divided into two parts covering the colonial and the post-colonial periods, the second chapter provides a panoramic view of Brazilian literary and cultural production, focusing not only on prose narrative, as suggested by the book's title, but also on poetry, theater, and sermons. Here, the parallel between Brazil and the US continues to be drawn, this time from the point of view of each country's literary production. In the section devoted to the colonial period, the emphasis lies on the fact that whereas colonial literature in the US had its origins in the Protestant Reformation, Brazil's early writing was marked first by the intellectual outlook and the poetics of the Renaissance, later by the Baroque. The result is that literature in Brazil began to flourish almost concurrently with settlement, and it reached a high level of development at the end of the first century of European occupation. By 1822, when Brazil gained its political independence, it had already produced a number of first-rate writers and texts, as well as the feeling of a distinctive national literature. By this time, literature in Brazil and in the US came to be developed under similar intellectual and aesthetic influences, chiefly from the Western European countries, and Fitz's comparative perspective centers on the individual literary movements (Romanticism, Realism, Modernism) and on the writers who have stood out in the literature of each country. Important parallels are drawn at these points between figures such as Cooper and Alencar, or Henry James and Machado de Assis, an author that Susan Sontag has considered, in an essay written for the *New Yorker*, as the greatest in the whole of Latin America.

The third chapter deals more directly with what the title promises; it provides a survey of the Brazilian narrative tradition from its very first document (Caminha's Letter of Discovery) to the present. Fitz pays special attention to the evolution of the Brazilian novel and short-story, two genres that have found a fertile ground in the country, and makes detailed comments about some of the most distinguished authors and well-known books. His parallels between Brazilian and North American literature continue, as well as the connections he constantly establishes between literary production and the countries' historical situation, especially in their social, political, and economic aspects. The part devoted to twentieth-century literature is particularly interesting in this regard not only for its encompassing and updated character, but also for the author's comments on the role of the intellectual in both contexts. The chapter closes with an account of Postmodernist literature in Brazil and of the contribution from female writers.

The two last chapters before the appendices are devoted to the translation of Brazilian literature into English and to a conclusion of sorts centered on the differences between the literary traditions of Brazil and the US. Fitz's brief history of the translation of Brazilian literary works into English is not limited to simply mentioning them. He also offers appropriate comments about these translations, and recommends those that are considered well-accomplished. A detailed list of these translations appears in Appendix 3. In his conclusion, he also discusses some of the most significant contributions which, according to him, Brazil has given to the literature of the Americas: its distinctive literature of discovery, conquest, and settlement; its strong, imaginative tradition of fiction, especially metafiction; the politically acute experimentalism of its modernist fiction; the diversity and vitality of its writing by women; and its extensive history of race-related writing.

The book has four appendices, two of which are brief surveys of Brazilian popular music and film production, followed by glossaries with the names of composers, songwriters, singers, filmmakers, and actors as well as special songs, films, and movements in both areas, such as Bossa Nova (New Wave) and Tropicalism, in the first case, and Cinema Novo (New Cinema) in the second. The chapter on popular music carefully discusses the importance of this art form in Brazilian society and its reciprocal influence on North American music, particularly in the last three decades when, as Fitz himself affirms, Brazilian music has become a force in the US. The chapter on film and video describes how Brazilian cinema evolved from its origin in the last decade of the nineteenth century up to the present, highlighting its projection onto the international scene at the time of Cinema Novo (the mid-twentieth century) and signaling its present situation, which, in Fitz's words, "remains aesthetically and technically inventive, intellectually resourceful, and committed to growth and development, nationally and internationally" (213).

Brazilian Narrative Traditions in a Comparative Context is a book that, in spite of its didactic character, should be read by all who want to get acquainted with the literature and culture of Brazil. The work of a specialist in Brazilian studies, the book reveals a solid knowledge of the country's culture while avoiding the ethnocentric perspective that often permeates works of this sort. In addition to being highly informative, the book offers a critical view of Brazilian literary and cultural production and proposes a reevaluation of this production for North American readers and for comparatists in general.

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Gene A. Plunka. *Holocaust Drama: The Theater of Atrocity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. vi + 447 pp. 978-0521494250.

Despite pockets of revisionist resistance, the Holocaust is well on its way to becoming a part of the educational curriculum in Europe and North America. This was not the case until the mid 1980s. Awareness of the Holocaust often overtook intellectuals and writers by surprise, sometimes creating an Orwellian "room one-oh-one" in their consciousness and leaving them with a sense of unfinished business. At different points of their lives, great numbers of intellectuals came to feel the need to seek some level of understanding the Shoah; this was usually followed by the need to respond to that knowledge, in ways that fit with one's training.

Gene A. Plunka's *Holocaust Drama* surveys such responses in the medium of the theater. The book also produces the impression of being its author's own response to the accumulated information about the Holocaust, and to do so within his own field of research, theater history.

The book combines a survey component with an analytic one. Survey-type information includes the history of the production and reception of each of the plays that it discusses, the structural and genre innovations of these plays, as well as the elements of the playwrights' biographical backgrounds that made them particularly susceptible to the issues raised by the Holocaust. Its evaluation of the playwrights' processing of the Holocaust materials is well grounded in major historiographical works on the Holocaust and Holocaust remembrance. In addition to being a valuable study of the dramatic imagination on the subject, the book can double as a beginner's guide to Holocaust studies as a scholarly discipline.

For the purposes of analysis the book arranges its vast material not by chronology of composition but according to the subjects dealt with in the plays, such as the responsibility of perpetrators and bystanders, the representation of cultural activities in the midst of the atrocities, Marxist perspectives on the Holocaust, the moral dilemmas of resistance or accommodation in the ghettos and the camps, the experience of the survivors, and the strange ways of collective memory.

For example, the first chapter of the book is devoted to four plays that develop the notion of “the banality of evil” made famous by Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Donald Freed’s play *The White Crow: Eichmann in Jerusalem* and Cecil Philip Taylor’s *Good* are discussed as presenting the Nazi as an ordinary human being drawn into evil by attempts to do his compartmentalized office job, get promoted, etc., without troubling his conscience about the goals that his work serves or else finding accommodating rationalizations for them—by now one of the insistently recurrent motifs of Holocaust studies. By testing the possibilities of sympathy for such “anono-mass” (24) or even likeable characters, the plays seem to implicate the audience, to show how “all of us” could, as it were, slip into collaboration with evil. Plunka notes that audiences sometimes resent this implication (the spectators’ anger, one should note, is not necessarily a sign of callousness); what he does not mention with equal explicitness is that a side effect of the representation of evil as banal rather than diabolical also produces an effect of normalization: phenomena like anti-Semitism and genocide emerge, especially in vulgar discourse, as almost the order of things. This point, however, transpires through Plunka’s discussion of Thomas Bernhard’s *On the Eve of Retirement*, which has the added twist of associating Nazi allegiances with moral perversion. In between, the chapter discusses Peter Barnes’s *Laughter!* which consists of two one-act plays, *Tsar* and *Auschwitz*; in the latter the playwright Barnes returns to the idea of evil as diabolical, but his devil is not the sexy sort of Satanic hero but rather a more Russian folk conception—a sneaky, meanly sadistic stoolie.

The book discusses well known plays, such as Arthur Miller’s *Playing for Time*, made even more famous by Daniel Mann’s film, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which for many viewers became a stand-in for more direct representations of the Holocaust, or Rolf Hochhuth’s *The Deputy*, which, at the time of its appearance, raised some of the most controversial issues of responsibility for the deaths of millions (in particular, the problem of the conduct of Pope Pius XII), as well as plays that had limited runs in the theatre or are less well remembered. The critical discussion of the theatrical handling and impact of Anne Frank’s diary, and an analytic chapter devoted to Hochhuth’s play are valuable and well placed in the book; but I am particularly grateful for the discussion of the less famous plays: one finds out how many of the ideas that have been moving onto the foreground in the recent years (e.g., in Jonathan Littell’s *The Kindly Ones*) can in fact be traced back to on- and off-Broadway theaters as well as to the European (especially British) productions of previous decades. What the scope of the book does not allow is the broader conceptual development to which these ideas belonged in the times when they were first voiced on stage.

The critical assessments of the different plays are made in terms both of their adaptability for the stage and of their ethical fidelity to their materials. Plunka criticizes Hochhuth, for instance, for defusing the power of his play by adding the last act; but he criticizes Peter Weiss’s and Tony Kushner’s plays for using the Holocaust material, with tendentious instrumentality, for attacks on the capitalist system of which

the Holocaust is presented as a peak expression. Whereas most of the Holocaust literature attempts to counteract the Nazi agenda of dehumanizing its victims by placing emphasis on the individuality of characters, these plays have recourse to the techniques of de-individualizing that show greater faithfulness to Brecht's school than to the specificity of the human realities that they refer to.

One does not, of course, need to agree with all of Plunka's views. I, for one, object to his repeated use of the cliché of the "aggressiveness" of Israelis (though in fact he may be merely recounting, in a sort of Free Indirect Discourse, the points made by others within specific period paradigms). More importantly, I disagree with his criticism of the term "Holocaust," whose launching in its current sense is generally attributed to Elie Wiesel. Plunka believes that this notion of "burnt offering" casts the Nazis in the role of priests making a sacrifice. However, this term need not involve allegorical ramifications, beyond those of martyrdom, such as the martyrdom of Jewish faithful in antiquity, at the hands of Greek and Roman rulers. True, the victims of the Nazi genocide were not given a choice to convert in order to save their lives, but Wiesel's term is apt because since the middle ages Jews killed for just being Jews have been considered martyrs, and their deaths, even when not heroic, have been conceptualized as *Kiddush Hashem* ("the sanctification of the name").

The book is not free from other mistakes—of the kind that often happen when one is impelled to plunge into totally absorbing new research. For instance, it mentions, erroneously, that Terrence Des Pres, who has gone down in intellectual history as the author of the seminal book *The Survivor: Life and Death in the Concentration Camps*, was himself a survivor of the Lager (275)—Des Pres was not imprisoned in the camps. Moreover, though the book is well structured, it is rather unevenly written—as if hasty local revisions may have disrupted some statements while adjusting others.

Plunka analyzes the ideological repertoire of each play by seeking to define the ethical positions or psychological phenomena represented by the main members of the cast of characters. The ethical poles of the cross section of the personages are active resistance on the one hand and survival, whatever it takes, on the other. One may note that whereas various shades of accommodation and inner freedom are a dominant theme in prose narratives of the survivors, the medium of the theater is more favorable to representations of self-sacrificial resistance. However, Chapter 9, dealing with the plays set in and around the Ghettoes (by Motti Lerner, Joshua Sobol, Harold and Edith Lieberman, Shimon Wincelberg, Millard Lampell, and Erwin Sylvanus), ends with the suggestion that the more realistic perspective is the one which delineates "moral and humanitarian acts of resistance as equivalent to suicide or martyrdom rather than heroism," and that the plays force us "to reexamine our traditional notions of morality and ethics when applied to a unique situation never before encountered in the Western civilization" (233). It seems, however, that evaluations of the moral merit of active resistance keep changing in the process of remembering atrocities, a process in which theatrical representations interact with the publication of survivor testimony, scholarship, and works of other genres, as well as with the development of commemoration rituals. Gene Plunka's *Holocaust Drama* supplies a signally important chunk of materials for the construction of this strand of the history of ideas.

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Steven Shankman. *Other Others: Levinas, Literature, Transcultural Studies*. SUNY Series in Contemporary Jewish Thought. Albany: State U of New York P, 2010. 206 pp. 978-1438430850.

Other Others skillfully demonstrates the helpfulness of Levinasian ethical philosophy for a comparative literary scholarship that moves beyond Eurocentric frames of reference and engages non-Western conceptual, analytical resources. Levinas might seem an odd inspiration for such a project since both his thought and comparative literature emerge from European high culture scholarly milieus. Shankman, however, interconnects readings of works clearly proximate to Levinas's historical situation (Primo Levi's and Paul Celan's writings on the Holocaust) and to his philosophical-cultural orientations (The Bible, Euripides, Dante, Shakespeare, Hölderlin, Valéry, Calvino) with ones reflecting concerns and contexts seemingly remote from the twentieth-century West (Marco Polo, Confucius, Mencius, Sima Qian, Mongo Beti, and Mahfouz). Working comfortably with texts in Chinese, Arabic, and Hebrew, as well as in ancient and modern European languages, clearly at home in far-flung literary-cultural contexts, like Rembrandt criticism and seventeenth-century art history, Shankman outlines in each of his eight chapters examples of what he calls "*transcultural*" literary criticism.

Instead of "multiculturalism," seen as too often "suggest[ing] that individual cultures . . . are homogeneous," Shankman offers this term to denote not only "the value . . . of going beyond a single culture," but also "the existence of a beyond of the very concept of culture. . . ." (16). That "beyond," for Levinas is "Ethics, presupposition of all Culture and all signification" (*Humanism of the Other*; qtd. in Shankman 16). The significance for literary studies of Levinas's claim that ethics is "first philosophy," prior to intentional consciousness, reason, language, signification, *and so culture*, is concisely elucidated by Shankman: "Much contemporary literary/cultural criticism is focused on the social or cultural 'construction' of the Other. For Levinas, in contrast, the Other is precisely that which eludes construction and categorization. . . ." (16).

