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# Literary Research

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# PRÉSENTATION DU RÉDACTEUR

# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Comparatists engage in the international study of literature, but how well do we communicate with each other internationally about our research? As an annual supplement to the AILC/ICLA's triennial conferences, *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research* (*RL/LR*) aims to encourage more such exchange. To fulfill this goal, this year's issue brings together thirty-four contributions, ranging from *Gilgamesh* to our digital age, from fourteen nations and four continents. If possible, reviewers come from different countries than the books they cover, but the journal also welcomes reviews of comparative work from a scholar's own nation.

*RL/LR* traditionally begins with a forum on current issues affecting comparative study. This year, the section features pieces on the growing global interest in the literatures of the Arab world and of sub-Saharan Africa. Two witnesses to the process, drawing on personal experience, describe how it has unfolded since the 1960s. Roger Allen, as a pioneer in researching modern Arabic literature in the English-speaking world, recalls the scholarly and pedagogical challenges he faced during his career. Similarly, novelist Véronique Tadjo's tribute to Chinua Achebe on the fiftieth anniversary of *Things Fall Apart* evokes a key turning point in the world's recognition of African literature, while also exemplifying interchange between francophone and anglophone African writers.

The next section gives insights into comparative practice from three different places in the world, beginning with China, where Haun Saussy reviews a survey of our field that stresses the promise of East-West studies. Nicoletta Pireddu then discusses recent primers and manuals in Italy, including translations of Claudio Guillén's magisterial work, and relates them to French and American models for our field. Finally, from Mexico, Julia Constantino and Natty Golubov explain how the idea of translating some influential theories of textual mobility turned into a program of comparative research in its own right. These discussions of the state of the discipline on three continents complement last year's presentations of recent comparative research in France, the United States, Germany, and Spain.

This year's journal includes an interesting new feature: a unit on Comparative Histories of National Literatures, made possible by books on Portuguese literature and on the modern Turkish novel that consider the international scope of topics more often treated in national terms. The three longer units that follow review work on world literature, literary theory, cross-cultural literary relations, and intermediality. An initial section of review essays focuses on collective studies and notable individual ones; then comes a group of standard-length reviews of single-authored books; and the following section of shorter book notes addresses more

specialized research. Readers interested in contributing to any of these sections should consult the journal's bilingual instructions (see pages 139 and 140).

The issue ends with a section on other forms of research, again from a wide array of locations. This year it features a review of the biennial East-West issue of *Comparative Literature Studies*, along with a report on the role of literary issues in a major African conference on "Knowledge and Transformation: Social and Human Sciences in Africa." The section also describes a collaborative project in Mexico that raises issues of definition, organization, and scope familiar to comparatists doing group research; the project will in fact result in a book, but at this stage it offers an alternative model to the ambitious East Central European project outlined last year by Marcel Cornis-Pope. This is a section I am eager to develop further, and I encourage readers to make suggestions about journals, conferences, ongoing research, and other items suitable for coverage (for example, websites).

Throughout the journal, reviews connect with each other in varied ways, illuminating both well-established and emerging areas of research. Each forum article, for example, highlights literary developments that challenge us to move beyond our field's European origins. But the cultural border evoked by Roger Allen, which became increasingly visible during the later twentieth century, parallels earlier borders, such as the one Gerald Gillespie describes in reviewing Peter Firchow's book on Anglo-German literary relations from 1910 to 1950. Alternatively, Azade Seyhan's book on the modern Turkish novel's varying relations with European models, reviewed by Ahmet Evin, counterpoints Allen's account of the reception of modern Arabic literature in English.

In a similar spirit, Tadjo's account of multilingual interactions within Africa intersects with Hershini Bhana Young's comparison of African, Caribbean, and African American women's fiction, discussed in a review essay by Annie Gagiano. It also lines up with Walter Collins's book note on a study of colonial African fiction set in pre-colonial Africa, authored by Donald Wehrs. Moving forward in time, Eva Kushner, who in the early 1980s was a leader in founding this journal, reports on the "Knowledge and Transformation" conference about intellectual life in contemporary Africa. Underlying most of these contributions is our field's growing involvement with world literature, the topic addressed in Christopher Braider's review essay on David Damrosch's recent critical and theoretical writings as well as his ambitious new world literature anthology.

The expansive spirit of world literature study resonates in a different key in the reviewers' marked interest in diaspora. This dispersion of peoples across borders furnishes the conceptual basis for Young's treatment of black women writers, and it also underpines the examples from East Asia, India, and Turkey in *Comparative Literature Studies*. Crystel Pinçonnat explores still other configurations of the diasporic, drawing on Irish and Caribbean examples, in her review of Marcus Bullock and Peter Paik's essay collection. As my own book note on the MLA's new edition of *Introduction to Scholarship* indicates, writing on diaspora figures in the growing transnationalism of literary research in North America. Yet reviewers also caution about overly broad uses of this concept that attenuate its

core meaning of enforced dispersion from a homeland.

Contributors comment on literary theory in equally varied ways, with issues of global perspective raised most explicitly by Takayuki Yokota-Murakami. His review essay considers the contribution that Japanese scholarship might make to a critical vocabulary thus far dominated by Western traditions: Yokota-Murakami highlights the concept of *otaku*, which refers to a contemporary confluence of digital, intermedial, and postmodern trends, as theorized by Azuma Hiroki. Hans Bertens scrutinizes Dorothy Figueira's critique of theories of postcoloniality, multiculturalism, and nomadism for not doing justice to cultural otherness. For Figueira, they fail to provide the broader global perspective that they envision, but Bertens asks if she has not actually targeted the social consequences of these theories, especially in the academy. Jonathan Culler, in turn, registers his disagreement with Bertens's approach in *Literary Theory: The Basics*, contending that to stress the key questions that theory in general seeks to answer is more productive than a "school-by-school" survey. As a group, these reviews display the pointed but judicious exchange of argument so essential in discussing theoretical issues.

Two reviews present contrasting insights into how theories evolve, one centering on a field, the other on a major theorist. Monica Spiridon assesses Rick Altman's book on narrative theory against the backdrop of a century's work in this area; after discussing the taxonomic and communicational schools, she argues that Altman neglects the story-discourse distinction. Reviewing Robert Doran's selection from five decades of essays by René Girard, Robert Smadja stresses the revelations of underlying motives in Girard's project and the polemics with other approaches. Theory shades into philosophy in Elisabeth Loevlie's review of John Caputo's book on Kierkegaard; in commenting on the interplay between literary reading practices and Kierkegaard's manner of writing philosophy, she explores yet another aspect of the theory-literature dialogue that was treated last year by Leonora Flis. The intricacy and ambiguity of language itself come to the fore in Jocelyn Van Tuyl's discussion of Michael Lucey's book on manipulations of the first-person pronoun in works that address homosexuality, specifically in fiction and autobiography by Colette, Gide, and Proust.

Alongside its attention to world literature, our field continues to inquire into international movements and cross-cultural exchanges within the West, no doubt encouraged, as Pireddu suggests, by projects of European integration. Virgil Nemoianu reviews three volumes honoring Daniel-Henri Pageaux of the Sorbonne Nouvelle and current ICLA president Manfred Schmeling, both leading comparatists who came to the field by way of the Romance languages. These collections of Pageaux's own essays and of work by both men's students and associates allow Nemoianu to survey the achievements of this branch of comparative research and to pay tribute to the tradition of Romanistik. Zhang Longxi reminds us of this tradition's endurance in his review of *Comparative Literature Studies*, which ends by invoking Kader Kanuk's generous reassessment of Auerbach's years in Turkey. Pageaux himself has reviewed a collection of essays by Mario Vargas Llosa which trace that author's broadly European ideological itinerary.

This year also saw the publication of a twenty-third volume in the ICLA's *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, this one on Romantic prose fiction. Angela Esterhammer brings out the impressive range and finely textured detail of this fifth and final entry in a series that has covered the poetry, drama, non-fictional prose, and characteristic irony of the Romantic period. As a group, the other reviews of cross-cultural scholarship in the Western tradition cover just as wide a range of genres. They include Jeanne Garane on advocates for women's education from 1760-1810, Theokharoula Niftanidou on how "inscriptions of the body" in Joyce's *Ulysses* influenced the modern Greek novel, and Roy Caldwell on the application of "genetic criticism" to the pre-textual documents of novels by Cortázar, Perec, and Villemaire. Ingeborg Hoesterey evaluates Martin Puchner's fresh approach to the art of the manifesto and to its multiple transformations from Marx, through figures like Marinetti and movements like surrealism, to the upheavals of the 1960s, while David William Foster discusses Wilfred Floeck's essays on Iberian and Mexican drama.

Finally, the topic of intermediality recurs in several guises. In the section on group projects, Susana González Aktories and Irene Artigas Albarelli describe an ambitious approach to ekphrasis that includes music, film, and the performing arts as well as painting and sculpture. Their research on the range and variety of intermediality in the Spanish-language sphere complements the German interest in this topic outlined last year by Evi Zemanek. Yokota-Murakami, as already noted, comments on *otaku* as a form of intermediality, and Stefan Buchenberger addresses another variant of verbal-visual interaction in a study of comic-book heroes. Gerald Gillespie looks back at a late nineteenth-century instance of this interaction in his review of Micéala Symington's book on the symbolist cult of poetic art criticism. Addressing a form of intermediality with possibly radical implications for literature itself, Kathleen Komar reviews the fruits of a major international conference on how the new digital media might change our ways of reading, writing, and doing literary research. This 2006 conference, which took place in Madrid, was co-sponsored by the AILC/ICLA's Research Committee.

Publication of this issue was funded by the AILC/ICLA in cooperation with George Mason University, which also covered the costs of international distribution. I am grateful to Jack Censer, Dean of George Mason's College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and to Peter Stearns, the university's provost, for this indispensable assistance. Several AILC/ICLA officers and executive council members have also been helpful, especially Hans Bertens, Angela Esterhammer, Gerald Gillespie, Eva Kushner, Maria-Alzira Seixo, Steven Sondrup, and Monica Spiridon. I want as well to thank Roger Allen, Marcel Cornis-Pope, Anne Tomiche, and Lois Parkinson Zamora for advice that resulted in broadening the issue's coverage. Above all, warm thanks must go to our contributors, whose insights into recent scholarship from around the world should help to enlarge and refresh our vision of comparative literary study.

John Burt Foster, Jr., Editor.

# FORUM I

## The Shifting Contours of Arabic Literature Studies: A Personal Retrospect From the English-Speaking World

In the spring of 2008, some former students who are all now university professors invited my wife and myself to dinner. At dessert time I was surprised to receive a file with details of the series of articles that will constitute my *Festschrift*, to appear in three journals in my field, Arabic language and literature. That happy experience, along with an awareness that my career might interest comparatists as an illustration of how literary studies have shifted and widened in scope over the past half century, has occasioned the retrospect that follows.

I am often asked how a student makes a career in Arabic literature studies and about my own original motives in doing so. When I was admitted to Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1961, I intended to study Greek and Latin (the "Classical Languages" to the Western academic mindset). Having started Latin at the age of seven and Greek at twelve, I needed only about one term to realize that I had had more than enough of weekly prose and verse compositions, although the literary traditions of Greek and Latin continued to impress me, as they still do. I vividly remember informing my tutor that I wished to change subject—not a complete impossibility at Oxford (where admission standards in any European language and literature program are extremely high), but certainly difficult and unusual.

After expressing some diffidence at my decision, he suggested that I talk to various professors in modern Greek, Serbo-Croat (as it then was), Portuguese, and "the Oriental group" (as he termed it). As a first-generation university student from the rural wilds of Bristol, I naively asked what that "group" might involve. Hebrew, Arabic, and Chinese were all mentioned, as well as a whole string of other languages: Prakrit, Khotanese, Syriac, and so on. Undaunted I did indeed pay a series of visits to tremendous "*eminences*" in their relative fields, none of

whom provided advice that would allow me to eliminate any single one from a prospective list. Thus, when asked why I started Arabic, I answer that I'd had enough Latin and Greek, and that I essentially drew Arabic out of a hat, tempering that admission by noting that I did observe that it was spoken over a very wide area of the world's surface.

Thus, in April 1961 I commenced my studies of Arabic and the Middle East toward the B.A. degree at Oxford. The first two years were fairly unexceptional, involving an unanticipated continuation of the largely philological approach to language-teaching that had marked my study of Latin and Greek. Mercifully, this routine was interrupted by a true adventure. That was a summer trip to Lebanon and the renowned Arabic School at Shemlan—the Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies [MECAS]—where for the first time Arabic actually came to life for me.

In 1963 however, everything changed, when Oxford appointed a specialist in modern Arabic literature. Dr. M. M. Badawi, who was to become my academic supervisor for the doctoral degree, has remained an inspiration for me and countless other students ever since. What an enormous privilege it is to see that he is a contributor to my own *Festschrift*! Now, my intentions in changing subject, my preference for the literary approach to the analysis of texts, and my interest in the modern Arab world could all come together.

My doctoral thesis, submitted in the summer of 1968, was the first to be supervised by Dr. Badawi and also Oxford's first doctoral degree in modern Arabic literature studies. It was based on research that I conducted in Cairo in 1966-67 on a pioneer in the development of modern Arabic narrative, Muhammad al-Muwaylihi. His *'Isa ibn Hisham's Tale* (published in book form in 1907) is an interesting blend of a very ornate traditional style and modern social criticism; my dissertation studied the text and its history, and included a translation into English. The translation was to prove a very useful prelude, when that very year I accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Arabic at the University of Pennsylvania. As my specific brief, I was to introduce modern Arabic into the expanding curriculum of a traditional program of philology and archeology. Some forty years later, I am in a sense still in my first job . . .

In addition to launching my career as a teacher of Arabic (indeed to introducing modern Arabic as the language of focus), Penn also asked me to teach an undergraduate course on modern Arabic literature. Here is where my history with teaching the subject actually begins as well as my continued connection with translation. Along with Professor Trevor Le Gassick, who had "crossed the pond" before me and has been at the University of Michigan for many years, I now had to invent a syllabus (I might almost say to invent a field) and to find the texts to use in it. The published offerings at the time were not all that promising: several volumes of big-print, fuzzy-edged works by Khalil Jubran (Gibran) and a couple of novels (including the newly published and spectacular *Season of Migration*

*to the North* by Tayeb Salih). There was also an excellent collection of Arabic short-stories from Denys Johnson-Davies—then as now the doyen of translators of modern Arabic literature into English, and a most peculiar anthology of modern Arabic poetry prepared by A. J. Arberry, the Professor of Arabic at Cambridge. While I used all these publications in my initial course, there was obviously an immediate need for a great deal of other material: for more translations (which I undertook myself) and for critical studies (which were largely non-existent). In those days one really had the feeling of working in isolation, but, all that said, two trends came to the aid of the incipient specialist in modern Arabic literature.

The first was the establishment of a journal devoted to the critical study of the Arabic literary tradition, the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, published by E. J. Brill in Leiden, Netherlands. This publication was founded in 1970 by a group of university teachers at British universities, including Dr. Badawi, who were essentially the founding figures of a new critical approach to the field. From its very first issue, the annual summer publication of critically- and theoretically-based studies of every period and aspect of Arabic literature provided our small, but gradually increasing, community of specialists with valuable records of research and the tools for teaching new generations of students. The same holds true today, when the journal, now published in three issues a year, is in its thirty-eighth year.

In the mid-1970s another journal appeared, with a broader purview and as the direct result of a second initiative that in retrospect seems symptomatic of the period. In 1970, the then infant organization, the Middle East Studies Association (MESA, founded in 1967) embarked upon an ambitious project to investigate what was termed "the state of the art" in Middle Eastern Studies. I was asked to lead the segment of the project dealing with literature, and invited two colleagues, William Hanaway (Persian literature) and Walter Andrews (Turkish literature), to join me in investigating the theoretical parameters of our "discipline," presumably Middle Eastern literature studies. (I might note that in the early 1970s the Hebrew language and the study of Israel and its culture were not included in "Middle East Studies" as defined by the National Defense and Education Act of 1957. That situation has since changed, and in any case Israeli literature soon came to be a necessary component of our purview.)

In the context of this MESA project and the conference at Stanford that concluded it, we were invited to consider literature studies within a framework heavily influenced by the disciplinary rigor of the social-scientific fields that dominated MESA. In retrospect it is my impression that this conference, and the "Literature" chapter in the volume, *The Study of the Middle East* (Binder) that emerged from it, constituted an important way-station in the development of Arabic and Middle Eastern literature studies, particularly in American institutions but potentially beyond as well. Not only were we invited to contemplate a discipline within which the different Middle Eastern literary traditions might be studied on the basis of

similar evaluative criteria; but, in addition, this comparative framework might be extended to the broader realms of modern Middle East studies in general and, in particular, to the increasingly theoretically based discipline of Comparative Literature or World Literature. I still vividly recall the lengthy sessions in which we tried to lay out the parameters for the introductory section to that "literature" chapter. These sessions inevitably led us to conclude that implementing these initiatives would require the foundation of a new journal devoted to such theoretically based and comparative approaches. Thus was born (in 1976) the journal, *Edebiyat*, which has continued to reflect the increasing reliance that emerging scholars in Middle Eastern literatures have placed on identifying and implementing literary-theoretical principles in their research. The journal has recently been combined with *Middle Eastern Literatures*, which began publication in 1998.

In the new generation of scholars that were now adapting to changing expectations in literature studies and integrating the heritages of Middle Eastern cultures into the Western academy, many had educational backgrounds that differed from previous generations. In Europe, especially, the majority—like myself—had come to the field from Classical Studies, rather than from the study of a Western literary culture such as Spanish or French. In this same period (the latter 1970s and 1980s) there also began a trend whereby comparative literary studies not only became more and more involved in literary-theoretical research *per se*, but also expanded its notion of "comparison" to include non-Western literary traditions. While many, if not most, Comparative Literature programs in the United States continued (and continue) to insist on the centrality of literary theory for their research, they have also gradually shifted away from a definition of "comparative" as involving "my literature plus one other," that itself having long since been unacceptable within the more multi-lingual context of the Western European academy. In my experience, the Arabic literary tradition in particular has come to be accepted as an important component in many research projects within Comparative Literature. Needless to say, the award of the 1988 Nobel Prize to an Egyptian novelist, to be discussed later, had a significant role in that process.

Discussion so far has concerned the linkage between research on Arabic literature and academic studies at the graduate level. At least in the United States, and, I suspect, beyond as well, the latter half of the twentieth century was marked by increased emphasis on programs and courses on non-Western cultures (more often than not, encouraged, if not financed directly, by government and educational agencies of one kind or another). However, the basic question that I faced in 1968 has remained the same: how to make the riches of Arabic literature available to an undergraduate population that frequently needs to be persuaded of this undertaking's value.