If ethics is what culture presupposes and speaks to, then the pressure of the ethical will be registered in recognizable, recurrent ways in literatures distant from one another in geography, chronology, and influence. If Levinas succeeded in sketching a phenomenology of how the ethical impresses itself upon consciousness, then one should find across cultures literary evocations of ethical experience that reward interpretation informed by Levinasian thought. Moreover, one should find within the semantic and conceptual vocabularies of diverse cultures some registering of distinctions, preoccupations, and concerns that resonate with threads and motifs integral to Levinas's reflections. In each of his chapters, Shankman seeks to develop a transcultural literary criticism that demonstrates, through meticulous, informed close reading, these three sets of claims.

Rather than viewing ethics, as much literary theory of the past thirty years had done, as being "necessarily an effect of culture," Shankman argues that "Ethics is often . . . a disruption of culture," and that cultures (to the extent that they have any claim to worth or moral legitimacy) "develop as a consequence of such ethical disruptions. . . ." (23). Such disruptions may take as elemental a form as addressing another as an interlocutor rather than an object, which, Shankman notes, constitutes no small achievement in the Auschwitz that Primo Levi describes. Shankman deftly links Levi's account of how he came to realize his vocation as a writer while talking about Dante to another prisoner to literature's "disruptive" role in calling culture back

to its ethical presuppositions, presuppositions that the simplest human speech act (denaturalized in Auschwitz) highlights: “Levi is sensing the power and the promise of language in the depths of Hell” through the “awakening” of his “incipient writer’s sense of his own ethical responsibility to which his writing is now bearing witness” (30). Responsibility to the Other entails listening as well as speech and writing. “But a writer must have an audience. . . . The act of listening, my attentiveness to the words of my neighbor, fulfills the promise of language in the depths of Hell” (31).

Connecting responsible literary criticism to the art of listening, Shankman allows us to hear within Marco Polo’s discourse and Italo Calvino’s novel about Marco Polo echoes or anticipations of Levinas’s concern that “the single-minded search for essence creates a dangerously autonomous game in which the human is replaced by essentialized wooden figures being moved about in a chess game” (52). Similarly, he listens to the lyrical “disruptions” within Sima Qian’s classical (first-century BCE) Chinese history so as to hear the influence of “the Mencian tradition of viewing the subject as constituted, most importantly, by *ren*, which is translated by Kwong-Loi Shun as an ‘affective concern’ for others” (68), a tradition of modifying Confucianism implicitly concordant with Levinas’s claim that the ethical is not an optional attribute of human subjectivity, but its grounding precondition.

Most significantly, Shankman locates in diverse cultural/literary contexts a central Levinasian distinction, hitherto under-developed in Levinas criticism, between the “sacred,” as in “the experience of participation in a cosmic whole,” associated with polytheism (and collectivisms ancient and modern), and the “holy” (in Hebrew *qadosh*), which “requires my recognition of the absolute exteriority of the Other, of the necessary separation of subject and object, self and world, self and other, of a necessary atheism, a breaking with polytheism that can only recover a relationship to the divine through my responsibility for the Other” (12-13). Shankman uses this distinction to illuminate the problematizing of anti-Semitism in *The Merchant of Venice*, the nascence of ethical alienation from colonizing consciousness on the part of the French missionary priest in Mongo Beti’s *Le pauvre Christ de Bomba*, the articulation of an ethical critique of *both* materialistic rationalism and self-absorbed variants of Sufi mysticism by Naguib Mahfouz in “Zaabalawi” and *Children of Our Alley*, and the unfolding of ethical unease with Neoplatonic essentialism evident in the poetry of Paul Valéry and Edgar Bowers.

In noting how Bowers’ later poems move away from the poet’s quest for “a pure and unmediated access to the infinite and absolute” and toward an ethical appreciation of particular, real-life people, so that the “movement of transcendence is not upward but is rather outward, toward the Other” (148), Shankman links literature not just with critique and demystification, but also with appreciation, admiration, and gratitude, not only directed toward mortal life but toward the ethical bearing of other people. In suggesting that criticism engage in appreciative listening to such appreciations, Shankman’s book joins a growing archive of Levinasian literary criticism. Despite his claim that “critics have not generally explored the implications of Levinas’s thought for literary works not specifically discussed by Levinas himself” (20), Adam Zachary Newton, David P. Haney, Melyvn New, and Elizabeth Kraft, to cite only a few, have been doing so for some time. Shankman’s impressive work would be even more so by situating itself in relation to the emerging literary critical tradition to which it so ably contributes.

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COMPTES RENDUS BREFS / BOOK NOTES



The Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature: From the European Enlightenment to the Global Present. Eds. David Damrosch, Natalie Melas, and Mbongiseni Buthelezi. Translation/Transnation Series. Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 2009. xvi + 442 pp. 978-0691132853.

An introduction plus 32 selections effectively present the origins of Comparative Literature, its self-questioning in what is called here “The Years of Crisis,” its evolution into “The Theory Years,” and an array of “Contemporary Explorations.” Most of the selected authors are canonical in the field and far from surprising, but also, therefore, necessary: Germaine de Staël, Goethe, Nietzsche, Lukács, Bakhtin, Curtius, Auerbach, Adorno, Paz, Wellek, and so on, but there are also a good number of other names that may be less known to non-comparatists, such as Hugo Meltzl (editor of the first journal of comparative literature in 1877, *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, a title continued in use today by *Neohelicon*), or Charles Mills Gayley, the many-talented Berkeley Professor who in 1894 proposed the creation of a Society of Comparative Literature (or of Literary Evolution). Each selection is preceded by a brief introduction, consistently enlightening and to the point.

Such a vast ambition as inspires Comparative Literature—comparing the literatures of the universe—is grounded and energized by questions: How do we compare, what is literature, of what universe are we speaking about. . . . These essays deepen, more than solve these questions, and since the texts have been admirably selected, they show that our discipline has been, and continues to be, exploratory, innovative, and always uncomfortable to domesticate. This is not an archeological collection, but timely. On what principles do we rank literary works—since we undoubtedly do—and how much does patriotism (as denied as it may be) determine our preferences (Herder)? How have women changed culture once they were allowed to participate more as creators and not only as subjects of representation, and can this perhaps matter for our search of happiness—in which literature plays a role (de Staël)? Do people from other nations or cultures “think, act, and feel almost exactly like us,” and is poetry universal (Goethe)? Is our relation with Nature natural and how entangled are we in illusion (Nietzsche)? Why do we need to reform literary history (Meltzl)? What is the range of comparisons available, and why, at a given time (Posnett)? How are the different destinies of international and local writers created (Brandes)? How can we work as a society of scholars without a clear and shared focus (Gayley)?

And these are only a few of the questions brought up even before we move into “The Years of Crisis,” where readers will find a most remarkable 1934 essay by Kobayashi Hideo, “Chaos in the Literary World,” exploring a question only apparently simple: “Why is criticism a difficult thing?” Equally important is Jean-Marie Carré’s brief preface to his 1951 *La Littérature comparée*, in which he challenges us by stating that “it does not do to compare just anything with anything, no matter when and no matter where,” adding what to me is a crucial distinction often blurred today, “comparative literature is not general literature.”

“The Theory Years” will probably be useful for a classroom, but treads well-known ground, with selections from Barthes, Kristeva, de Man, Barbara Johnson, Even-Zohar, Glissant, and Said. Equally predictable is Ngugi wa Thiong’o, who becomes the only representative from Africa, even if he has taught at Yale, New York University, and UC Irvine since his exile from Kenya in 1977, just as the unsurprising, even if justified, inclusion of the Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz makes him the only critic selected from Latin America. For a book that includes the “Global Present” in its subtitle, the range of selections, as good as they all are, does not seem global enough. One can only hope it will be increased in subsequent editions.

“Contemporary Explorations” does provide examples of some comparative trends. Bruce Robbins discusses cosmopolitanism as a positive step towards an international world—more a project than a reality, of course, with so many differences in power, resources, and access possibilities the world over. In this sense the selection from Pascale Casanova’s excellent 1999 *The World Republic of Letters* is instructive, since it delineates the power relations within the literary world—even if with mostly a European point of view. Other articles deal with the institution of Comparative Literature in other countries (here China, but it could have been Brazil, which also offers a significant alternative to our usual view of the field in the US), translation, the persistence of borders and the fears they generate, and new attempts to redefine World Literature. One sorely misses in this section the interdisciplinary work being done with cognitive science (or any science), and gender studies.

No anthology will ever satisfy all readers, but this one comes close. It should prove most useful in framing the continuing and vital discussion about Comparative Literature for some years to come.

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Stéphane Michaud, ed. *Correspondances de Freud*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2007. 178 pp. 978-2878544077.

In recent decades, a proliferation of acrid recriminations against psychoanalysis have not dimmed scholarly dreams of cutting new paths through the Freudian labyrinth, with its false turns, impenetrable thickets, and sudden clearings. Stéphane Michaud’s collection of essays devoted to Freud’s correspondences offers a refuge from this positivist *jouissance*. Steeped in the history of Freud’s shifting relationships with various members of his inner circle, most of the volume’s contributors, including the editor, draw upon their own signal efforts to compile, edit, and translate a multilingual legion of letters. Michael Molnar, director of the Freud House in London, maps the sublimely overwhelming task of consolidating an archive, which could comprise as many as 20,000 letters between Freud, his family members, and friends, not to mention countless patients and unknowns, and without taking into account those letters that were lost or destroyed. Molnar also provides a helpful overview of major shifts in the historiography that transpired as scholars incrementally gained access since Freud’s death in 1939 to pivotal exchanges with his closest collaborators.

The four essays that follow Molnar’s overview highlight Freud’s frequently tense relationships with key members of the “secret committee” over the course of his decades-long endeavor to establish the theoretical framework and institutional legacy of psychoanalysis. Fernand Cambon’s essay on the Freud-Abraham correspondence

focuses on the distinctively “Germanophonic” self-consciousness that the Austrian in Vienna and the Prussian founder of the Berlin Society of Psychoanalysis impart to their exchanges about the core principles of psychoanalysis; hence, the form of their dialogue mirrors the collaborative work of analysis itself as a discourse addressed, in every instance, to an other if not also to “the Other.” Olivier Mannoni concretizes the institutional machinery of the psychoanalytic movement from Freud’s correspondence with the Russian born Max Eitingon (1881-1943), early financier of the movement, co-founder and President of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Polyclinic, and, after Abraham, President of the International Psychoanalytic Association. Mannoni comments on Eitingon’s blind reverence for Freud, which comes to the fore in the “veritable anthology” of German and Austrian mannerisms of the period that adorn the former’s letters (50). As Mannoni points out, this correspondence is a “mine” for historians of the psychoanalytic movement because it meticulously traces the risks posed to the “Freudian edifice” by Sándor Ferenczi, Otto Rank, and others through the eyes of its two principal architects before the war.

Judith Dupont ferrets out elements of wit and humor in Freud’s correspondence with Ferenczi, spotlighting Freud’s annoyance with the younger man’s endless narration of seemingly trivial miseries. While Freud suffered his own anguishes, Dupont surmises that he preferred to lose himself in his work, and he therefore begrudged the younger man the right to complain. It is, perhaps, ironic, then, that Freud ultimately lived long enough to write Ferenczi’s obituary after the latter’s passing in 1933. Disputes about Ferenczi’s physical affection with patients alongside theoretical differences concerning the nature of trauma threatened to derail the relationship; in their final years, however, a détente transpires between Freud the “joyous pessimist” and Ferenczi the “desperate optimist” as each declines painfully toward imminent death.

Claude Nachin’s contribution centers on Freud’s correspondence with Rank, which ranges from amicable exchanges on family matters to letters elucidating the gestation of the psychoanalytic movement, discussions about psychoanalytic issues, and irreconcilable disagreements as Freud stubbornly guarded the fundamental status of incest against Rank’s stress on the anguish of birth and maternal body fantasies in the context of a psychoanalytic theory of trauma. Nachin also foregrounds Freud’s interventions into the rivalries between Rank, the English group led by Ernest Jones, and the German constituency represented by Abraham who ostensibly coveted Rank’s proximity to the father in Vienna. As Nachin contends, “Freud perceived very well the role of the transference remainders [attending] his person in the conflict, but he manifestly underestimated the ferocity of the siblings’ battle for power in the psychoanalytic movement. . . .” (75).

Departing from the volume’s predominant focus on “secret committee” constituents, Ingeborg Meyer-Palmedo depicts Anna Freud’s metamorphosis from a troubled adolescent overwhelmed by her father’s influence into a leading figure in psychoanalytic circles. Stéphane Michaud complements this essay by detailing Lou Andreas-Salomé’s mentorship of Anna at her father’s behest through a correspondence at once tender, possessive, and transformative. Henriette Michaud turns a psychoanalytic-literary lens on Freud’s long-term fascination with the historical author behind Shakespeare’s name, a symptom of an anxious preoccupation with the perpetuity of his own oeuvre. The collection closes with Michel Deguy’s lyrical reflections on how Freud shaped French thought and the critique of the subject in particular since the 1960s. Admittedly, not all of the contributors avoid preciousness as they linger over

particularly poignant or surprising details in the correspondences, yet this occasional indulgence does not detract from the elegance of Michaud's collection, which paints a lush portrait of an ambitious thinker as he builds and defends a life's work.

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Madame G. M. de Rochmondet. *Études sur la traduction de l'anglais, or Lessons on the French Translation*. Collection Regards sur la traduction. Benoit Léger, introd., notes, et bibliographie. Translation/Traduction Series. Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2009. lxxi + 287 pp. 978-2760306974.

Il est rare que la réflexion traductive du passé nous parvienne autrement que sous la forme de citations bien choisies ou d'extraits réunis en des anthologies qui sont couramment amenées à modifier ou à supprimer la structure des textes originaux, à simplifier le cheminement des pensées et à aplatir leurs singularités historiques. Ces dernières sont cependant précieuses puisqu'elles soutiennent le travail de l'historien chargé de rendre aux textes d'autrefois leurs propriétés distinctes, celles qui leur permettent d'être autre chose que des jalons modestes d'une évolution conduisant aux théories présentes, toujours plus abouties, croirait-on: ce sont plutôt des vecteurs d'un état de pensée et de culture qu'il convient de comprendre selon des logiques d'époque. On peut donc saluer comme un événement la parution d'une édition complète, annotée, indexée, et dotée d'une riche préface de plus de 70 pages, d'un ouvrage historique sur la traduction en langue française.

Il n'est certes pas indifférent, pour justifier cette réédition, que les *Études sur la traduction de l'anglais* paraissent en 1830, traditionnellement considérée comme une année-charnière du romantisme en France. Or, ce travail de Mme de Rochmondet, sans être ignoré des historiens de la traduction, n'a jamais fait l'objet d'une enquête systématique. Voire: les efforts de Benoit Léger pour retrouver les traces de l'auteur n'ont guère abouti. On continue donc d'ignorer à peu près tout de cette femme de lettres peut-être protestante et probablement orléaniste: est-elle Française, Suisse ou Anglaise, signe-t-elle de son nom propre (ou celui de son mari), d'un pseudonyme (ou d'un anonyme: G. M*** de Rochmondet)? est-on sûr qu'il s'agit d'une femme? (On peut regretter que le portrait en couverture de la réédition ne soit pas celui, car introuvable, de Mme de Rochmondet, mais d'une contemporaine.) L'ouvrage paraît à compte d'auteur à Paris, chez Joubert; il est réédité en 1837 sous un titre modifié: *Études sur la traduction de l'anglais, ou nouveau guide du traducteur d'anglais en français*. On peut donc lui supposer un certain rayonnement, sans doute auprès des établissements d'enseignement universitaire, auquel le destine en 1831 le conseil royal de l'instruction publique (lviii).

Malgré la prolifération des méthodes de langue et des méthodes de traduction, ces *Études* ne se laissent pas ramener à l'une ou à l'autre catégorie; elles sont, comme l'écrit Léger, "à la fois manuel pédagogique, histoire de la langue anglaise, stylistique différentielle, traduction de morceaux choisis" (xxxiv). En quoi réside leur originalité? Sans doute dans l'application avec laquelle sont abordées les questions de traduction d'une langue moderne ou vivante, alors appelée "étrangère." Il est frappant que les grands traités de traduction du latin ou du grec, ceux notamment de Ferri de Saint-Constant (1811) ou d'Adrien Viguier (1827), l'aient peu inspirée; certes, elle se réclame ouvertement, pour la partie analytique de son ouvrage, des *Études sur Virgile comparé avec tous les poètes épiques et dramatiques des anciens et des modernes* de Pierre-

François Tissot (1826-1830), mais en précisant qu'elle "n'a sans doute pas fait pour la langue anglaise ce que M. Tissot a fait pour la latine" (p. 9). Quant à ses idées sur la traduction, il semblerait qu'elle les ait plutôt puisées auprès de plusieurs traducteurs, écrivains et critiques contemporains, qui n'ont toutefois pas donné à leurs intuitions ou thèses, consignées dans des préfaces et des comptes rendus, le format d'un traité ou d'une théorie. On connaît, autour de 1830, les principales voix qui informent le débat: Vigny traducteur d'*Othello* (1829), Nerval traducteur des *Poésies allemandes* (1830), plus tard Chateaubriand traducteur du *Paradis perdu* (1836). Il s'agit, pour ces auteurs-traducteurs, de prendre la mesure de la longue tradition des Belles Infidèles afin de substituer à celles-ci un modèle d'écriture traductive qui cherche à mieux aligner la posture traductive sur la posture auctoriale. Ce modèle en quelque sorte fusionnel de la traduction romantique, très bien analysé par Efim Etkind (1982), cherche à trouver un moyen terme entre l'imitation et la version alors jugée trop littérale.

L'ouvrage de Mme de Rochmondet reflète "l'ambivalence de la position des traducteurs entre 1830 et 1840, ou même des traductions qu'ils produisent, hésitant entre la version littérale érudite et la traduction-communion, elle-même cousine des Belles Infidèles" (xv) et Benoit Léger parvient avec excellence à décrire, à partir des exemples fournis par Mme de Rochmondet, l'attitude complexe que cette dernière adopte vis-à-vis des questions de traduction (génie de la langue, diction, fidélité, etc.), comme vis-à-vis des méthodes d'enseignement de l'anglais. Il identifie également les partis pris éthiques et esthétiques de Mme de Rochmondet, ceux du moins que peuvent révéler ses choix d'auteurs et de textes, ses façons de les traduire ainsi que les commentaires qu'elle apporte aux traductions anciennes ou contemporaines des mêmes textes.

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***La production de l'étrangeté dans les littératures postcoloniales*. Eds. Béatrice Bijon and Yves Clavaron. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2009. 331 pages. 978-2745318855**

This book is a collection of twenty-two essays exploring the place of "étrangeté" (foreignness or alterity) in postcolonial literatures. Edited by Béatrice Bijon and Yves Clavaron, both French professors of comparative literature, the volume grew out of a conference held at the University of Saint-Étienne in January 2008. As Bijon and Clavaron observe in their introduction, alterity is more often associated with colonial representations of the colonized than with postcolonial writing (8). Edward Said's seminal study of Orientalism, for example, examines European depictions of the Muslim East as a foreign, exotic culture. Taking this reflection in a different direction, the essays gathered here ask how this representational tradition has been transposed in postcolonial writing. The contributors propose that rather than simply dispensing

with the concept of alterity, postcolonial writers have replaced the unidirectional attribution of foreignness to the colonized “other” with a more complex understanding of alterity as a force that operates within as well as between cultures, and which inhabits the self as well as the other. Following the lead of Édouard Glissant, several of the essays imagine postcolonial alterity as opacity, that is, as resistance to the totalizing and reductive potential of representation.

The volume begins with a section titled “Cartographies de l'étrangeté,” which explores various ways in which the political, economic, and cultural map of the world has changed in the wake of decolonization. The following four sections are organized by region, and examine literature from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and finally Australia, the Pacific, and India. Though a few of the essays consider diasporic writing, the volume's regional organization constitutes something of an impediment to the consideration of either transnational literary production or the postcolonial dimensions of contemporary European and North American societies.

The most innovative feature of *La production de l'étrangeté* is the adoption of the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies by a group of scholars writing in French. Until recently postcolonialism has had relatively little impact in France. French intellectuals have tended to regard it as an Anglo-Saxon import that is allied with a tradition of divisive identity politics. Over the last decade, however, this state of affairs has begun to change. A number of French social scientists and historians have acknowledged the relevancy of postcolonial studies to the French social and political landscape, and in conjunction with this shift some of the key works of postcolonial theory, for example Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (1983), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987), have belatedly been translated into French. French literary scholarship has been somewhat slower to take the “postcolonial turn.” Allusions to concepts such as the “hybrid” and the “subaltern” remain rare in French literary criticism, and although interest in “francophone” writing (literature from former French colonies) has increased markedly over the last decade, the work of writers from former British or Spanish colonies is still not widely studied by French scholars. If *La production de l'étrangeté* is any indication, however, this situation may also be poised to change. The essays collected in this volume deploy the full conceptual armory of postcolonial theory (they abound in references to the “hybrid,” “métissage,” the “subaltern” and “third space” . . .), and examine texts from a broad array of former colonies.

But while the volume's engagement with postcolonial theory represents an innovative departure, its translation of this body of thought from English into French is somewhat disappointing. The editors' introduction, in particular, reads as a reductive survey of some of the best-known concepts of postcolonial thought. Rather than exploring the distance between postcolonialism and French republican thought, or addressing the relationship between postcolonialism and *francophonie*, the editors simply translate arguments made in English into French, applying them to texts in what are essentially predictable ways. A second, related weakness is the failure to offer a thorough and nuanced definition of the postcolonial. The essays examine texts from different regions published at different moments and that reflect very different conditions of production. What features characterize these texts as postcolonial and justify their juxtaposition? Curiously, it is only toward the end of their introduction that Bijon and Clavaron offer a definition of postcolonial literature (14). Though their

characterization of it as writing that manifests particular attentiveness to the legacies of colonization and the modes of agency of people living under domination is reasonable enough, it neglects important questions such as the relationship between oppression that results primarily from colonization, and modes of subjection that are associated with more contemporary asymmetries of power, for example economic globalization. The editors note that a well-known English language collection, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), has frequently been criticized for providing a monolithic account of power and resistance that opposes the metropolitan center to the postcolonial margin, and thereby reinscribes the colonial binarism (14-15). They state that they will avoid this trap by treating the postcolonial as a “fluid and polysemic category.” But acknowledging a problem is not the same thing as rectifying it, and while the essays collected here are in their own right historically and culturally specific, the project as a whole manifests the very tendency that the editors identify as a failing.

This point is illustrated by the manner in which the concept of *étrangeté* is defined and interpreted. The editors suggest that foreignness is always experienced in relation to an *horizon d'attente*, and that in the case of postcolonial literature this horizon is embodied by the classics of European and North American literature (7-8). They further propose that when formerly colonized subjects come to writing, the strange becomes the familiar, though since postcolonial writing often preserves a layer of opacity, the colonized other becomes not the transparently familiar but rather the “uncanny” (that which is at the same time familiar and strange) (8-9). Though this analysis is in many ways a compelling one, it manifests several weaknesses. Notably, it is grounded in a model in which the periphery positions itself in relation to the center, i.e. the former colonial power. Though one cannot deny the extent to which postcolonial writers respond to and in some cases rewrite western classics, this model of literary production is too one-dimensional, and leaves out important aspects such as relationships between “postcolonial” writing and the literary traditions of non-western regions, e.g. India, China, and the Arabic-speaking world.

Despite these weaknesses the volume contains several strong essays that represent valuable contributions to the field. Florence Paravy's piece on strange or extreme “strategies of enunciation” in francophone African novels, for instance, avoids the prevalent tendency to treat postcolonial literature as a static corpus by exploring works published in the late 1990s and 2000s (225-38). Paravy suggests that the recent wave of African novels narrated from a perspective of psychosis or animality reflects a new engagement with the problem of the postcolonial subject. In a convincing reading of several recent novels she proposes that writers such as Alain Mabanckou and Daniel Biyaoula attempt to transcend racialized categories of identity by interrogating the parameters of the human.

Another valuable contribution is Kathleen Gyssels's essay on Ellen Ombre, a Dutch-language writer from Surinam who resides in the Netherlands, and whose work has not as yet garnered much attention from either anglophone or francophone scholars (99-112). In her careful analysis of Ombre's multiple self-positioning as an immigrant writer of mixed black/creole and Jewish ancestry, Gyssels shows how ascriptions of otherness are destabilized in cases where multilayered identities cut across dominant categories of identity and difference.

Finally, Jean-Marc Moura's essay on the relationship between images that circulate in the tourist industry and literary representations authored by Antillean writers, turns a helpful cross-disciplinary lens on French Caribbean literature (114-28).

Combining literary reading with sociological analysis (and indeed arguing for the necessity of such an approach), Moura explores how literary works reproduce and/or resist the pervasive images associated with tourism. He shows that while it is certainly pertinent to approach the Caribbean as a region shaped by its colonial past, we must also take into consideration the ongoing impact of forces that are related to but not reducible to colonization, for example economic globalization.

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Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan. *En torno a los márgenes: Ensayos de literatura poscolonial.* Madrid: Minotauro Digital, 2008. 172 pp. 978-8461269259.

This brief but densely-packed book from Spain compares the rise of major literary figures in postcolonial societies in the second half of the twentieth century, focusing primarily on African, Indian, and Caribbean writers. Guerrero-Strachan, a literature professor at the University of Valladolid, concentrates on essays written by poets and novelists, including Walcott, Rushdie, Sarduy, and Achebe, using them to analyze common themes and trends in decolonized and neocolonized literary milieus. Invoking Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity and Edward Said's filiation/affiliation distinction, as well as aesthetic theory from the Frankfurt School, Guerrero-Strachan argues that a wide array of texts from formerly colonized nations in the global south represent the world's best contemporary writing.