The answer then, as now, has meant translation. From the somewhat sparse beginnings described above, the availability of Arabic literature in translation has

certainly improved. Nonetheless, the extremely small number of translators (a situation which still prevails) would regularly encounter the excuse of "lack of market interest" from all but a few publishers. What publication did occur was mostly undertaken by university presses. The situation reached a nadir when the great American-Palestinian critic and intellectual, Edward Said, gave a New York commercial publisher a list of Arab authors who deserved translation, only to be told that Arabic was a "controversial" language—an interesting way of describing a language, but unfortunately symptomatic of the problems that Arabic literature in translation has faced, and still does in the Anglophone publishing world. Suffice it to note, however, that the 1970s and 1980s witnessed an increase in the number and types of translations, although they were almost exclusively confined to twentieth-century works. Those that did appear were mostly in the form of fiction (also the most popular genre in the Arabic-speaking world itself), with considerably less attention to poetry and almost none to drama. In 1972 the American University in Cairo Press announced a project to translate several novels by the then globally unknown Naguib Mahfouz. *Miramar* was the first to appear in 1978, prefaced by some admiring remarks from the English novelist, John Fowles. It was followed by a number of Mahfouz's other novels (including my own translation of *Autumn Quail* in 1985), although, for a complex of reasons, the project did not include the renowned *Trilogy* of novels (written in 1956-57) upon which his reputation in the Arab world was largely based at that time.

Incidentally, the availability of good, readable, perhaps even literary translations of the different genres of pre-modern Arabic literature continues to present an enormous problem for teachers. Robert Irwin, in his anthology, *Night & Horses & the Desert*, does an admirable job of trawling all the scattered available sources, but large tracts of the pre-modern literary heritage of the Arabs continue to be unavailable to English readers.

I would like now to focus on the 1980s, because in many ways this decade seems pivotal in bringing a series of changes with both a positive and negative impact upon the discipline ever since. In the first place, 1983 witnessed the publication of the first volume in what would turn out to be a long-term project, the *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*. Some idea of the complexities in the very definition of this project's parameters can be gleaned from the fact that it was first mooted and planned in 1961. At that time, it would appear, the more philologically based and generalist view of "literature" (meaning basically anything in written form) still prevailed—at least in Arabic studies in England. With the appearance of this first volume some two decades later, the extent to which literature studies had changed became evident. This volume on the earliest era in Arabic literary history was severely criticized, by myself among others. At issue was not so much the faulty nature of the data provided—although even there problems existed—but a failure to take into account many of the more recent developments in

literary research. Neglecting the entire issue of orality in the pre-Islamic tradition of poetry was just one example.

To be fair, the press decided that the second volume, on the lengthy "Abbasid" period from 750 to 1258, would adopt a more current definition of "literature," and the term "belles-lettres" was used in the title. That decision, however, then required the publication of a third volume (already commissioned and delivered to the press) devoted to the same "Abbasid" period but consisting (apart from criticism) of essentially non-literary topic-areas—or, perhaps more fairly, topics covered by the older definition of "literature," such as "administrative literature" and "medical literature." The remaining three volumes in the series—devoted to the "modern" period, to the literary production of al-Andalus (the Iberian Peninsula), and to the vast historical era, dubbed as "decadent," between approximately 1150 and 1840 (the last to be published in 2006)—all restricted their purview to texts whose value lies, to quote the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "in beauty of form or emotional impact." I cite this project because it illustrates so well the success and problems of the transitional stage in Arabic literature studies. On the broader scale one might suggest that such a transitional stage, which involves the integration of Arabic literature studies into comparative literary studies, is still in progress.

A second trend in the 1980s occurred in an area that affects the study of literature very directly, that of language-acquisition. Since the 1960s, academic institutions in most Western countries—with France and Russia in the vanguard—had been moving away from the more textually-based grammar-translation approach to language-learning, which had long been espoused by the philological tradition, towards methods that put greater stress on communicative skills and the language currently used in the Arabic-speaking world. This shift still permitted a wide variety of emphases, and thus, while more attention was paid to the ability to communicate and even to develop competence in the colloquial dialects of Arabic, primary emphasis continued to fall on the ability to read texts from a number of different periods and disciplines. It was during the 1980s—at least in the United States—that "national needs" began to be cited as motivating factors in a push towards a greater concentration on applicable language skills—what became known as the "proficiency movement." Within Arabic literature studies what this movement in language-teaching and -learning did was to enhance—albeit gradually—the level of competence that learners were encouraged to achieve. It thus resulted in a new generation of literature specialists who were not only ready to interpret the literary texts but also to spend increasing amounts of time conducting research in the Arabic-speaking regions and to engage with the creative writers and critics who contribute to the indigenous literary tradition.

This increasing engagement between the still small group of Arabic literature specialists in the West and the writers and critics of the Arabic-speaking regions was much enhanced by a marked increase in the number of opportunities for con-

tact. There had, of course, been a number of foreign research institutes in Arab capitals—with Cairo certainly holding the prize for the largest number and the longest duration: French, Austrian, German, Italian, Dutch, British, and American. Beyond those facilities however, the "Maglis al-A'la li-al-Thaqafa" (the Supreme Council for Culture—a subdivision of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture) began under the enlightened leadership of prominent literary scholars, first 'Izz al-din Isma'il and later Gaber Asfour, to organize conferences to which were invited creative writers, critics, and scholars from across the Arabic-speaking world and also from all the Western and Eastern academic communities. I can recall, for example, how remarkable it was to attend conferences devoted to the novel and to translation and to encounter not only the majority of the region's great writers but also colleagues from Russia, Japan, and China in addition to others from as far apart as Morocco and Iraq. Such meetings have been (and continue to be) invaluable for creating and maintaining contacts between literature specialists outside the Arabic-speaking regions and the practitioners within them. They resulted in a joint awareness—probably absent or unrealized in the past—that we are all involved in an important joint enterprise, that of bringing an awareness of the riches of the Arabic literary tradition to a much broader public, wherever it may be.

In connection with scholarly communities of this kind, I should mention the organization of modern Arabic literature specialists in Europe that began as EMTAR in 1992 (a conference at Nijmegen in the Netherlands convened by a much respected late colleague, Ed de Moor) and more recently renamed EURAMAL (the European meeting of specialists on modern Arabic literature). This biennial gathering brings specialists from different European nations together, and the papers delivered at its thematically-based conferences have been gathered in a series of publications that are important contributions to Arabic literature studies and, in particular, to the linkage of such studies to developments in literary criticism and theory on the broader level.

But, to return to the 1980s, the most significant event for Arabic literature studies occurred on October 13, 1988, when it was announced that an Egyptian novelist, Naguib Mahfouz, had won that year's Nobel Prize in Literature. I well remember the mad scramble as newspapers, magazines, and publishers sought information about this writer, then almost totally unknown outside the Arab world itself. What was perhaps most disarming was how all these differing clienteles readily acknowledged their surprise at several vast gaps in knowledge. Not only was such an important literary figure unknown and scantily available in English translation (Columbia University Press, which distributed the American University in Cairo Press's series of Mahfouz novels mentioned above, ran out of copies the very first day), but the Arabic literary tradition as a whole was almost totally missing from all major reference works and anthologies devoted to "world literature" or even "non-Western literature" (where the overwhelming prefer-

ence was for East Asian and, more recently, African literary traditions). When the Arabic literary tradition did appear, the selection consisted almost always of an extract from the Qur'ân (not considered by Muslim believers to be "literature") and another from *A Thousand and One Nights*—a curious juxtaposition, to put it mildly. In retrospect, the Nobel award not only brought Mahfouz's name to the attention of a much wider reading public but also transformed the presence-absence of Arabic literature in every kind of literary and cultural reference work, upon the revenues from which so many Western publishers rely. Mahfouz's prominence also had a "kick-on" effect, in that other prominent Arab writers could now have their translated works be considered by Western commercial presses rather than be dismissed as "unmarketable." There is something of an irony in the fact that, after the "bust" in the American economy in the late 1990s and the continuing impact of 9/11, the willingness of publishers to take on items of Arabic literary creativity has now reverted to the (bad) old days, perhaps even worse.

By any yardstick, the study of Arabic literature in Western academe (and especially its Anglophone segment) has seen considerable change over the past half-century. The linguistic competence of its practitioners has broadened to such an extent as to make research visits and prolonged periods in the Arabic-speaking regions not merely a desideratum but a necessity, in that it provides links between specialists from the region itself and other world regions (not only the West). With a grateful nod to the great achievements of the philological traditions of the past—the dictionaries, anthologies, histories, text editions, and translations—a new generation of "literature specialists" has trained itself in the theoretical components of literature studies and specifically Comparative Literature (both of them relatively new endeavors, as Terry Eagleton has reminded us) and to apply those principles to the Arabic literary tradition in all its different eras and genres and from a variety of points of view. This trend has gradually led to an inclusion of the Arabic literary heritage as an interesting and potentially important element in a number of comparative literature environments. This observation applies most obviously to Hispanic studies (or, more accurately, Hispano-Arabic studies), but equally to later Hellenistic research and to African (and especially North-West African) studies. Along with an enhanced and variegated language and cultural competence applied across a number of different disciplinary fields and boundaries has come an increase in the number and quality of translations. They come mostly, to be sure, from the modern period, but also, in regrettably rare cases, from the pre-modern era. In the Anglophone tradition, I would cite the work of Michael Sells: in particular, his translations of early Arabic poetry, *Desert Tracings* (1989) and of the later suras of the Qur'an, *Approaching the Qur`an: the early revelations* (1999). Needless to say, such a large and varied repertoire of translations, especially of fiction, has made the offering of undergraduate courses (and not only in literature studies) far easier than when I began my career in 1968.