In a chapter focusing on the figure of the postcolonial writer in Africa, Guerrero-Strachan suggests that Taban lo Liyong (Sudan), Chinua Achebe (Nigeria) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya) form a useful triad for understanding various perspectives on the position of the writer in African societies. The priority placed on political engagement in essays by Achebe and Ngũgĩ is understood by Guerrero-Strachan as fairly typical of African literary discourse, but he uses Liyong's more aesthetic/individualist emphasis to suggest that leftist politics alone does not guarantee the quality of a work, but in fact requires from the author a higher degree of artistic rigor (59).

A chapter on exile glosses theories on language and nationalism by Antonio Tabucchi and Benedict Anderson, and then returns to the interesting case of Ngũgĩ, who in 1986 decides to switch from writing in English to his native Gikũyũ as a mode of cultural/political commitment and literary self-exile. Guerrero-Strachan also identifies here a noteworthy similarity between Bhabha's notion of literary exile as an eccentric "third space" and George Lamming's argument that a writer must understand himself/herself simply to be "where one is" (91), rather than a representative of any particular national or geographical niche.

In a chapter on convergences between western and eastern literature, Guerrero-Strachan compares essays by Juan Goytisolo, Salman Rushdie, and Severo Sarduy. The Spaniard Goytisolo has lived in self-exile in Morocco for many years, a perch that sharpens his critique of Spain's negative stereotypes of Islam, and allows him to theorize that literary influence works in sometimes contradictory ways, appearing occasionally to flow backwards through time and against the inherent centrifugality of colonization. This harmonizes with Rushdie's argument that a writer's vision can only be "stereoscopic" from a non-unitary, marginal socio-geographical position, which explains why so many important literary figures have emerged in former British colonies. This idea in turn dovetails with Sarduy's three main theoretical figures for the Latin American neobaroque: transvestism, anamorphosis, and *trompe l'oeil*, each

of which, in different ways, is germane to the dynamics of peripheral cultural perspective. Guerrero-Strachan argues that these three writers can be understood to form an international literary group that rejects nationalism in favor of themes of immigration, cultural mixing, center-margin relations, and rebellion against the limits of traditional realism. This approach allows these authors to transmit important social and political implications without succumbing to the shrillness that can afflict overtly political writing.

In a final chapter on Caribbean literature, Guerrero-Strachan studies works by Alejo Carpentier, Derek Walcott, Wilson Harris, and Édouard Glissant, arguing that these writers all see language not as a medium that obscures reality, but rather as a means of presenting new realities, inventing new worlds, in the spirit of the original baroque. The chapter also focuses on literary representations of landscape as a trope for understanding the aesthetics and preoccupations of postcolonial writers in this region.

A few caveats. The structure and coherence of the chapters are uneven—the word “rambling” comes often to mind. The author also has a tendency toward grandiloquence, making broad generalizations without giving sufficient evidence. While scholarly lyricism and overstatement are fairly common to academic writing from Spain and other parts of Europe, they are particularly gratuitous here, showing up even in the central thesis: “Today it is an accepted fact that the best literature is not being written in the traditional centers of culture, but rather hails from the margins of what once was occidental civilization: India, Nigeria, the Caribbean, Spanish America, Yugoslavia, Turkey and certain Islamic nations” (18, my translation). Furthermore, significant nuances are sometimes left unaddressed; for example, although the chapter on exile claims a kind of “exilic nationality” for all expatriate writers, it does not satisfyingly differentiate between the marginal status of writers currently occupying prominent positions in US academia (e.g., Achebe, Ngũgĩ, Walcott, Rushdie, Lamming, and Glissant) and those still residing in their home countries (Liyong being the only major one). And finally, there are some unfortunate errors of scholarship, including many misspelled names (e.g., Hobsbawm, 20, and Lukács, 119), and the inclusion of the character Martín Fierro on a list of important nineteenth-century writers of the Americas (151). In sum, although one wishes this book had been blessed with a better editor and peer-review process, it does represent an interesting and far-reaching contribution to comparative research on postcolonial literatures in Africa, India, and the Caribbean.

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Justin K. Bisanswa. *Roman africain contemporain: fictions sur la fiction de la modernité et du réalisme.* Paris: Honoré Champion, 2009. 221 pp. 978-2745318947.

Dans son nouveau livre, Bisanswa s'est donné une tâche difficile: parler du roman contemporain africain en général, sans tomber dans des banalités, et en même temps faire apprécier le génie idiosyncrasique de certains romanciers africains, en particulier V. E. Mudimbe et Sony Labou Tansi, à des lecteurs qui n'auront peut-être pas tous lu les œuvres en question. Le volume est apparu dans la collection “Unichamp-Essentiel,” dirigée par J. Bessière et D. Mellier, qui se dit destinée “aux étudiants, aux enseignants et à un large public” (4^e de couverture); si Bisanswa

parvient à faire avancer son argument sur ces trois fronts à la fois, c'est qu'il s'appuie sur la théorie pour proposer une lecture nuancée de textes emblématiques, sans pour autant négliger le contexte littéraire et socio-politique qui les sous-tend. Dans sa présentation du livre, Bisanswa affirme son objectif de situer le roman africain dans un champ théorique qui libérerait non seulement les écrivains africains—ceux “que l'on enfermeait naguère encore dans une attitude de fidélité aux *realia*” (15)—mais aussi leurs lecteurs, trop souvent tentés de chercher “un document authentique” au lieu de faire face à l'originalité d'une fiction. Et il conclut que “c'est à l'intersection d'une rhétorique et d'une sociologie qu'il conviendra d'interroger l'articulation du contexte de production au discours du roman africain” (18).

L'étude est divisée premièrement en deux parties—“A travers le prisme du discours critique” et “Énonciation du néant et du possible de l'histoire”—qui sont divisées en trois chapitres. Le premier chapitre s'ouvre sur une discussion de l'engagement et du réalisme, considérés souvent comme “les grandes marques” du roman africain (21), pour aboutir à la définition de l'approche “sociopragmatique” prônée par Bisanswa. Suivent deux chapitres consacrés à Sony Labou Tansi—surtout à *La Vie et demie* (1979) et *Le Commencement des douleurs* (1995)—et à V. Y. Mudimbe—aux romans *Le Bel immonde* (1976), *L'Écart* (1979) et *Shaba deux* (1989) entre autres. La deuxième partie du livre commence par une exploration du paratextuel chez Labou Tansi, Mudimbe, et Henri Lopes, qui révèle comment ces auteurs ont su non seulement “assimiler [mais aussi . . .] détourner et . . . tourner en dérision les conventions de l'acte romanesque” (137). Un des chapitres les plus réussis de cette section porte sur *La Rue Félix-Faure* de Ken Bugul. Bisanswa note l'originalité de Bugul, qu'il caractérise comme “la première à parler véritablement de la ville africaine” (158), tout en reconnaissant qu'elle poursuit de manière innovatrice un chemin tracé par d'autres, tels que Beti, Beyala, Boris Diop, Sow Fall. J'ajouterais à cette liste le camerounais Patrice Nganang, qui nous donne, tant dans son 2^e roman, *Temps de chien* (2001) que dans *L'Invention du beau regard* (2005), une image tout aussi saisissante de la ville africaine et, pour emprunter une description à Bugul, de “la rue de l'espérance doublée de patience” (*Rue Félix-Faure*, 17, cité dans Bisanswa, 158).

Dans sa conclusion, Bisanswa accuse une tendance de la critique à placer “les œuvres d'art de la littérature africaine sous la catégorie de la différence qui les exclut implicitement des productions de l'esprit” (202). La réponse de Bisanswa se trouve non seulement dans l'attention qu'il porte à l'intertextuel mais aussi dans l'étendue de ses références critiques. S'il situe chaque œuvre dans une tradition africaine—allant du *Batouala* (1921) de Maran à *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000) de Kourouma—Bisanswa insiste aussi sur comment le roman africain poursuit une conversation littéraire bien française: son originalité esthétique est mise en relief par le biais de références aux classiques français du 19^e siècle—notamment Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Baudelaire, et Zola—aussi bien qu'à Proust et à Borges. De même, les points de repère critiques de Bisanswa sont d'abord les piliers de la théorie structuraliste et post-structuraliste en France: Bakhtine, Barthes, Benveniste, Foucault, Genette, Jakobson, Richard, Saussure et Todorov, mais aussi Bourdieu, Derrida, Kristeva et Sollers. Néanmoins, Bisanswa ne néglige point le travail de critiques africains, tels que Josias Semujanga, Mukala Kadmia-Njuzi, Abel Kouvouama, et Paul Kibangu. Si ces références ne seront peut-être pas familières à tous, elles encourageront les lecteurs les plus assidus à poursuivre les pistes théoriques balisées par Bisanswa.

En somme, ce livre sera utile à tous ceux qui cherchent à approfondir leur com-

préhension du contexte actuelle de la littérature africaine contemporaine, ainsi qu'à ceux qui s'intéressent particulièrement aux œuvres de Labou Tansi et de Mudimbe. Il trouvera sa place sur les étagères des enseignants qui y puiseront à la fois de la matière à réflexion et des références pertinentes pour leurs étudiants.

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F. Elizabeth Dahab. *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009. 227 pp. 978-0739118788.

The novelty of Elizabeth Dahab's book lies in its attempt to bring to the fore marginalized Canadian writers of Arabic origin generally, and the five writers she studies specifically. In her words, she hopes that this book "will provide a framework for the canonization of the literature of francophone [sic] Québécois writers of Arabic origin. . . ." (xii). She lists twenty-nine of approximately forty writers currently publishing in Canada. These authors are quite diverse both in their linguistic abilities and in their preferred genres. What unifies them, Dahab claims, is their "exilic" status, which is to say, their residence in a country other than their native homeland. Dahab consciously prefers the term "exile" to "immigrant" because "exile" conveys "terminal loss and forced displacement" (201), even in contradiction to her earlier definition of an exile as someone who *chooses* a new homeland (xii). This exile, Dahab further elaborates by quoting Edward Said's essay on Adorno in *Representations of the Intellectual*, could also be metaphorical: "for a man who no longer has a homeland writing becomes a place to live" (xii). Dahab's intellectual underpinnings are, in addition to Said, Barthes and Deleuze and Guattari. A clearer definition of Dahab's choice of terminology would have been helpful, especially because note 24 of her preface acknowledges the debate and difficulties inherent in the terms "immigrant" and "exile." But this is only the first of several problems with the monograph.

The book, including its title, unfortunately begins on a misleading note. The title, *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature*, tells us that we will be reading about "Francophone" literature, and, indeed, four of the authors write almost exclusively in French. The late Saad Elkhadem, however, the first writer Dahab studies, wrote nothing in French. Dahab does acknowledge this discrepancy, but does not explain it (x).

The introductory chapter attempts to pull together points of convergence in what at first seems quite a disparate group of writers. Overall, Dahab succeeds in her efforts, although, again, her focus remains on Québec, even with Elkhadem becoming the focus of her first study in chapter two. A problem that Dahab acknowledges but does not solve is the fact that many Canadian-Arab writers have as their first language either French or English, and so it is natural for them to write in the majority language (23). Dahab attempts to overcome this problem by invoking Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *reterritorialization*, whereby, as she interprets the concept, an author will infuse "the major ambient language . . . with his alienation" (24). She acknowledges that some of the authors about whom she writes had already been exiles in their home countries: for example, Naïm Kattan was a Jew in Iraq, and Elkhadem could not bear to live in Nasser's tyrannical regime in Egypt.

Chapters two to six are dedicated to the individual authors. Of course, these chapters make up the bulk of the book, and they are, in themselves, informative but uneven in quality. Their most important facet is that they introduce the authors and

their works well. As biographical essays, they are excellent, and in this type of book I would not have expected an introduction to an author that is other than an *explication de texte*. The chapters on Abla Farhoud and Wajdi Mouawad are quite moving. In both cases, Dahab rightly focuses on the authors' theatrical productions, which constitute their major output. The discussion of the young woman Kaokab, for example, in Farhoud's *The Girls from the Five and Ten*, centers on the intergenerational conflict that is often the hallmark of exilic/immigrant conflict. Dahab does focus on the fact that Kaokab speaks in French, English, and Lebanese-Arabic. Farhoud acknowledges that language exists outside the person, and for the young anti-heroine this inter-linguistic self is the place of freedom from oppression. It is also the location of her new identity. This belief is similar to Kattan's upon which Dahab only partially elucidates. She brings up a fascinating discussion that Kattan undertakes regarding the difference between Semitic and Western languages. She writes, "In Arabic, a language whose genius is in the noun, not in the adjective, he asserts, an object lives because it is named; a thing is not *qualified*, it is *said*. In contradistinction, Western thought is so heavily mediated that it cannot grasp the power of evocation Semitic languages enjoy, and Kattan concludes: 'Western man is consequently a divided, split man'" (90, original emphasis). Instead of elaborating further, however, Dahab then leaves the discussion hanging.

The chapter dedicated to Mouawad is equally moving. Mouawad does not focus on language per se, but rather on war, broken promises, and contradictions. Mouawad is unique in this grouping of authors in that he has attained the kind of fame—worldwide—that very few writers achieve. In fact, Mouawad is not at all a marginal writer, having twice (2000 and 2002) won Canada's most prestigious award for literature, the Governor General's. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2009, and he is the Artistic Director of French Theatre at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Mouawad, as Dahab points out, has received many other accolades from around the world, especially the *Chevalier de l'Ordre National des Arts et des Lettres* from France. But this raises an important question that I wish Dahab had asked: why did this writer become, in words she uses in a different context, "fully institutionalized" (202), and the others have not, with the possible exception of Kattan? She closes her book by bemoaning the fact that these writers are still marginalized, even as her chapter on Mouawad belies her conclusion.

This contradiction is, sadly, evocative of too many errors, some factual, others grammatical. Often they are sloppy, and I doubt that a copy editor was used. I make these criticisms not to denounce the book, but to emphasize the shame of such an important study not being better presented. At any rate, the fact that we have it is itself a good starting point for further elaboration on the writers presented here, and similar writers who remain unacknowledged by the wider academic and lay communities.

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Alain Suberchicot. *Moby-Dick: Désigner l'absence*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008. 208 pp. 978-2745318237.

One of the premises of this new study of *Moby-Dick* is that Melville, like Proust, constructs a *roman total* in order to propose but also problematize a form of "global literary mastery" (11). Paradoxically, this total narrative relies on "absence": the absence of a credible "moral project" in the America signified by the Pequod crew; absence of

an intelligible meaning in the shipwreck of Melville's world; absence of connections among the different branches of a "zigzagging narrative"; absence of meaning at the heart of a religious culture caught between damnation and salvation; and a sexual abyss inside the self (12). This multilevel absence needs to be "designated" (as per the book's title) in a complex rereading of the novel that includes existential, narratological, archetypal, religious, gendered, and mediatic dimensions.

Chapter 1 presents the novel as a meditation on the sea and whaling, complete with etymological considerations that include the interesting hesitation of French translators between "baleine" and "cachalot" for "whale" (all other chapters contain comparative comments on translation issues and their role in recasting certain thematic nuances of the novel). Chapter 1 underscores the continuity between the culture of New England and the world of the Pequod, in terms of the "art of falsehood" that characters engage in (23). It also discusses briefly the interplay of religion and utilitarianism, moral exploration and deception (parody), themes that will be picked up again later. Chapter 2 focuses on the radically heterogeneous nature of the narrative, its reliance on digression, parceling, and a poetics of spatialization. Yet *Moby-Dick* presents, according to Suberchicot, sufficient proofs of literary authority that counteract the tendency (fashionable today) to see Melville's work as an "instantiation of the fragmentary, a potential dispersion, a tendency towards the indetermination of meaning" (51).

The critic's own approach changes as a result of this rethinking of the Melvillean text, moving from the looser, associative structure of the early two chapters, to a stronger metatheme in Chapter 3, foregrounding the contradictory "symbolical exchange" (73) between humans and animals in Melville's epic. Chapter 4 shifts focus to the "Religious Imaginary" to emphasize the problematic position that organized religion occupies in relation to the experiential world of the novel. According to Suberchicot, Melville's novel upsets metaphysical-religious oppositions (sea and land, sublime and commonplace, victim and victimizer, god and devil), emphasizing the continuity between terms. Chapter 5 continues this theme, defining the narrator's position as both encapsulating and encapsulated (101). This chapter redefines for us the paradoxical nature of Melville's realism, revolving around an omniscient narrator whose omniscience is "paralyzed," hesitating "between the literal and the figural" (111), "prospective and retrospective" narration (114).

Chapter 6 picks up one more "cleavage" in Melville's text, highlighting the philosophic tension between mystery and rationality in a discussion of the role of laughter in problematizing certitudes (127), and the conflict/negotiation between emotional and rational, "oriental" and Western approaches. I missed in this chapter a clearer emphasis on the fact that Ishmael's survival owes something to his capacity to synthesize these different geocultural perspectives, anticipating the multicultural approach of late nineteenth century comparative religions.

In the book's most provocative section, Chapter 7, the author uses André Gide's journal reflections on *Moby-Dick* to foreground a theme only timidly discussed so far: the tension between heterosexuality and homosexuality, not only in the human but also in the animal world. While Ahab remains arrested in a homosocial phase, isolated in his cabin, Ishmael participates in a fraternal ritual of male desire, even though in the end he draws back from the full implications of "A Squeeze of the Hand" episode. In Suberchicot's apt interpretation, Ishmael's sexual awakening has a compensatory dimension vis-à-vis his impotent position on board the ship. But his

newly discovered sexual energy is tempered by “religious culture, [that] by projecting upon the profane schemas that reveal the sacred, turns male sexuality into a will to dominate” (155).

The last chapter focuses on John Houston’s screening of the novel, pointing out the temptations and difficulties of transposing a narrative text that has “prospective and retrospective dimensions” (165), and a narrator who is both a self-conscious “I” and an effaced “he.” Given the limitations of cinema in its use of a “subjective camera” (168), Ishmael’s perspective appears impoverished and less ambiguous (168). The film version (released in 1956) curtails the sexual allusions, resolves many of the novel’s ambiguities, and firmly positions the narrative in the realm of the tragic, missing the incongruous dimensions of Ishmael’s narrative perspective: “[e]pic, lyrical, tragic, realist and narrative, oneiric, poetic, ironic” (184).

Suberchicot concludes his multilevel rereading of *Moby-Dick* by emphasizing (with a phrase borrowed from Gerald Graff) its “open finality” (185), as against a more stereotypical notion of indeterminacy (184) present in modern criticism of Melville. His book exploits the inexhaustible potential of the novel but in a way that anchors the interpretation in a structure of alternative critical propositions that replicate the interlaced structure of the novel itself.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE ANNA BALAKIAN PRIZE

The Anna Balakian Prize, consisting of US\$1000, is awarded to promote scholarly research by younger comparatists and to honor the memory of Professor Anna Balakian. It will be awarded at the 2013 AILC/ICLA Congress (site as yet not finally determined) for an outstanding first book in comparative literature studies by a single author under 40 years of age. Books published from January 2010 through December 2012 will be eligible.

Rules for submitting books:

1. Books can be submitted if they are a first book in comparative literature studies by an author under forty years of age at the time of the book’s publication.
2. The books must have a literary-critical approach that deals with such areas as the following through a comparative optic: literary aesthetics or poetics, literature and the arts, literary movements, historical or biographical influences on literature, cross-fertilization of regional or national literatures, or literary criticism on an international plane. Studies that are primarily ethnic or gender-related or that are restricted to a single literature are not eligible for the Prize. Electronic publications are excluded.
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COMPTES RENDUS DES REVUES,
DES CONGRÈS, ET DES PROJETS/
REVIEWS OF JOURNALS,
CONFERENCES, AND PROJECTS



Special Issue: “Eyewitness Narratives.” *Partial Answers: A Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 7.2 (June 2009). Ed. Leona Toker. 1565-3668.

At a time when most of the contemporaries of World War II are no longer living, including those who directly witnessed the destruction of a large share of the Jews along with other persecuted minorities of Europe and, among those witnesses, the survivors of the death camps, the question concerning the purpose of maintaining the remembrance of these painful events among later generations has emerged with a new urgency. If the generation which lived through this experience was understandably unable to forget its traumatic impact, new generations have grown up in the shadow of these events, which they have either discovered from older contemporaries or, more indirectly, from school courses in history or from films and the media. To members of more recent generations, the shadow of this recent past is often felt as a heavy burden, not only among those whose families belonged to the many communities that were dislocated or exterminated, but often to those who were less directly concerned with these events and who have, over the years, come to realize the enormity of the change that European civilization underwent as a result of this loss.

A cursory glance at recent writings on this theme, in philosophy, social sciences, or literature, brings home the fact that there are very different ways of dealing with this burden of recent history and of working through its traumatic effects. An attempt may be made to retrieve as carefully as possible a record of the events that occurred and to recall to memory the communities that perished. For a different mentality, the burden of the past may inspire indifference in the face of the grim shadow it casts across the present. More recently, attempts have been made to underplay the Shoah’s gravity or at least the responsibility of those who brought it about. A revisionist current of historiography has sprung up over the past decades, which, in the face of the events, has attempted to attenuate the responsibility of the perpetrators of the evil. In recent years the debate over the Shoah and its legacy has taken reflection on its causes as an occasion to voice the claim that it may be accounted for in terms of fear inspired by the Soviet Gulags or by potential communist violence.¹ At the same time this debate has become embroiled in the question concerning its unique character or, on the contrary, its comparability to other genocides in our period. Here, in the labyrinth of abstraction, the deeper significance of the extermination of a large share of Europe’s Jewish communities, along with other minorities, and the subsequent mutation of European society and culture, has often been left unexamined.

In focusing on the theme of “Eyewitness Narratives,” the strong point of

this special issue of the review *Partial Answers* lies in the authors' willingness to place the theme of remembrance of the burdensome past in an original perspective. Without entering at length into the endless debates concerning the unique character of the Shoah, or its comparability with and its relation to the Gulags, the merit of this volume's focus on "eyewitness narratives" lies in the interpretation it provides of a kind of event that can hardly be represented or even imagined by those who have not lived through it. Moreover, this way of dealing with the burdensome past is not commanded by a need to moralize or psychologize our relation to it. Its authors are not preoccupied with the abstract question of whether our generation has a "duty to remember," or whether, on the contrary, our task is now to be limited to psychological "memory work" (*travail de mémoire*), with the intention of restoring a "happy memory" (*mémoire heureuse*), in full view of the long shadow it casts.² The aim of this volume is more modest, for it is not to put the burden of the past behind us in the hope of recovering a "happy" or even a "serene" memory; it limits its focus, in its different perspectives, to the *experience* that lies at the source of the burden in order to reexamine its significance for a generation whose members never witnessed it.

Manuela Consonni, in her article "Primo Levi, Robert Antelme, and the Body of the Muselmann," centers her analysis on the experience of the body or, more exactly, of the prisoner considered *merely* as a body. This analysis leads to her insightful examination of the Muselmann, the inmate who has been reduced by unbearable circumstances to a stupor near death, as it has been evoked since the epoch-making works of Bruno Bettelheim, Primo Levi, and Robert Antelme. Here we encounter the body at an ultimate stage of deprivation, which others are unable to comprehend, and which even the inmate, if he or she survives, is later unable to fully represent or interpret. Through a subtle juxtaposition of Robert Antelme's description of his fellow inmates at Buchenwald and Marguerite Duras' account of Antelme's own dire condition upon his return from the camp, Consonni concludes that even those prisoners who were in the position of the Muselmann later tended to repress the awareness of this situation and to refer to the Muselmann as the "other." She presents an original approach to this topic, which is important for the critical light she casts on tendencies toward banalization and comparative oversimplification of this theme that have recently become fashionable.

In his contribution, Richard Freadman concentrates on the autobiographical work of the Australian survivor of Auschwitz, Jacob Rosenberg, in a poignant attempt to uncover the unique experiential basis of Rosenberg's testimony. Dalia Ofer presents a thoughtful account of the experience of Jewish police in the Kovno ghetto. Through a careful analysis of rare documentary evidence left by members of the Kovno Jewish police, she delves into their difficult and controversial role in the face of the dreadful circumstances of ghetto life during this period in Eastern Europe. Sarah Liu, in her examination of "Aphasia after Auschwitz," focuses on the traumatic effects of the experience of the death camps, including deep forms of identity disturbance symptomized by the "loss of words" to convey the reality that has been faced. This "loss of words," as she points out, should not be reduced to a mere psychological deficiency: "We should be wary of projecting our need to understand, to vicariously experience, our desire to relieve feelings of guilt, distance, or confusion, onto survivor testimonies" (324).

The originality of the theme of "eyewitness narratives" as it is presented in this issue lies in the possibility it offers of extending interpretation beyond the phenom-

enon of the Shoah to deal with other traumatic events in recent history, without indulging in comparative analyses or developing typological schema to classify them. Paul John Eakin's remarkable examination of Art Spiegelman's approach to personal observation and memory in *Maus*, for example, complements his examination of Michael J. Arlen's attempt to understand his father's quest to recover his Armenian identity through a reading of eye-witness accounts of the Armenian genocide during the period of World War I. Spiegelman and Arlen are both a generation away from the experience of their parents and Eakin well demonstrates the difficulty of retrieving the traumatic sources of their parents' experience which continues to mold their own lives. In his article on "The Archive and the Eyewitness," Jeffrey Wallen presents a stimulating analysis of eyewitness accounts of a former inmate in the Stasi prison at Hohenschönhausen, providing an example of the ways in which archives may reshape and even transform former prisoners' interpretations of their own earlier experience. In another vein, Yuval Noah Harari makes the theme of "eyewitness narratives" the basis of a searching epistemological distinction. He distinguishes eye-witnessing, which is the favorite source of the historian's claim to objectivity, from "flesh-witnessing," in which actual participants in historical events engage. To the extent that this concept of "flesh-witnessing" emphasizes the difficulty of translating direct experience of traumatic events into readily representable categories, it fits in well with the conclusions of other articles in this volume, which underline the difficulty of communicating profoundly traumatic experiences.