In spite of these positive developments, however, a number of challenges continues to confront Arabic literature specialists today. In addressing those challenges, what comes to mind is the ancient saying of Hippocrates, usually cited in Latin: "Ars longa, vita brevis." The tradition of Arabic literary art is indeed long in chronological terms, stretching back to unidentifiable beginnings not later than the fifth century CE. However, when we add to that purview the geographical spread of the Arabic-speaking world during the post-Islamic period—in the ringing words of the former Egyptian President, Gamal `Abd al-Nasir (Nasser), a region that extends "from the [Atlantic] Ocean to the [Arabian/Persian] Gulf"—and the amazing variety of genres and sub-genres that we encounter within these chronological and geographical frames of reference, then the task of the Arabic literature scholar becomes potentially enormous. It is in such a context that the implications of "vita brevis" come into play. Life is indeed (too) short to encompass even a small portion of the field. I now prefer to state that I am first a narratologist, and second someone who deals with the literary production of the Arabic-speaking world, rather than making any claims to be able to "cover" the entire field of Arabic literature.

However, beyond that situation is the fact that, compared to other fields of foreign and comparative literature studies, the number of Arabic literature scholars is extremely small. I have become particularly aware of this situation in recent years as editor of the final volume of the *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, devoted to what was termed (not without its own controversy) the "post-classical period"—or, the seven centuries between 1150 and 1840. If the number of specialists in Arabic literature studies in general is relatively small, then in this period there are large segments of literary productivity for which there are no specialists at all—with the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries as a particular wasteland of research. The recent and excellent survey in French by Hilary Kilpatrick constitutes an almost unique exception to this statement. What complicates this situation even more is that the vast majority of these scholars in Arabic literature studies are the only people in the field at their institutions. Rare indeed is the academic institution where a cluster of such scholars can be found. Whence, one might suggest, the indispensability of the conferences and associations that have been convened to bring scholars together in a single venue and around a particular topic, genre, or region.

Turning to the world of publication, I have been interested in recent decades, in my many contacts throughout Europe, to observe the different postures toward Arab literature and that scholarship devoted to it. France and its university system have been far ahead of other nations and cultures in their interest in the region and its literature. Of course, that is partially a response to colonial initiatives arguably stretching back into the eighteenth century, but a visit to any French bookstore should be enough to demonstrate that, for reasons that need much more compara-

tive research, there is a large French reading public for Arabic literature from all periods. The same is true, albeit more recently, with the comparable publics in Spain and Italy. In the case of Germany, recent initiatives in publication have also led to a marked increase in interest among readers of literature. The award of a national prize to the Libyan novelist, Ibrahim al-Kuni, for the best foreign novel of the year and the devotion of an annual Frankfurt Book Fair to Arabic literature are merely two examples of a larger trend. Why, by comparison, the Anglophone readership—implying Britain and the United States—seems so uninterested in Arabic literature remains a mystery to me. As just noted, this entire topic is in need of research.

Perhaps the most dismaying problem connected with publishing works of and about Arabic literature involves the future of the academic monograph and indeed of the printed book as an institution. In an article for the journal, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, the editor of the *American Historical Review*, Michael C. Grossberg, addresses with agreeable frankness the gradual demise of the academic monograph as a commercial proposition. He goes on to advocate the need for the academic community to come to grips with alternative means of publishing research (and, equally important, for younger scholars seeking jobs and advancement in the profession, of evaluating it). If the academic monograph in general finds itself in hard times as it faces the demands of "market forces," then such works devoted to the Arabic literary tradition are in the process of completely disappearing. In the wake of 9/11/2001, there is a continuing demand for works devoted to Islam and terrorism (preferably a combination of the two), to Middle Eastern finance and banking, and to works by women of Middle Eastern origin that will appeal to the large number of Western readers (and book clubs) that wish to have their prejudices confirmed. While thousands of copies of books in this last category flourish, the more accomplished and significant works by genuinely gifted women writers in the region struggle to find a market and to remain in it. A short list would have to include Huda Barakat and Hanan al-Shaykh from Lebanon, Salwa Bakr and Radwa Ashur from Egypt, Sahar Khalifa from Palestine, and Layla al-'Uthman from Kuwait.

And, as the group of scholars of EURAMAL discovered in a discussion at their May 2008 conference in Uppsala, Sweden, we now seem to be encountering the emergence of the "Arabic best-seller," represented by the fiction of Ahlam Mustaghanimi from Algeria (such as *Memory in the Flesh* [2000]), 'Ala' al-Aswani from Egypt (*The Yacoubian Building*, 2004), and Raja' al-Sani' (Rajaa Alsanea) from Saudi Arabia (*Girls of Riyad*, 2007). What is particularly interesting about this phenomenon is that all these works have been roundly condemned by the "literary critical establishment" both inside and outside the region, yet they continue to sell large numbers of copies (and al-Aswani's novel has been made into a highly successful film). Here the Middle Eastern creative writers and critics

find themselves confronting an issue which neither they nor Western literature scholars have yet considered: what is the dividing line between fiction "of literary merit" and other types of work that are considered "unworthy" of critical attention, to be consigned perhaps to the category of "airport reading." Equally important, if a line is to be drawn, who is entitled to draw it and on the basis of what criteria? This too is clearly a topic for further research and debate.

The opening of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* talks of "the best of days" and "the worst of days," an appropriate phrase to close this essay. Within Arabic literature studies today, standards of language-competence and literary-critical acumen are higher and more pleasingly variegated than ever before. More translations of at least the literary production of the modern era are now available, and in many Western languages, and more people than ever are involved in both activities. And yet the gaps in our basic knowledge of the literary heritage of the Arabs are enormous, and I have not even discussed the plethora of uncatalogued and unread manuscripts to be found in the world's libraries which, as my late and much esteemed colleague, George Makdisi, continually reminded his students, may far outweigh what we already know about the Arab-Islamic heritage. Those few "laborers in the vineyard" now confront a changed situation, one in which the palpable interest of so many people in the Middle East is not reflected in an equivalent awareness of the crucial importance of its literary traditions, and one where, in a maximal irony, it now becomes yet more difficult to correct such an imbalance through publication.

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# FORUM II

## Why Chinua Achebe Is Important to Us:

## At the Fiftieth Anniversary of *Things Fall Apart*

Note: Véronique Tadjo, the author of this tribute, was born in Paris but raised in Côte d'Ivoire. Her novels include *À vol d'oiseau*, *Le royaume aveugle*, and *L'Ombre d'Imana*; her most recent novel, *Reine Pokou*, received the "Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Noire" in 2005.

When I was a schoolgirl living in Côte d'Ivoire where I come from, *Things Fall Apart* was part of our curriculum. The story of the protagonist Okonkwo resonated in our lives, not just because Nigeria is our big neighbor, but mainly because we could identify with the characters in the novel. In the story, Okonkwo lives in a village very similar to the villages that still exist in many parts of Africa and especially in West Africa.

The conflict between tradition and modernity was predominant in our part of the world, too. Even though I am from Abidjan, the economic capital, I had ample opportunities to go to my father's village, where I could experience rural life and observe the rapid transformation that was going on there. Yet, like many of my friends, we thought that the pace of change was too slow. But one thing was for certain, our life was a constant battle with compromise, trying to find a balance between our grandparents' past and our parents' present. We did not know how much faster we could go. Nevertheless, we knew instinctively that it would fall on us, too, to assess our cultural heritage and to decide what we should keep and what we should abandon. At stake was our position in the world arena or as Léopold Sédar Senghor, the great Senegalese poet, used to call it, "The civilization of the universal" (Biondi 120, my translation).

We were able to have access to a French translation of *Things Fall Apart*, thanks to Présence Africaine which published the novel in 1966. It very quickly became a classic. For those who are not familiar with Présence Africaine, it began in 1947 as a Pan-African cultural, political, and literary review, published in Paris

and founded by Alioune Diop, a Senegalese writer and professor of philosophy. He collaborated closely with writers and thinkers from Africa, Europe, and the USA, among whom were Aimé Césaire, Richard Wright, Albert Camus, André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Théodore Monod, as well as Senghor. A publishing house and a bookstore were later added. As a review, *Présence Africaine* was highly influential in the struggle for decolonization from France. Its editors had the ambition of creating a platform of expression for what was then known as the Negro World. It promoted the Négritude movement, which was a literary weapon against cultural and political colonial oppression.

In 1956, Présence Africaine organized the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists (Premier Congrès international des écrivains et artistes noirs) in Paris. Jacques Rabémananjara, Cheikh Anta Diop, and Frantz Fanon joined the other writers of the Négritude movement; and Pablo Picasso, who had been interested in African art since before World War I, designed a poster for the occasion. Editions Présence Africaine published the most important Francophone African writers of the twentieth century and also pioneered in bringing out French translations of Anglophone writers like Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o in addition to Achebe.