The question of the relation between eyewitness and mediated narratives is the topic of an original examination by Cyril Aslanov of the notion of eyewitness truth as bequeathed by medieval accounts of the fall of Acre, the conquest of Constantinople, and the capture of Granada. Here the narrative of loss is seen to be a source of collective memory of vanquished nations. Esther Cohen presents an insightful examination of miraculous-cure narratives in the later Middle Ages. She begins by considering the role of miracle narratives in medieval religious life, which leads her to focus on a specific case in a Colettine community of nuns in fifteenth-century Ghent. In this context, she examines the complex ways in which the narrator's empathy may enter into accounts of miraculous cures and mold the ways in which they are described. Finally, the theme of the eyewitness report provides Carola Hilfrich with the possibility of examining Brecht's notion of "eyewitness performance." This notion of acting, which has become unusual today, develops from "acts of truth-telling that take place in everyday scenes of often horribly intensified historical or social struggle" (300). In her stimulating interpretation, Hilfrich applies this notion to Anna Deavere Smith's play, *Fires in the Mirror* (1991-92), which takes the form of eyewitness accounts of the Brooklyn Crown Heights race riots of August 1991. This interpretation leads to an investigation of eyewitness accounts as evoked by the medium of theatre.

The articles in this volume each ultimately deal with eyewitness accounts of a burdensome past and the themes that unify them as a group seem to me to be twofold. First, as Leona Toker indicates in her introduction, each article conveys the great difficulty of bridging the gap between those who have first-hand experience of traumatic events and those who, without such experience, attempt to grasp its reality. Second, they communicate the idea that the experience of such events, even where it is no longer direct, is part and parcel of our contemporary world and that, in its intense recent forms, the shadow it casts can neither be dissipated nor rationalized by explanatory categories or philosophical systems.

The articles present interpretations that clearly contrast with attempts to attenuate the unspeakable terror of the past and to rationalize the motives of its perpetrators. These latter attempts tend above all to enclose analysis within the everyday concerns of a present that, in relation to the past, aims to reinforce a contemporary quest for psychological and moral self-assurance. Similarly, the belief that it might be possible, by a conscious decision, to overstep the tacit hold of the past and to discharge its burden in order to create a “happy” relation to it, serves a present need to master the past and to leave behind us the unfathomable experience of past terror, which can only trouble the everyday quest for normality in our contemporary lives.

The specific quality of the approach to the traumatic past through eye-witness accounts lies in the willingness of the narrator to retrieve traumatic past experience that has been directly recorded—however opaque and incomplete its traces may be—and to lend an ear to this experience in all of its recalcitrance to present representations. In regard to the Shoah, the evocation of this experience ultimately calls for a specific kind of awareness on a European scale: if, indeed, loss of the vast communities that were an essential part of the European past is experienced by us as a burden, it is a burden we may neither lighten nor cast off without at the same time distorting the present reality in which we live.

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Notes

- 1 See in this respect Ernst Nolte’s article “Vergangenheit.” In an article in the Parisian review *Le Débat* on the occasion of the publication of François Furet’s *Le passé d’une illusion*, Nolte wrote that there was “un noyau rationnel de l’antijudaïsme national-socialiste” [a rational kernel to National-Socialist anti-Judaism], and he brought into question the tendency to consider the Jews “comme les victimes d’une entreprise infâme et non comme les acteurs d’une tragédie” [as the victims of an infamous enterprise, rather than as actors in a tragedy] (“Sur la théorie”).
- 2 On the theme of overcoming the pain of the past in view of “happy memory,” see the conclusion to Ricoeur’s *La mémoire*, 643-56. During his prestigious Marc Bloch lecture at the Sorbonne in 2000, Ricoeur stated that, in order to “avoid the risk of closing off a given historical community in its singular misfortune, of freezing it in the mood of victimization,” it is necessary to abandon the call for a “duty to remember” in favor of “work of memory” (“L’écriture”). He feared in this respect that moral presuppositions might weaken the historian’s claim to impartiality. Similarly, without endorsing Nolte’s thesis of a causal relation between the Gulag and Auschwitz, Ricoeur argues for a separation of moral considerations raised by this issue from the historian’s task (*La mémoire* 435). For a critical analysis of Ricoeur’s theory of collective memory, see my article.

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Special Issue: “Introducing Human Rights and Literary Forms; or, The Vehicles and Vocabularies of Human Rights.” *Comparative Literature Studies* 46.1 (2009). Eds. Sophia A. McClennen and Joseph R. Slaughter. 0010-4132.

Sophia McClennen and Joey Slaughter’s guest edited issue of *Comparative Literature Studies* joins the company of other dedicated journal issues on human rights literary and cultural production, including *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103.2-3 (2004), *PMLA* 121.5 (2006), and *Peace Review* (Spring 2008). This new volume, when considered together with the other special issues and recent books by Slaughter, James Dawes, Lynn Hunt, Elizabeth Goldberg, and Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, most of which are well reviewed herein, makes visible a constellation of human rights humanities scholars producing a subfield that is making a significant impact on literary, cultural, and human rights studies.

McClennen and Slaughter’s contribution to the scholarly conversation is three-fold: to consider the relationship of the comparative literature framework to human rights humanities inquiries, to consider the relevance of literary form to human rights discourses, and to consider the ambivalent status of “human rights” as a discourse and practice. Acknowledging that comparative literature has been historically embedded with imperialist ventures and, thus, the discursive production of human rights violations, McClennen and Slaughter call on the comparative literature community to consider the ways they might broaden conceptions of what counts as comparison in both text and method. Their approach is inflected by a postcolonial orientation that is an impetus for many who turn towards a human rights framework, including more than half of those represented in this volume.

McClennen and Slaughter’s introduction, which should be required reading for young scholars in the field, demonstrates how progressive human rights critiques mobilized by non-state, legal, and grassroots actors can be co-opted to nefarious purposes as in the war on terror’s “military humanitarianism.” “Human rights” became the validating discourse by which “just wars” were launched and torture advocated as a lesser evil. Such morphing of discourses underscores the need for vigilant critique of key conceptual categories we are invested in such as “human rights” and “comparative literature.”

McClennen and Slaughter further call on human rights literary scholars to give more attention to the intersection of aesthetics and ethics or of literary genres and social justice work. Salient questions from their introduction include: what role do literary (and other cultural) forms play in the production of human rights discourse? How has literary form been shaped by human rights discourses? How has the human rights movement produced new literary forms such as the human rights report, the testimonio, and the human rights memoir? What are the literary forms that make human rights problematics visible, new vocabularies legible, and new discursive regimes of power conceptually viable?

An exemplary essay from this special issue that explicitly theorizes the connection between genre and human rights discourse is Sarah Winter’s “The Novel and Prejudice.” Here, she historicizes the emerging category of “prejudice” for eighteenth-century thinkers via Locke and Smith, then theorizes the emergence of a new sub-genre distinct from the sentimental novel in the eighteenth and nineteenth century—“the novel of prejudice”—through incisive readings of *Frankenstein*, *Harrington*, *Emma*, and *Huckleberry Finn*. She further compels us to think through

the under-explored category of “conscience” which performs self-critical and reformatory work in contrast to the work of sympathetic identification. Winter’s insights might be productively extended to exploration of the vexed work of conscience in twenty-first century, human rights memoirs like Philip Gourevich’s *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* (1998) and Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull* (2000).

The volume would have benefited from more strategic organization so that clusters of essays might be brought into more explicit conversation with each other, as well as dialogically framed in the introduction. Winter and Maslan’s essays might lead the volume as they consider the contribution of the Anglophone novel of prejudice and of French theatre, respectively, to related problems of exclusion and prejudice made visible by early modern human rights discourses and law. Susan Maslan’s discussion of the theatrical redress for problematic exclusion of servants from the original 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen reminds us that questions of class, work, and workers are often missing from current rights culture discussions.

Marcos Natali’s engagement with twentieth-century Brazilian critic Antonio Candido’s defense of a “right to literature,” which seeks to include folk, oral, and performance practices in the category of “literature,” might have been situated as part of the struggle for expansion of those regarded as “subjects of rights,” which began in the early modern period discussed by Winter and Maslan and continues to the present. Natali’s concern with the cultural violence performed by incorporating indigenous oral practices into “literature” might also have been enriched by engaging the extensive treatment of this problem in related European settler-invader contexts by Mary Louise Pratt and other postcolonial critics.

Paul Grealey and Aryn Bartley are an obvious pair. Both focused on the ways post-TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] South African novels offer more complex, ambiguous, and nuanced explorations of the problematic of truth than nation-building Truth Commission Reports can do. Both also reveal the way novels vigorously participate in ongoing transitional justice debates in South Africa and elsewhere. Reception questions of genre efficacy, of what counts as efficacy, and of what kinds of efficacy for what audiences might have been valuable to pursue here and elsewhere in this volume.

A final pair of essays looks at the ambivalent capacity of popular culture interventions to make rights claims for accountability and/or discursively to dismantle human rights prohibitions. Christine Hong’s reading of Hiroshima testimony in the graphic novel, *Barefoot Genii*, explicitly challenges assumptions that publication of eyewitness accounts of human rights atrocity will promote claims for accountability and redress. While Nakazawa Keiji seems to advocate for nuclear non-proliferation in a general sense, the A-bomb survivor’s claims for accountability are muted. This raises the question of how a universalized human rights campaign (No Nukes) can eclipse the specific claims to redress by a particular community. David Holloway chillingly demonstrates the way generic features of plot, episode, and character in the “war on terror espionage thriller” contributed to normalizing torture of “Islamist” terrorists, so as to render “pre-emptive violence” an inevitable practice of the everyday within not only neoconservative models of a new world order, but also “embedded” liberalism’s accommodations.

That the majority of the essays in this volume are preoccupied with sub-genres of the novel and other narrative forms suggests a contradiction in McClennen and

Slaughter's commitment to engage literary forms in the plural. Granted the constraints of space, why is only one essay (on 18th-century French theatre) devoted to forms other than narrative? Does this suggest that only narrative forms have efficacy and purchase on the imagination in human rights culture? Missing are discussions of the interventions of contemporary theatre such as Michael Lessac's *Truth in Translation*, or Goupov's *Rwanda 94*. Missing is engagement with the powerful work of twentieth-century poets of conscience, such as Paul Celan, Claribel Alegria, and Wislawa Szymborska. Missing is engagement with new media—surely one of the arenas where new human rights genres are emerging. In fairness, one can say that this volume must be seen as a starting place for inquiry into the relationship between literary genre and human rights discourses, interventions, and violations. It points to the necessity of future work.

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COMPARATIVE CRITICAL STUDIES

Comparative Critical Studies (CCS) is the peer-reviewed house journal of the BCLA, the British Comparative Literature Association (<http://www.bcla.org>). Published by Edinburgh University Press and now in its seventh year, CCS is the successor journal to the yearbook *Comparative Criticism* (Cambridge University Press, 25 volumes from 1979 to 2003, edited by Elinor Shaffer) and *New Comparison* (36 numbers from 1986 to 2003, most recently edited by Maurice Slawinski). These two journals fused in 2003 to create the new journal. The journal's definition reads:

COMPARATIVE CRITICAL STUDIES seeks to advance methodological (self)reflection on the nature of comparative literature as a discipline. The editor invites contributions providing innovative perspectives on the theory and practice of the study of comparative literature in all its aspects, including but not restricted to: theory and history of comparative literary studies; comparative studies of conventions, genres, themes, and periods; reception studies; comparative gender studies; transmediality; diasporas and the migration of culture from a literary perspective; and the theory and practice of literary translation and cultural transfer. As house journal of the BCLA, *Comparative Critical Studies* will also regularly include sections with book reviews, the winners of the Dryden Translation Prize, the keynote lectures of the triennial BCLA conference, and selected papers from BCLA conferences and workshops.

The first issue of every year contains the BCLA “President’s Letter,” four to five peer-reviewed open-submission articles, and the three winning entries of the John Dryden Translation Competition, which is held annually by the British Comparative Literature Association in conjunction with the British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT). Further information on this competition may be obtained from transcomp@uea.ac.uk or, to enter a translation, you may download an application form from www.bcla.org.

Every other year, the first issue of CCS contains the “Malcolm Bowie Memorial Lecture.” This lecture series was initiated in 2008 in memory of Malcolm Bowie (1943-2007), who was Master of Christ’s College at the University of Cambridge and the BCLA’s president from 1998 to 2004. The first “Malcolm Bowie Memorial Lecture,” entitled “Travelling through Translation,” was given by Susan Bassnett in 2008 and published in CCS 6.1 (2009). Issues two and three of every year are normally devoted to special themes, some of which result from conferences organized by BCLA members. Every third year a double issue is devoted to the BCLA’s triennial international conference. At least one issue per year also includes book reviews. Recent themed issues have been:

- 3.1-2 (2006) *Comparative Literature at a Crossroads?* (Ed. Robert Weninger)
- 3.3 (2006) *Comparative Reception Studies Today* (Eds. Elinor Shaffer and Robert Weninger)
- 4.1 (2007) *Beyond Empire* (Eds. Elinor Shaffer and Robert Weninger)
- 4.2 (2007) *Literature Travels* (Eds. Glyn Hambrook and Ben Colbert)
- 4.3 (2007) *Novelization in the Islamic World* (Eds. Mohamed-Salah Omri and Wen-chin Ouyang)
- 5.1 (2008) *Listening to Sing: Music and Literature* (Eds. Jean Boase-Beier and Robert Weninger)
- 5.2-3 (2008) *Folly*, BCLA Triennial Conference (Eds. Lucia Boldrini and Florian Mussgnug)
- 6.2 (2009) *Gender in Literary History* (Ed. Margaret R. Higonnet)
- 6.3 (2009) *Cinematicity* (Eds. Jeffrey Geiger and Karin Littau)

For 2010 I am currently preparing a themed double issue, entitled “Legacies,” which will be devoted to honoring the memory of colleagues who have passed away since the early 1990s and whose work has defined the field of Comparative Literature for the past half century. Among those for whom articles have been solicited are René Wellek, Werner P. Friederich, Henry Remak, Anna Balakian, Malcolm Bowie, Claude Pichois, Claudio Guillén, Tania Carvalhal, and Earl Miner, such theorists with a comparatist bent as Jacques Derrida, Wolfgang Iser, Edward W. Said, Richard Rorty, Wayne C. Booth, Paul Ricœur, and Yuri Lotman, and the translator Michael Hamburger, who was both a comparatist scholar and translator. 2011 will see a themed double issue on “Archive,” the topic of the BCLA’s twelfth international conference, to be held at the University of Kent in Canterbury, Great Britain, from July 5 to 8, 2010. For more information on this event go to www.kent.ac.uk/secl/archive or email archive@kent.ac.uk.