Senghor, who was one of the originators of the concept of Négritude, defined it as "the totality of the values—economic and political, intellectual and moral, artistic and social—not only of the peoples of Black Africa, but also of those of the minorities of Black America and even of Asia and the Ocean islands" (Biondi 146, my translation). His conception of Négritude was different from that of Aimé Césaire, who was known to be more radical in his fight against French racism and imperialism. His long poem *Return to my Native Land* is a perfect illustration of his revolutionary writing. Senghor was more preoccupied with the meeting of cultures and the idea of universality through authenticity. However, both agreed that their shared black heritage was a rallying force in the fight against French political, economic, and intellectual oppression.

To my mind this movement among Francophone Africans and their supporters applies to *Things Fall Apart* as well. On numerous occasions, Achebe has stated that at the time (the fifties) his intention in writing the book was to respond to European cultural domination. For him, a novel like *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad "projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (*Hopes* 3). *Things Fall Apart* successfully challenges the colonialist discourse of the time by showing the complexity and richness of traditional Ibo life and customs. Achebe sought to put an end to a Eurocentric way of telling Africa's story. The novel takes place at that moment in the nineteenth century which marked the end of one time and the beginning of another. In this sense one can say that beyond its critique of colonialism Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is also important to us because it represents a paradox.

Indeed, Achebe's novel is striking for its realistic style, which is rooted in a specific historical and social context to such an extent that it could be viewed as a documentary or an eyewitness account of traditional Africa and of Ibo culture in particular. The story takes place in Umuofia, a village in Iboland located in present day Nigeria. Umuofia is a world onto itself. It seems totally cut off from the outside. It has its own rules, laws, and religion. In this closed environment, Okwonko lives entirely for his clan, seeing himself as a defender of his society against outside influences. Yet despite this very specific, localized subject matter, the novel has been translated into more than fifty languages and has sold over twelve million copies. As a result, it can be claimed that, more than any other novel, *Things Fall Apart* illustrates that art is a universal medium.

The paradox here is that the more you dive into a particular culture, the more it is possible to attain a universal level of meaning because the human dimension needs truth and authenticity to be fully realized. Okwonko exemplifies the tragedy of transition, of the old order being replaced by the new. Every society has experienced this situation at one point or another. What we are as human beings is defined by our past. But what is left of it? The African way of life before and during colonization is no more. In *Things Fall Apart* we become the witnesses to this destruction.

But the novel is also remarkable because it recounts the downfall of Okonkwo, an ambitious man who all his life strove to become influential in his society, but who was ultimately defeated by his own demons and ended up miserable and rejected by his clan. Underestimating the apocalyptic clash of civilizations brought by the arrival of Europeans and of the Christian religion, he stuck to the old ways even when they did not make sense any more in the new order.

The worldwide success of this novel is unmistakably due to yet another factor: Achebe's creative use of language. In an interview, he stated: "When I decided to write a novel which would deal with the colonizing presence of Britain in my life and in my country, I realized I had to start a conversation between these two languages, which is how the book was conceived. I knew that in some way the meeting of these two languages would define my literary identity" (Interview). Achebe freely uses untranslated Ibo words and phrases. In *Things Fall Apart* one of the characters Okoye speaks in proverbs. He explains the Ibo art of conversation in these terms: ". . . proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (4). Achebe uses the same principle in his writing in order to better render the flavor of Ibo society and culture. "In fact, it is not one language—English—that Achebe uses but a series of languages with which he explores new frontiers. He does that in order to accommodate new realities in the social experience" (Anohu 9).

Although English was the language of colonialists, Achebe understood at the time that it was too powerful a weapon for him not to use it for Africa's own agenda. Through his inclusion of proverbs, folktales, and songs translated from the Ibo language, Achebe managed to capture and convey the rhythms, structures, cadences, and beauty of the Ibo language. His approach was revolutionary, and

it brought about a real liberation of the English language from the shackles of its oppressive historical past. It became a medium for change.

It is interesting to note that much the same thing was going on in francophone Africa with the French language. When most of the former French colonies became independent in the sixties, it was a time of euphoria and great hope for the future of Africa. Less than a decade later, however, things were not going that well in francophone Africa. Neo-colonialism took hold of the economy, and the political elites proved to be too greedy to honour the promises made at independence. A period of disillusion followed. The novel that best illustrates this post-independence disenchantment is, without doubt, *Les soleils des indépendances* (The Suns of Independence) by Ahmadou Kourouma from Côte d'Ivoire. When Kourouma submitted his manuscript for publication, it was refused by publishers in both France and Africa on the grounds that it was written in "incorrect" French. The manuscript found itself passed around before it ended up in Canada where it was finally published in 1968. It became an instant best-seller and was subsequently bought by a prestigious French publisher, Le Seuil, in 1970. Cheaper editions were produced for the African market and the book was read by millions of school children, since it stayed on the syllabus for decades and is still being taught today.

What was revolutionary in Kourouma's novel was the fact that for the first time a writer attempted to recreate the way common people really talked in Africa. He fused French with his Malinke mother tongue. French syntax and grammar were twisted, and some words took on a whole new meaning. His language ignored basic rules. The style was exuberant and full of raw sensuality. With this book, Kourouma showed that French wasn't just the language of the former oppressors but that it could also be used to serve our purposes and to render our African experience. He demonstrated that the language belonged to us, too, and that we were free to use it the way we wanted to in order to communicate our reality. It is only through a creative use of language that a writer can begin to approach truth through fiction. In Achebe's case this search also led him to tell the story of Ibo traditional society in all its grandeur and all its weakness.

Many critics have pointed out Achebe's courage as a writer because he chose to include in his story the dark side of Ibo customs. If he was skillful enough not to turn this aspect of the novel into a denunciation, he was nevertheless clear sighted in his portrayal of the village of Umofia with some of its destructive beliefs. For example, Okonkwo chooses to participate in the ritual killing of the young boy who, over time, has become like an adopted son to him. He even gives him the fatal blow so as to avoid showing any sign of vulnerability. This demonstrates an inherent weakness of the society as illustrated in the main protagonist. With more cohesion, Umofia might have been better able to resist the colonizers' cultural and religious domination.

At no time does Achebe fall into a nostalgic recounting of the past. This is unusual because such a position at the time required an ability to distance oneself that was much more difficult to achieve than today. Okonkwo is a tragic figure

whose flaw lies in his inability to understand the winds of change. He is an ordinary man wreaking havoc on his society because of his intransigence and refusal to bring about the necessary changes that could have saved his society from defeat and domination. Had he been a different kind of hero, he would have been able to integrate the new into his life and outlook and to make it work for the good of the community.

When I look back at my own life as a writer, I can say that *Things Fall Apart* was a great inspiration for me. It was certainly at the back of my mind when I completed my most recent novel, *Reine Pokou*. It is the retelling of a well known legend/myth involving Pokou, who was the founder of the Baoulé kingdom located in present-day Côte d'Ivoire. According to the eighteenth-century legend the queen, originally from the Ashanti kingdom (present-day Ghana), had to sacrifice her only son in order to save her people from a fratricidal war. The kingdom was named Ba-ou-li (the child is dead).

For me it was important to question this legend because it carries a message that is unacceptable today. The problem comes from the fact that Queen Pokou is also an historical figure. Her departure from the Ashanti kingdom is dated and records of it exist. It is therefore very confusing to have this blurred frontier between myth and history. Did the sacrificial killing really take place, or should we understand it on a symbolical level?

Because this legend is still part of our imagination and our politicians sometimes refer to it, I concluded that it was a matter of urgency to challenge its legitimacy. I also wanted to give back to Queen Pokou a central place in the legend. In the different retellings that I propose, she appears as a heroic figure not unlike those of Greek tragedy. I also wanted the child to come to the forefront so as to initiate a strong awareness of the vulnerability of children in certain societies.

When I return to *Things Fall Apart* as a woman writer/reader, some specific aspects in the novel stand out in my mind. Because of his failed relationship with his father whom he considered weak, Okonkwo adopts a violent and harsh manner towards people he perceives as being in a lower position than him. Consequently, he rejects anything that might appear feminine. In his mind, masculinity is linked with force and brute authority. He beats his wives and even threatens to kill the youngest one in a fit of rage because she has been "unruly."

Yet "The female characters in the novel stand for the very thing which the male-dominated society does not consider," said Achebe in an interview. "If you go back to *Things Fall Apart*, all the problems Okonkwo has from beginning to end are related to ignoring the female! And that is where he is a flawed hero. Women stand for compassion" (Interview).

When talking about his work, Achebe has also thrown light on the concept of "Chi" in Ibo culture: "Every individual has a chi, a 'spirit being' linked to his physical being. It means that everybody has a double in the spirit world and therefore, there is a duality inherent in our personalities. We are not one but two. We are not just masculine or feminine but both. By denying his feminine side,

Okonkwo limits his options and closes himself from the possibility of redeeming change" (Strong-Leek).

In addition, there is another belief that reinforces this image of the feminine as a positive force in *Things Fall Apart*. Kwame Anthony Appiah states:

> . . . the god who, above all others, regulates life in Umuofia is Ani, the earth goddess. And it is a reflection of Okonkwo's failure to seek balance between the manly virtues and the womanly virtues as understood in Umuofia, that each of the disasters that afflicts him can be seen as a crime against the earth. . . . It is a mark of Achebe's mastery that he manages to communicate this ideal of balance . . . even while describing a culture that will strike many modem readers as overwhelmingly—even oppressively—dominated by men (Resources).