For those interested in submitting articles for publication to CCS, our submission policy is as follows: Manuscripts, in English and not to exceed 8,000 words, should be submitted electronically to the editor, Professor Robert Weninger (robert.weninger@kcl.ac.uk), in Microsoft Word (6 or Office versions, PC or Macintosh) format. They should be written in conformity with the most recent edition of the

MHRA Style Manual (downloadable at <http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/download.shtml>). Alternatively, you can ask the editor to send you a shortened version of the stylesheet as a MSWord attachment. Articles submitted through the open submission mechanism will be peer reviewed by two specialist scholars and/or editorial board members, assuming that the submission fits the remit of the journal and is of sufficient academic merit to warrant peer review. Authors always receive some form of feedback, either from myself as editor, or, if peer review is initiated, via the peer review process.

A tip for authors who are not native speakers of English: please have your article read and corrected by an academically trained native speaker before submitting it to a journal like CCS. This practice can considerably increase the likelihood of an article being accepted for peer review and, later hopefully, for publication. On average only one in four to five submitted articles will be accepted for publication, and it is crucial to present your article to me as editor, or to the editor of any academic journal, for that matter, in the best shape possible, not just in terms of flow and sequencing of your argument, but also stylistically and formally.

And a tip for all authors, native speaker of English or not: keep your audience in mind. The readership of CCS is global. Thus it is important that *all* foreign-language quotes be translated in the footnotes, which can take up a good portion of your word count since footnotes will be included in the final word tally (make sure when using the automatic word count function to tick the “include footnotes” box). Second, do not assume that your audience will know the authors or texts that you are referring to, as canonical as some might be within a given tradition. Again, the reader of CCS can be someone whose specialty is Film Studies, or Art History, or someone who lives and works in Poland, Thailand, or Brazil, with good reading knowledge of English, to be sure (else he or she would not be reading the journal in the first place), but with no particular expertise in English literature, or Japanese literature, or Arabic poetics, or Czech Formalism, or East German film, etc. Always contextualize your authors, materials, and methods for the non-specialist academic that most of us must of necessity be in a field that is as broad and encompassing as Comparative Literature.

At least once a year an issue of CCS will include a book review section. While book reviews are normally solicited, in exceptional cases it can be worth contacting the book review editor, Dr Rosa Mucignat (rosa.mucignat@kcl.ac.uk). Also, it is always worth sending a copy of any recent book publication in the field of Comparative Literature to her for review (her mailing address is: Dr Rosa Mucignat / Comparative Literature / King's College London / Strand / London WC2R 2LS United Kingdom). It goes without saying, however, that due to space limitations we cannot guarantee that every book sent to Dr Mucignat will be reviewed.

Finally, I am happy to add that Edinburgh University Press is offering a special discounted subscription rate to *Comparative Critical Studies* of £26 for 2010, a 20% discount on the standard rate of £33, for ICLA regional members. Please see <http://www.eupjournals.com/ccs> for further information on the journal or contact journals@eup.ed.ac.uk to subscribe at the special ICLA rate.

If you have any further question(s) about the journal, please feel free to contact me at robert.weninger@kcl.ac.uk.

Robert Weninger, *King's College London* (United Kingdom).
Editor, *Comparative Critical Studies*.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN INDIA: A REPORT ON TWO CONFERENCES

Two significant Comparative Literature events took place in India in March 2010. At the newly established Central University of Kerala (located in Kasaragod), an International Workshop in “Curriculum Development: Scope and Challenges” was held on March 25-26, sponsored by the Department of Comparative Literature under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor of the university and the President of the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI), Jancy James. This university is one of fifteen new universities established in India in March 2009. The university’s academic program includes a full set of graduate courses in Comparative Literature, taught by an eminent faculty headed by Prasad Pannian.

The landmark event opened with a keynote address by Dorothy Figueira, an AILC/ICLA Vice President and Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Georgia. Her topic was “The Future of Comparative Literature in a World of World Literature: The US Experience.” Workshop presentations featured plenary speakers from all over India and abroad, on topics of Methodology and Perspectives, Comparative Literature and World Literature, and Comparative Literature and the Other Arts. Plenary speakers included Sieghild Bogumil from Germany, Harish Trivedi (Delhi), A. K. Singh (Saurashtra), Ipshita Chanda (Jadavpur), as well as N. V. Narayanan (Calicut), Chandra Mohan (Jammu), Rizio Yohannan (Central University of Kerala), and Hema Nair and Meena T. Pillai (both from the University of Kerala). Other presentations dealt with Indian Poetics, Performance Studies, Film Studies, Women’s Writings, and Translation and Media Studies, both as presently practiced in India and how they might develop in the future.

Comparative Literature in India is traditionally embedded within English departments. There was considerable discussion regarding the possibility of establishing full-fledged departments and academic centers of Comparative Literature in Indian universities. Various speakers addressed the role that Comparative Literature might play either within or alongside departments of India’s other national languages and how our field might incorporate other Indian regional languages in future comparative work. For instance, Kasaragod, where the Central University is located, has a unique tradition of linguistic and cultural diversity. Many natives speak as many as six languages fluently and are accustomed to the cultural traditions of people from different religious backgrounds. The Central University of Kerala tries to integrate these local traditions into the frame of its Comparative Literature curriculum. The workshop also addressed the related issue of translation studies as an essential component of comparative literature in India.

In a message to the workshop, President Manfred Schmeling of the AILC/ICLA, expressed appreciation for the ever increasing activities of Indian comparative literature studies in association with CLAI and the AILC/ICLA. The elegant Souvenir of the occasion, edited by Rizio Yohannan, included abstracts and the histories of the Central University of Kerala and of the CLAI. Organizers for the workshop, which was praised for its scope and excellence, included Prasad Pannian, Rizio Yohannan, and Joseph Koyippally from CUK, as well as Chandra Mohan from the CLAI.

On March 29-31, this workshop was followed by an international conference on “Expanding Territories: Comparative Literature in the 21st Century,” organized by the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies of Saurashtra Uni-

versity, Rajkot (Gujarat), in collaboration with the CLAI. It was co-sponsored by the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, and the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. The conference was remarkably well attended, with over three hundred papers in English, Hindi, Gujarati, and Sanskrit, on comparative topics involving fourteen different languages, namely (in addition to the four already mentioned) Marathi, Kannada, Nepali, Bengali, Oriya, Malayalam, Tamil, Charani (Rajasthani), Kashmiri, and Urdu. The presenters discussed nearly all the major forms of comparative literature and of translation and media studies, and major aspects of literature in general. Since the organizers only accepted papers that were truly comparative in scope, the range and variety of the discussion were to be envied, certainly by members of some comparative literature associations that have become less comparative in recent years.

Insightful opening remarks were offered by the Conference Coordinator, A. K. Singh and by the CLAI President, Jancy James. In his annual report Chandra Mohan, the CLAI General Secretary, drew attention to the number of members attending the upcoming AILC/ICLA conference at Seoul, August 15-21, 2010. Guests of Honor included S. S. Noor, Vice President of the Sahitya Akademi, and Kalindi Mehta, the Deputy Director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. Kamlesh J-shipura, Vice-Chancellor of Saurashtra University, presided over the conference. The inaugural session honored Amiya Dev (Kolkata), Bholabhai Patel (Ahmedabad), and Indranath Chaudhuri (New Delhi) for their outstanding contributions to Comparative Literature in India and abroad. Dorothy Figueira gave the keynote address, with the title "Brand India: Commodifying and Trivializing India in American Academe."

The enthusiasm of the conferees continued unabated for the entire three days of the conference. In addition to Professors Dev, Patel, and Chaudhuri, the nine plenary sessions and a special panel discussion on "Comparative Literature: Issues of Pedagogy and Practice" featured distinguished scholars such as Professors Trivedi, Bogumil, and Chanda from the Kerala workshop as well as Subha C. Dasgupta, Manorama Trikha, T. S. Satyanath, E. V. Ramakrishna, Kamal Mehta, Rizio Raj, and Chandra Mohan. Eight reading sessions ran concurrently in different auditoria on the Saurashtra campus. The conference proved especially useful for the sizeable group of Research in Progress students who had the opportunity to discuss their work with the scholars in attendance. The conference concluded with an excellent valedictory address on the relevance of comparative literature in India, delivered by India's foremost literary critic in Hindi, Namwar Singh. The organizing committee, which consisted of A. K. Singh, K. H. Mehta, Sanjay Mukherjee, J. K. Dhodhiya, and R. B. Zala, received a warm round of applause in appreciation of its efforts.

The Comparative Literature Association of India is very active and welcomes comparatists from outside its national borders. It publishes a Bulletin/Newsletter, sponsors projects in comparative literature, and organizes seminars and workshops. In addition to Chandra Mohan, General Secretary, and Jancy James, President, its officers include Harish Trivedi and Swapan Majumdar, Vice Presidents; Sayantan Dasgupta and D. K. Pabby, Secretaries; and V. K. Sharma and Tapati Mukherjee, Treasurers. The CLAI has recently made great strides forward in raising the profile of comparative literature in the general curriculum. It functions as a liaison with government and semi-government departments of education in India and continues to work for the further development of our discipline in India.

Chandra Mohan, *Jammu University* (India), and Vice President, AILC/ICLA.

WRITING A HISTORY OF LITERATURE IN GREATER SYRIA

Al-Harakah al-Adabiyah fī Bilād al-Shām: al-Mujallad al-Awwal-Tārikh [The Literary Movement in Greater Syria: Vol. 1, A History, in Arabic]

Al-Harakah al-Adabiyah fī Bilād al-Shām: al-Mujallad al-Thānī-Mukhtārāt [The Literary Movement in Greater Syria: Vol. 2, Selections, also in Arabic].

Eds. Abdul Nabi Isstaif, et al. Damascus: Capital of Arab Culture, 2008.

Students of the literary history of *Bilād al-Shām* or Greater Syria, that is, of the area that today comprises the modern political entities of Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, as well as historical Palestine along with the modern Turkish provinces of Alexandretta, Gaziantep, and Diyarbakir, face a daunting challenge. They would easily realize that all the scholarly works¹ that have been written on the literature of this important area of the ancient world, viewed by many as the cradle of human civilization, are partial and limited in scope, since they cover only one short period or another in the long history of this literature and confine themselves in most cases to texts produced only in Arabic. Furthermore, these works were carried out by individuals whose ability to handle such a vast multilingual material is certainly limited, however experienced and skillful they might be.

In light of this situation Abdul Nabi Isstaif, the author of this report and a former Chairman of the Department of Arabic at the University of Damascus as well as the founder of the Syrian General Organization of Books and its first General Director between 2006 and 2008, took the initiative of organizing a group project for writing a history of the literature of *Bilād al-Shām*. This history was intended as a contribution to the various cultural activities of “Damascus: The Capital of Arab Culture,” a celebration that took place in 2008. Establishing an editorial board of five members, Professor Isstaif, together with these four colleagues, drew up a plan for the two-volume encyclopedic work and commissioned a team of some twenty-five scholars from the major Syrian universities to write the individual chapters. The other members of the editorial board consisted of Mahmūd Ribdāwī, an Emeritus Professor of Abbasid literature and criticism at Damascus University and at a number of Arab universities in Algeria and Saudi Arabia; Wahab Rumiyyah, Professor of Pre-Islamic and Islamic literature at Damascus University and at a number of Arab universities in Yemen and Kuwait; ‘Ali Abū Zayd, Professor of Pre-Islamic, Mamluk, and Ottoman literatures at Damascus and Kuwait Universities; and Dr. Fawziyyah Zūbārī, a lecturer in Abbasid and modern literature at al-Baath University in Hims, Syria.

The first volume, which provides a concise history of the literature of the region, is meant to recover the unity of a natural geographical space within which various nations, peoples, and ethnicities have lived together over the centuries, producing their own literatures in their own languages and in the language of the prevailing culture at the time. Surveying the literature of the region from the earliest recorded texts, when Cuneiform writing was invented by the Sumerians in the year 2800 BCE, to the end of the twentieth century, the history volume attempts to provide an account both of the “continuity” of this literature and of “the diversity in unity,” which, on the one hand, have always distinguished this literary tradition, and which gave it, on the other, its prominent status within the literatures of the ancient Orient and later within those of the Arab world at large. This volume consists of an introductory chapter, six sections and a conclusion.