Let me end these reflections with words from Chinua Achebe himself. It is a quote from his essay "What Has Literature Got to Do with It?":

> The matter is really quite simple. Literature, whether handed down by word of mouth or in print, gives us a second handle on reality, enabling us to encounter in the safe, manageable dimensions of make-believe the very same threats to integrity that may assail the psyche of real life; and at the same time providing through the self-discovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with these threats whether they are found in problematic and incoherent selves or in the world around us. What better preparation can a people desire as they begin their journey into the strange, revolutionary world of modernization? (*Hopes* 170).

We are still, most of us, in one way or another, in the throes of transformation, and this is why Chinua Achebe's work remains so important to us.

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# ÉTATS DE LA PROFESSION / STATES OF THE PROFESSION:

## La Chine/China, L'Italie/Italy, Le Mexique/Mexico.

**Zhang Longxi. *Bijiao wenxue rumen / An Introduction to Comparative Literature*. Yanjiusheng xueshu rumen shouce series. Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2008. 5 + 164 pp. 978-7309062250.**

Although comparative literature was born from the impulse to transcend the narrow limits of national literary history, every example of the discipline shows that there is no directly cosmopolitan standpoint, no "view from nowhere": a comparative project always originates in its own moment and milieu and addresses a particular audience. Zhang Longxi's brief survey corresponds to the state of the discipline in China and is addressed to the advanced student who is familiar with literary studies but not yet persuaded to take the comparative route. It is an effective recruiting poster. Readers not directly addressed by the book may take from it a new angle on our field.

The book's chapters are entitled: "Prologue," "The Challenges and Opportunities of Chinese-Western Comparative Literature," "Models of Research in Comparative Literature," "Models of Research in Chinese-Western Comparative Literature," and "Works Cited." The landscape it depicts is thus not comparative literature in general, or for an indifferent observer, but as seen by a specifically situated agent: the future Chinese comparatist. It suggests paths through an area that has not yet been completely mapped.

An environment consists of constraints and opportunities, the inventory of which is keyed to the capacities of its inhabitants. Literary research is no exception.

> Ever since the 1960s and 70s, a great many scholars in the West have been increasingly dissatisfied with purely Europe-centered literary research, and comparatists, seeing that comparative literature in the traditional sense was apparently leading nowhere, began to break out of the confines of the Western canon. At present there is a body of work on comparative literature or world literature that leaps over the Western tradition and is written from a global point of view. Although such works are not many, they represent an opportunity for the future of comparative literature. Nonetheless, East-West comparative literature—or to speak more narrowly and concretely to the Chinese scholar: comparisons involving Chinese-Western literature or culture—are still at a preliminary stage. In the context of worldwide comparative literature, East-West comparison is still in its infancy, and is far from occupying the center or mainstream. (3-4)

In the background of these remarks lies the fact that in China, comparative literary research is usually housed in departments of Chinese, and the shape of discussions and dissertations tends to reflect that sponsorship: "Voltaire and China," "Rilke and China," "The image of China in the nineteenth-century English lyric," and so forth, are highly probable topics. Zhang points out that this sinocentrism is not universal, and implies that it may go the way of the Eurocentrism found unsatisfactory in previous decades. Just as Western scholarship was impelled to find a way out of its dead end, so Chinese scholarship will need to broaden its coverage—but it is not a matter simply of introducing new objects to compare. The models that enable comparison, accounting for differences and relationships among literary works from different traditions, must multiply and increase in sophistication. Inclusion in itself leads nowhere—or underwrites a superficial globalism—and may, if limited by a doctrinaire relativism, paradoxically narrow the reach of comparative study. Zhang takes Susan Bassnett's model of comparative literature as "translation studies" as a premonitory example: while mounting a much-needed challenge to the universalism of literary taste that often merely cloaks a provincial Eurocentric agenda, the suggestion that the leading task of British comparative literature should now be to investigate the colonial and postcolonial relations among English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh literatures seems both restrictive and, in its post-imperial way, nationalistic.

Zhang takes very much to heart the emergence of an "American" way of doing comparative literature in the years after the Second World War, as a reaction against the chauvinism and self-centeredness of the all too nationalistic 1930s. Though often criticized as "ahistorical" and unempirical by tenants of a "French" approach (to cite the markers of a polemic now happily out of date), the "American" approach could never be said to have exempted itself from history: largely the creation of émigré scholars from Europe, it implicitly repudiated the national vanity and the hierarchy of literary origins that haunted influence studies (35), and instantiated a space of intellectual freedom where the scholar could make Montaigne dialogue with Mencius, for example, and where Racine, Shakespeare and Zeami might meet on a ground other than that of normativity.

Zhang's aesthetic and ethical bonds to the postwar period are strong. This becomes apparent in his choice of model texts in his third chapter: Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*, Claudio Guillén's *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*. Pedagogically speaking, it is more effective to put before the student examples, with all they can offer of content, style, narrative, and authorial personality, than bare precepts. These three leading examples share the feeling that comparative literature is both a newly possible field of endeavor and one poised on the brink of transformation by the availability of new, extra-European canons, and they respond to the uncertain future shape of the discipline with open-minded curiosity (sometimes mixed with nostalgia, as in Auerbach's closing chapters). Zhang feels less of a link to the post-colonial mode, which in his thinking tends too rapidly to generate apocalyptic pronouncements

and to revert to "cultural nationalism" (24, 37).

Given these tastes, the question is how to set up and practice a cosmopolitan or "global" view. The history of the comparative investigation into parallelism and rhyme first launched by the Formalists (Zhirmunsky, Jakobson) and continued by Riffaterre, Kugel and others (27-30) provides one example. Here the individuality of particular cultural forms and the irreducible differences of languages must be taken into account: the particulars correct whatever is over-ambitious in the original hypothesis and makes possible a typology of poetic forms, perhaps even an international history of formal change. (It just so happens that Chinese poetry is one of the main sources of new ideas in this investigation.) "In pursuing the question thus," says Zhang in summary, "the goal is not to reach a single all-embracing conclusion, but to understand better the nature and structure of parallelism, to recognize the rich plurality of the literary traditions of multiple languages" (29). A universal question gets a multiply specific answer. Without the question, there would be nothing to answer; this gives universalism (and "theory," which I believe Zhang would class among the aspirant universalisms) a constructive but not constricting role.

The first set of model texts showed how to do comparative literature within a basically European universe, making the assumptions about literary language and human nature that went with *pax Americana* cosmopolitanism. In chapter 4, Zhang brings his focus closer to home and discusses in detail several comparative investigations that exemplify the integration of Chinese and Western literary and theoretical texts. These are: Zhu Guangqian's investigations into psychology and aesthetics and his general poetics (100-114); Yang Zhouhan's pursuit of Milton's rare topical references to China and the Chinese, and the history of the first Western poem to be translated into Chinese, Milton's "Sonnet on his Blindness" (114-125); and at greatest length, Qian Zhongshu's wide-ranging, discursive, scrapbook-like essays exploring the coincidences among the topoi of Chinese classical literature and the literatures of Western Europe (125-146). These three authors, revered in China, are likely to be less well known to readers of this journal. Of the three, Yang's research appears to be less adventurous in spirit, in that it is based on textual records and asks commonsense questions (what did Milton say about China? How did he gain his information? What did China represent to him?) without significantly disturbing the link between the sign "China" and its referent. But it takes no stretching of categories to recognize Zhu, Qian, and Yang as fellow members of the craft and classifiable into familiar types: a builder of general aesthetic theories, a scholar of sources and influences, and an orchestrator of detail, conducting stylistics and the history of ideas in parallel in the manner of Leo Spitzer. But what will a Chinese undergraduate or graduate student, the intended reader of this book, make of them? Zhang admits that not many of us can aspire to the learning, the memory, or the creativity of Qian or Zhu. Nor would many of us hold up well under the neglectful or hostile treatment they received in their time. Separated from the common conversation and hindered from publication for

decades due to Chinese government suspicion of anything foreign, Zhu Guangqian and Qian Zhongshu deserve recognition for their stubborn allegiance to the idea that cultures and ideas can be made to communicate (*tong* or "pierce," in Qian's favored phrase). Nonetheless they combine to make uncontroversial the claim that comparative literature incorporating the Chinese tradition is not only possible or desirable but can be discovered and enlarged.

Zhang's book does not cover everything. The international range it envisions is basically "Chinese + Western," omitting possible or achieved comparative projects linking Chinese texts to those of (for example) India, Africa, the Islamic world, or Japan. Literary theory, an avenue of access to foreign literatures for many young Chinese scholars, does not receive much emphasis, and what is said about it is often unenthusiastic (as when Zhang warns against over-reliance on "jargon"). Zhang's intended reader, it seems, is familiar with literary works but less so with criticism. Popular culture, film, and electronic media—which account for a "global perspective" of their own by sheer distribution—scarcely figure. But this book is a gateway, not an exhaustive atlas, and the person who opens it will emerge stimulated, encouraged, scolded, and prepared to think about the "unity in variety" (146) that characterizes our field.

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## Between the Local and the Global: Comparative Literature in the Land of Dante

The starting point for my remarks is the 2008 publication of *L'uno e il molteplice: Introduzione alla letteratura comparata*, the Italian translation of the 2005 updated version of Claudio Guillén's seminal text *Entre lo uno y lo diverso: Introducción a la Literatura comparada (Ayer y hoy)*. In addition to providing further evidence of the worldwide success of this work, the latest Italian edition (issued after three reprints of the previous version, respectively in 1992, 1998 and 2001) also suggests various considerations on the conceptualization and status of comparative literature within Italy's academic and cultural establishment.

Arguably, the different translation choices for the titles of the American and Italian editions are themselves symptomatic of distinct approaches and disciplinary concerns. While "*The Challenge of Comparative Literature*" evokes a somewhat established but controversial scholarly domain confronting trials and resistances, the "introductory" scope of the volume highlighted in the Italian translation promises, more reassuringly, to familiarize readers with both the coherence and the complexity of what appears as a dynamic, yet not necessarily contentious, new field. Furthermore, by omitting the tension between the past and the present status of Comparative Literature to which the addition of "*Ahier y hoy*" alludes in the 2005 Spanish edition, the Italian version reinforces the perception of fundamental features that define the discipline against the test of time.

This does not mean that Guillén's book intends to uphold an essentializing idea of Comparative Literature as a discipline with immutable objectives and crystallized relationships with other cognitive fields. As the most recent Spanish edition also shows, Guillén's critical vision of comparative literature echoes the intense ongoing debates on the status and the boundaries of the discipline with respect to literary theory, cultural studies, and the wider practice of interdisciplinarity. Proximity to these fields seems, on the one hand, to empower comparative literature by expanding its agency. Yet, on the other hand, this boundless border crossing is also seen as a potential erasure of the discipline's own identity, insofar as both the comparative approach and the specificity of the literary domain risk being dissolved into broader and blurrier spheres.

If the latter standpoint has generated essays like Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* or the less apocalyptic reports of the American Comparative Literature Association which question the traditional territories of Comparative Literature, for its part the consciousness that, overall, comparative literature has of itself in the land of Dante is closer to what Guillén defines as "The French Hour" of Comparative Literature (46-59), and, precisely because of its different background and concerns with respect with the American context, it can still greatly benefit from Guillén's own work.

As symptomatic evidence we can take two 1995 publications, respectively in the U.S. and in Italy, namely *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* edited by Charles Bernheimer, and *Letteratura Comparata: Storia e testi*, edited by Armando Gnisci. Issued as a way of disseminating and arguing with the 1993 Bernheimer Report, the American collection offers a rich debate on the shifting boundaries of comparative literature away from its traditional goals and methods. Both descriptively and prescriptively, contributors engage with the decentering of the discipline "from the old models of literary study according to authors, nations, periods, and genres" (42), and expand its horizon beyond the European canon by recontextualizing it within a multicultural, multidisciplinary, and multimedia world. This redefinition of comparative literature in view of a democratization of knowledge expected of a postcolonial world also paves the way for that consciousness of globalization that will become central in the 2006 ACLA Report edited by Haun Saussy.

For its part, Gnisci's 1995 collection *Letteratura Comparata* reveals different priorities. The most urgent need is to build the history of the discipline for the Italian audience through a selection of texts by leading Western intellectuals (from Texte, Baldensperger, and Croce to Wellek, Remak, and Miner, among others) and to combine this diachronic (albeit accelerated) hermeneutic itinerary with pedagogical and research tools able to equip the Italian neophytes for the contemporary dialogue in which they are, as Gnisci admitted at the time, the latest arrivals (11). A clear sign of the importance of increasing Italy's awareness of the current international discussions emerges from Gnisci's 1997 edited volume *Manuale storico di letteratura comparata*. This collection updates the format

and content of the previous work by including the Italian translation of the 1993 Bernheimer Report, as well as contributions by Yue Daiyun on the centrality and international power of theory in comparative literature and by Gnisci himself on the mission of comparative literature as worldwide outreach.

Yet, as a whole, there is still a great deal that Italian students and scholars wish to assimilate in terms of approaches, methods and objectives before feeling ready to mull over the future of the discipline altogether. Rather than deconstructing itself, comparative literature in Italy needs first of all to construct an identity and to find a niche. This explains Guillén's latest reappearance on Italian bookshelves, as the 2008 volume description issued by the publishing house also confirms: if we accept that the comparative perspective is becoming a quite established approach to literature also in Italy, *L'uno e il molteplice* deserves special attention as still one of the very few reference texts in the field.

While offering a diachronic and international overview of the scholarly and pedagogical objectives of comparative literature, Guillén also organizes his critical reflections around the most crucial questions of literary genres, forms, and themes, as well as of reception, intertextuality, and periodization. Not simply a handbook but, rather, a personal and critical systematization of its subject matter, *L'uno e il molteplice* is nonetheless beneficial to an Italian audience precisely because of its introductory and orderly nature, and its attempt at exhaustiveness. It is not accidental that the Italian translation of another reference text, arguably more "handbook-like" than Guillén's, namely Souiller's and Troubetzkoy's *Littérature comparée*, is enjoying equal popularity in Italian stores and syllabi.

However, Italian scholarship itself has contributed additional works of this kind. In 2002, Nicola Gardini published *Letteratura comparata: metodi, periodi, generi*, which can be considered the first Italian single-authored introductory book explicitly devoted to the discipline and aimed at providing a systematic framework for Italian comparative studies. Without aspiring to exhaustivity, the structure of the book, as Gardini himself explains, intends to cover the three main areas of research in European and North American comparative studies, namely, theoretical inquiries (from reflections on the identity and tasks of comparative literature, the issue of the canon, and the role of genres and themes, to the status of translation across epochs, and a sample of recent theoretical approaches that have offered particularly fertile grounds to comparative literature, namely, reception, cultural, and gender studies); a historiographic reappraisal of literary movements across temporal, geographical, and linguistic boundaries; and a discussion of the main literary genres and forms through a comparative analysis of major authors and works blending a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. Significantly, 2002 also sees the re-publication of Gnisci's 1999 edited volume *Letteratura comparata*, which, while sharing with Gardini's an attention to historical developments and contemporary theoretical trends, periodization, genres, and themes, includes, too, a discussion of relationships between literature and the other arts, of travel literature, and of imagology as intercultural studies.

This methodical attention to the norms and evolution of literary forms and to their relations—a *leitmotif* in Italian comparative studies—can be found, for instance, in a critical study recently published precisely in the field of imagology, namely, Paolo Proietti's *Specchi del letterario: l'imagologia. Percorsi di letteratura comparata* (Sellerio, 2008). Presented as the first Italian systematic investigation in an area of comparative studies dealing with the central role played by literary images in the construction and interpretation of a text, Proietti's volume combines structural and theoretical issues with a historical approach to the study of images ranging from ancient Greece to contemporary culture. This critical overview, which Proietti conducts through the specific image of the other and of the stranger, is also an occasion to examine the ideas of leading comparatists who at different epochs engaged with those subjects—from Joseph Texte, Paul Hazard, and Jean-Marie Carré, down to what Proietti presents as the founders of modern imagology proper, namely, Hugo Dysenrick and Daniel-Henri Pageaux. By concentrating on stereotypes of "otherness," they pave the way not only for the "comparative poetics" proposed in the 1990s by Earl Miner but also for contemporary extraliterary explorations (psychic archetypes, for instance) and broadly cultural questions of ethnicity, migration, and postcolonialism.

While rooted in a local tradition, recent comparative studies in Italy have thus also begun to diversify the scenario by drawing from an international theoretical and cultural debate within which the influence of the American perspective is paramount, especially for gender, cultural, postcolonial, and ethnic studies. Treating comparative literature as a form of cultural hermeneutics, Armando Gnisci has hence insistently urged a "decolonization" of Italian and European literatures from themselves (*Noialtri europei*; *Creolizzare l'Europa*; *Decolonizzare l'Italia*), but also, more radically, for a liberation of comparative studies from the yoke of North American interpretive ideologies. This operation consists not simply in a worldwide enlargement of the areas of literary inquiry but, more radically, in the reconceptualization of their own identities as intrinsically plural and informed by otherness.

However, beyond the various degrees of theoreticity that have gained ground in the Italian comparative panorama, an element that still seems to differentiate the practice of comparative literature in Italy from U.S. approaches is the importance that literature preserves in its negotiations with the theoretical and the extraliterary domains. The fact that, despite their belatedness on the international stage, Italian scholars—as Gnisci claimed in his 1995 volume (11)—have the longest-lived literary tradition in the West may explain in part why this legacy still occupies a prominent position and is not subject to the same intense problematization occurring overseas. This relates to another crucial factor, namely, the configuration of comparative studies within the Italian academic system. Having been mainly an elective discipline in academic curricula rather than being organized in self-standing departments, comparative literature has functioned as a sub-category of Italian literature departments. Scholarly and institutionally, therefore, it is marked by what Guillén presents as the national, or, in the best scenario, inter-

national dimension, rather than by the supranational exploration that according to him should characterize the scope and point of departure of comparative studies (Guillén 3).

Indeed, as also Gardini observes (9), because the model of national literary history has been pivotal to the cultural unification of Italy, its enduring political and cohesive power has equated the study of general literature to Italian literature *tout court*, even casting a shadow over the remarkable local diversity and linguistic varieties that within the Italian territory would lend themselves to a comparative approach. Attempts to reexamine both the actual plurality of Italy's own literary legacy and foreign traditions are increasing in secondary school programs and textbooks, also in connection with the European Union's cultural policies. Likewise, in several universities comparative literature has become an undergraduate and graduate field of specialization, has even gained academic independence in autonomous departments and designated research centers, such as the "Centro interdipartimentale di teoria e storia comparata della letteratura" at the University of Bologna, and, since 1993, has been represented by a professional association.