In the introductory chapter, Dr. Isstaif, the editor in chief, discusses in some detail the key-concepts in the volume's title, namely "literature" and "*Bilād al-Shām*," referring in particular to the various languages of this literature and stressing the fact that, in emphasizing the unity of the literature produced in the area, the volume is, in fact, implicitly calling for all peoples of the area to replace the political map, imposed by the allied imperial powers after the First World War, with the natural geographical map which has united them throughout history.

The first section of the volume covers, in five chapters, the history of literature in Greater Syria from the ancient times to the end of the Umayyad era (750 CE). In the first chapter, 'Īd Mir'ī, of the Department of History at Damascus University, discusses the various literatures of Ancient Syria, including those of the two Kingdoms of Ebla and Mari, of the Alalch, the Phoenicians, and the Aramaeans as well as the Syriac literature in its different phases. The second chapter, by Shafīq Bītār, considers the poetry and poets of the pre-Islamic era, dealing with both indigenous figures and with immigrants into Greater Syria. In the third chapter, Mahmūd al-Miqdād turns to the literature of the early Islamic period, including the poetry of conquests and political disputes, and the artistic prose of the period; while Fātimah Tajjūr studies, in the fourth chapter, the Umayyad poetry, with attention to its relationships with authority, society, and the individual. The fifth chapter, written by 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Abd al-Rahīm, is devoted to Umayyad prose, that is to say the three sub-genres of al-Khitābah or Oratory, al-Ras'āil or Epistles, and al-Wasāyā or Advisory Recommendations.

The second section, which consists of five chapters, considers in detail the Abbasid period (750-1258), or the Golden Age of the literature of *Bilād al-Shām*. In the first chapter Fawziyyah Zūbārī studies the movements of innovation in this period, covering the renewal in the structure of the Arabic Qasida or Ode, its themes, and meanings. In the second chapter, Mahmūd Ribdāwī considers the so-called 'Tab'' (natural talent) and 'San'ah' (craftsmanship) in the poetry of this period, comparing the 'San'ah' of 'Abu Tammām to the 'Tab'' of al-Buhturī, and consequently between the Syrian and Iraqī doctrines of poetic composition. Following the same order, Ahmad 'Alī Muhammad discusses, in the third chapter, the artistic prose of the period, referring in particular to the Sufi prose and to the development of scholarship, while Nāsif Nāsif considers, in the fourth chapter, the literature of the Fatimid (909-1171) and Ayyubid periods (1171-1341), with a special reference to al-Ma'arrī's *Riāslat al-Ghufārn* [Epistle of Forgiveness], which some scholars claim to have influenced Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The fifth and final chapter of this section, written by Ahmad Dihmān, is devoted to the so called Post-Golden Age of the literature of *Bilād al-Shām*, considering the most important literary figures of the period.

The third section of the book, which comprises eight chapters, is devoted to the Mamluk (1250-1517) and Ottoman periods (1517-1918) of the literature of *Bilād al-Shām*. Against the political, social, and intellectual background of this turbulent period, mapped out concisely in the first chapter by Mahmūd Ribdāwī, Mahmūd Sālīm considers, in the second chapter, the poets and poetry in the Mamluk era, discussing both form and content, while Mahmūd Ribdāwī considers the art of prose during the same period, with a special reference to its major figures. The fourth chapter, by Bakrī Shaykh Amīn, complements Ribdāwī's work with a more detailed study of the period's prose, and in the fifth chapter 'Alī Abū Zayd studies its scholarly and encyclopedic works. The last three chapters are devoted to the Ottoman Era, with Wafīq

Slīṭīn discussing the art of poetry, Mahmūd Ribdāwī the art of *Muā'radāt*, and 'Alī Abū Zayd the art of *Badī'īyyāt*. *Muā'radāt* refers to “the imitation or emulation of a literary text, often with the dual purpose of honoring the model and trying to surpass it. In the case of poetry, metre and rhyme of the model—usually a well-known and admired poem—were adopted, as well as the subject matter” (Van Gelder). *Badī'īyyāt* involves “poems in the praise of the Prophet, the aim of which is to illustrate every type of embellishments or rhetorical figures” (Cachai).

The contributors of the fourth section of the volume address the literature of *Bilād al-Shām* in the so called Renaissance Era, or pre-modern time. Abdul Nabi Isstaif details, in the first chapter, the formative factors of this era. Considering the impact of the French invasion of both Egypt and the southern part of greater Syria at the turn of the nineteenth century, he investigates the literary and cultural movements generated by this crucial encounter between Europe and the Arab Orient. In particular, he explores the role played by the various cultural, scholarly, and academic institutions established during this era in stimulating the literary production during the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth. These institutions include the Syrian College, which later became the American University of Beirut; the Orthodox Imperial Russian Society of Palestine; and the American University of Cairo. Also included in this group are the Syrian University, which later became the University of Damascus; the Egyptian University, which was later named the University of King Fu'ad I and then, after the Egyptian revolution of 1952, became Cairo University; and the Arabic Scientific Academy, later named the Arabic Academy in Damascus. He also discusses the role of the press and printing houses in facilitating the dissemination of the literature of the period among the masses of Arab readers. In the second and third chapters, 'Umar al-Daqqāq surveys the developments of the various traditional and modern literary genres up to the early decades of the twentieth century, discussing the major figures of the era in both poetry and prose. In the fourth chapter, Lutfiyah Barham considers the literature of *Bilād al-Shām* during the French and British mandate, stressing its close relationship with the nationalist struggle in the various parts of greater Syria, including Palestine, where the establishment of the Jewish State was underway with the help of the Western colonial powers.

The fifth section, which consists of two major chapters, is devoted to the Shāmī or Syrian literature in al-Mahjar or overseas. 'Abd al-Karīm al-'Ashtar details, in the first chapter, the contribution of the first few generations of the Mahjari writers up to the end of the Second World War, namely the émigrés to North and South America such as Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān [Khalil Gibran], Amīn al-Rayhānī, Mikhā'īl Nu'yamah, 'Īlyā Abū Mādi, Nasīb 'Arīdah, the Ma'lūfs, Jūrj Saydah, Zakī Qunsul, and several others. Abdul Nabi Isstaif discusses the term of “New Mahjari literature,” which is written in both Arabic and other European languages and published all over the world; he refers to the difficulties and challenges which confront its students, and presents in some detail the contributions of those writers who lived and are still living in North and South America.

The sixth and final section, with nine chapters, surveys the developments of both the traditional and Western-inspired genres of Arabic literature in *Bilād al-Shām* in the modern era. Lutfiyah Barham studies the Romantic poetry in chapter one, while Ridwān Qudmāni considers in chapter two the Realistic trend in Modern poetry, leaving the Modernist trend to be treated by Sa'd al-Dīn Kulayb in chapter three. Salāh Sālīh studies the novel in chapter four, Fu'ād Mir'ī the short story in chapter five,

Nidāl al-Sālih biography and autobiography in chapter six, Mahā Fā'iq al-'Attār the essay in chapter seven, Ahmad Ziyād Muhabbik poetic drama in chapter eight, and finally Jān Aliksān prose drama in chapter nine.

The conclusion, by Wahab Rumiyyah, explores the future horizons of this literature, referring in particular to the challenges that face its producers in the current age of globalization and the revolution in communication technology.

The project's second volume is an anthology of the literature of *Bilād al-Shām*, selected, edited, and introduced by the contributors, each of whom is responsible for the texts relevant to the chapter or chapters that he wrote.

Having presented this bird's eye view of the contents of the two volumes of this history, let me briefly turn to the pros and cons of this pioneering work in writing a literary history of Greater Syria. To begin with, it is the first collective history of the literature of Greater Syria ever to be written in Arabic. Although it is confined to a small area of the Arab world, it is, nonetheless, an important step towards writing a more comprehensive history of Arabic literature produced in the Arab world and beyond. However, although it does cover the literatures written in the various ancient languages of the area, it should have given more room for the modern literatures produced by citizens and expatriates of the area, written in other languages such as Kurdish, Armenian, Syriac, French, English, Spanish, German, and Portuguese, and published in the Arab world and beyond.

Although the work is devoted to the literature of Greater Syria, it is not a regionally-oriented history, because it deals with its subject matter from a broader perspective, stemming from a deep-seated belief in the unity of Arabic literature, particularly after the spread of Islam in the entire area, and after Arabic came to dominate as the language of commerce, learning, and literature and as a medium of everyday communication throughout the region and the rest of the Arab world.

Finally, the work is the result of a serious collective effort by a team of Syrian scholars. However, it could have far better had it drawn on the contributions of many able scholars from elsewhere in the Arab world and beyond, and had the editorial board had sufficient time to do so. Nonetheless, the work, as it stands, could pave the way for a more detailed history of the literature of the area, particularly since it has provided a clear map of the literary achievements among the peoples in this most ancient center of civilization, going back to the invention of writing—which is not an easy mission to accomplish.

Abdul Nabi Isstaif, *University of Damascus* (Syria).

Note

- 1 See Bāshā, *Al-'Adab* 1986, which surveys the history of Arabic literature in Greater Syria from the Umayyad Period to the end of Abbasid era. This study was originally intended as the author's contribution to *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*. See also Bāshā, *Al-'Adab* 1967, which surveys the history of Arabic literature of Greater Syria in greater detail during the Zangi, Ayyubid, and Mamluk' eras. In addition, see Dayf.

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NOTICES BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

SUR LES COLLABORATEURS /

BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



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Paulo Horta has recently joined New York University Abu Dhabi, a pioneering venture in international education. Previously he was an assistant professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, which will host the 2011 ACLA convention. At SFU he was instrumental in developing the university's world literature program from the ground up. He is co-editing a volume for the MLA series *Approaches to Teaching World Literature* and has written on the cross-cultural collaborations that influenced *The Thousand and One Nights* and the reception of the works of sixteenth-century Portuguese author Luis de Camões.

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AVIS AUX COLLABORATEURS PROSPECTIFS

Recherche littéraire / Literary Research a comme but de communiquer aux comparatistes du monde entier les développements récents de notre discipline. La revue publie les comptes rendus des livres notables sur les sujets comparatistes, les nouvelles des congrès professionnels et d'autres événements d'une importance majeure pour nos membres, et les prises de position sur des problèmes qui pourraient apporter beaucoup d'intérêt. On devrait souligner que *RL / LR* ne publie *pas* de recherche littéraire comparée.

D'ordinaire les comptes rendus sont écrits ou en français ou en anglais, les langues officielles de l'AILC. Un compte rendu prendra une des formes suivantes: des annonces brèves de 500 à 800 mots pour les livres courts ou spécialisés, des comptes rendus proprement dits de 1200 à 1500 mots pour les livres d'une portée plus ambitieuse, ou des essais de 2000 à 3000 mots portant ou sur un seul ouvrage d'un grand mérite ou sur plusieurs ouvrages qu'on pourrait traiter ensemble. En vue de l'importance des ouvrages collectifs pour notre discipline, *RL/LR* acceptera les comptes rendus de recueils d'essais bien organisés, y compris les numéros spéciaux des revues.

Ceux qui voudraient écrire un compte rendu sont priés de considérer les besoins d'un public international de comparatistes. Les comptes rendus devraient être lisibles, informatifs, et judicieux. Il faut qu'ils soient lisibles pour qu'ils puissent être accessibles aux lecteurs comparatistes en général, non pas seulement aux spécialistes. Il faut qu'ils soient informatifs parce que bien que les comparatistes s'intéressent tous aux belles lettres comprises dans un sens étendu et interculturel, ils ne partagent pas nécessairement de sujet particulier en commun. Les comptes rendus devraient être judicieux parce que, afin d'atteindre une compréhension plus approfondie de leurs études, nos lecteurs ont besoin d'une discussion raisonnée et bien réfléchie.

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INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

Recherche Littéraire/Literary Research exists to inform comparative literature scholars worldwide of recent contributions to the field. To that end it publishes reviews of noteworthy books on comparative topics, information about events of major significance for comparatists, and position papers on issues of interest to the field. It should be emphasized that *RL/LR* does *not* publish comparative literary scholarship.

Reviews are normally written in French or English, the official languages of the ICLA. Book notes of 500 to 800 words cover short or relatively specialized works, standard reviews of 1200 to 1500 words are for works of greater scope, while review essays of 2000 to 3000 words deal with a work of major significance or for joint treatment of several related works. Given the importance of collaborative work in promoting comparative scholarship, *RL/LR* welcomes reviews of well-conceived edited volumes, including special issues of journals.

Contributors need to take the needs of an international audience of comparatists into account. Reviews need to be readable, informative, and judicious. They should be readable so as to be accessible to a general comparatist readership, not just to specialists. Reviews have to be informative, because although comparatists share a wide, cross-cultural interest in the verbal arts, they have no specific subject matter in common. Reviews should be judicious, because to give our readers a broader sense of their field they need a reasoned, thoughtful evaluation of the work being reviewed.

RL