Yet even if these recent structural changes partially bridge the gap with the U.S. system, the practice of comparative literature in Italy preserves features that distinguish it from its overseas counterpart both in the scholarship and in the conceptualization of courses, albeit with due exceptions and crossfertilizations. While trying to avoid value hierarchies and unilateral judgements, it may be useful to reflect upon the cultural and institutional parameters that account for such differences. Why might an Italian course on *fin de siècle* European literature still feel the need to make a nod to Mario Praz's *La carne, la morte e il diavolo* [The Romantic Agony] while an equivalent topic taught in the United States would rather highlight the latest critical essay by Joseph Bristow? Confronted with a legacy of incorrodible texts and contexts, research in Italy follows in the historical and intellectual steps of generations of scholars. The solidity and authority of the new contribution comes from the sense of belonging to an interpretive genealogy. On the other hand, "state of the art," "cutting edge," or "pioneering" are some of the most common expressions that qualify the ideal product of American research, which is more inclined to privilege the most recent turn in a specific discipline and hence also ready to promptly liquidate past productions in the name of the "new" as such.

The role played by literary and critical theory in the two systems underscores these two different sensibilities. More than a guarantee of methodological rigor or an expression of sophistication in textual analysis, theory in U.S. academia also promotes intellectual fads that often exert ideological pressure on the researcher. Whereas, according to the U.S. perspective, a literary scholar's success or lack thereof may depend on the degree of originality or popularity of the theoretical approach s/he adopts, literary research in Italy does not necessarily demand interpretive tools of the latest fashion. For instance, followers of the thriving Italian semiotic school would be snubbed as *passé* in the U.S. If the Italian imperviousness to the fibrillation of U.S. theory may often result in less provocative or more

impressionistic contributions, it can also keep off the specter of what the recent U.S. volume *Theory's Empire* in defense of literature against the alleged aberrations of theorists has denounced as the proliferation of simplistic overstatements and unwarranted political aspirations that have transformed much contemporary theory into a pervasive doctrine. Therefore, just as it is worth reconsidering critically the promise of interpretive pluralism offered by U.S. theories, it is equally important to keep in mind that the Italian attachment to tradition can also preserve fertile elements and fruitful hints which would otherwise be irremediably lost to the genetic pool if we only cared about the most recent contribution.

These two scholarly stances, we could argue, reflect respectively the idea of tradition as an intrinsic value and that of innovation as marketability and exchange value. These two ways of conceiving and of benefiting from knowledge recall the tension between the Humboldtian university model that shaped the European academic system and that, in many ways, still rules in Italy's academic and mental framework (despite institutional reforms), and the "corporate university" model that is rapidly altering U.S. higher education. In other words, the Italian idea of research seems sensitive to the pursuit of knowledge as a value in itself, while the U.S. perspective tends to subordinate the Humboldtian *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft* to the entrepreneurial mentality of the university as a productive system purportedly able to compete on the global market precisely thanks to a more instrumental conception of knowledge. This apparent polarization is interesting not so much as a pretext to take sides for or against either reality. Rather, it can validate Roland Barthes's provocative claims about the very nature of literature in "Réflexions sur un manuel." Literature, for Barthes, is nothing more than that which is being taught, formally defined, and collectively recognized as such in a precise context and by a conventional act of institutionalization (like the insertion or inclusion of a text in a literary history manual or an anthology). The antinomy between literature as a practice and literature as teaching, which, according to Barthes, is at the roots of the problem of knowledge transmission, hence raises the issue of the canon in the two academic practices.

If comparative literature is neither uniquely and properly a methodology, a theory or a discipline, but, rather, a way of constructing objects (Saussy, "Comparative literature?"), the construction that comparative literature "Italian style" still privileges (as the structure of its reference works confirms) is that of a *corpus* of texts more or less known but organized mainly thematically and set against a literary and historical background that contextualizes and legitimizes it. The central position is still occupied by the national dimension, which generates connections with other (mainly European) cultures, without the need for a well-defined theoretical framework. A course titled "The Myth of Ulysses in 20th-century European literature" can be found more easily in an Italian than in a U.S. context, where we would rather encounter "Myth, power, and ideology in 20th-century literature," with the objective of prioritizing political and cultural concerns in the analysis of primary texts. The difference in the kinds of questions

raised in the two academic contexts reveals a more aestheticizing formation on the Italian side and a more militant and engaged one overseas, where the relevance of authors and topics has to be justified even beyond the literary realm. To the emphasis of Italian comparative studies upon intertextual relationships generated by influences, exchanges, and translations within an organic literary system, the U.S. context responds with a more extended interdisciplinarity that treats literature as just one of the multiple expressions of generalized cultural phenomena seen as conflicting and polymorphic practices.

A conception of culture that is still rather elitist and mainly limited to the humanistic sphere may explain in part what we could define as the more notionistic and conservative perspective of the typical, mainstream Italian comparatist, with his/her legitimate albeit at times rather predictable constructions. For its part, the unrestricted inclusiveness of the global U.S. approach, ready to erase the differences between high literature, non-literary discourses, and popular cultural forms, encourages scholars to explore uncharted territories. To an Italian eye, these sorts of endeavors may look more peculiar, questionable, and not always fully justifiable because of their lack of contextualization and historicization. Yet, despite (or, perhaps, thanks to) their less cautious approaches, often they also turn out to be more dynamic and creative.

But if comparative literature is not only founded upon dialogue and pluralism but also grants the intellectual freedom coming from its ongoing re-identification and from the reinvention of its competencies (Gnisci, ed., *Letteratura* xvi-xvii), perhaps the so much discussed extinction of this discipline can be prevented precisely by not mandating just one way of producing knowledge. We may think about George Steiner's claims about the identity of comparative literature, which, never completely at home in any national tradition like the twentieth-century Jew, "carries within it both the virtuosities and the sadness of a certain exile, of an inward diaspora" (Steiner 148). Research in comparative literature may avoid becoming a form of exile, on either side of the ocean, if we generate occasions for critical exchanges which, both by transcending localisms and by resisting a universal and leveling idea of culture or of a global model of scholarship, can allow the virtues of both systems to emerge, throwing a bridge between those who choose to don the garb of the comparatist "made in USA" and those who, in the footsteps of the novelist of "italianità" *par excellence*, Alessandro Manzoni, decide to continue rinsing their clothes in the Florentine river Arno.

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**Adriana de Teresa, ed. *Circulaciones: Trayectorias del texto literario*. México: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM / Bonilla Artigas Editores, 2009. 263 pp. 978-6077588054.**

Following the initiative of Adriana de Teresa, in 2006 a group of professors who teach literary theory at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) came together to form a seminar devoted to the selection and discussion of a wide range of essays, articles, and books dealing with the mobility of literary texts. The original idea was to compile a collection of essays on how literary artifacts are formed and transformed through circulation that would work as a student reader for use in the classroom. Our discussions began with texts such as "Essai sur le don" by Marcel Mauss, Roger Chartier's work on written culture and history, and René Girard's ideas on the triangulation of desire. As our work progressed, we realized that, although a compilation of these well-known texts would be useful, it would be more interesting to elaborate upon their ideas in our own work. The result is *Circulaciones: trayectorias del texto literario*, which provides a good example of how a concept may be worked and reworked from different theoretical perspectives without ignoring our individual concerns. The collection includes

translations into Spanish of some of the central essays, as well as other essays originally published in other books or journals in Spanish, and those written specifically for the anthology by members of the seminar.

The first two essays are by Roger Chartier, consisting of translations of "Del códice a la pantalla: trayectorias de los escrito" [From Codex to Screen: Trajectories of What is Written] and "Materialidad del texto, textualidad del libro" [Materiality of the Text, Textuality of the Book]. These essays work well together to develop the idea that the circulation of texts and the technological changes regarding words have generated very specific ways of reading; they state that it is necessary to write a history of the materiality of texts as well as of their immateriality. Chartier considers both the history of written culture and the sociology of texts, to underline the importance of developing both our reflections upon the interpretations of texts and the analysis of the technical or social conditions of their publication, circulation, and appropriation.

The book continues with "Los tesoros del orfebre: el valor de las ediciones originales en los estudios literarios" [The Goldsmith's Treasure: The Value of Original Editions to Literary Studies] by Ana Elena González Treviño, one of the texts specifically written for the book. As its title suggests, the essay deals with the ways in which the material condition of a book produces an effect on its readers and shows how literary studies are changing as a consequence of the broader circulation of scholars and texts. The essay also offers a general history of printing practices, the dissemination and circulation of written texts, and their material supports.

"Intercambio y don" [Exchange and the Gift], by César González Ochoa, was originally published in 1991. This is an examination of how the poem, the work of art, and the challenge and the reciprocity of the gift are instances of symbolic exchange that break the logic of productivity in a society that seems to focus exclusively on the economic value of objects. González Ochoa gives two examples, one from Western Medieval practices and the other from the Modern period, to show how Mauss's concepts of the "gift" and "exchange" and Bataille's notions of "the gift" and what is "spent" mark artistic artifacts and transform them into spaces where a very special relationship between human beings is played out, where giving and giving back become an uninterrupted cycle.

The following two essays were written for the collection and are, respectively, theoretical reflections on genre and on the historicity of the concept of authority. In "Aires de familia: teoría de los géneros y comunicación textual" [Family Resemblances: Theory of Genres and Textual Communication], Noemí Novell considers genre as a communicative and hermeneutic concept capable of outlining transverse trajectories among different artistic and cultural products. Genre establishes a "family resemblance" and makes visible the transit through different products that might seem unrelated, such as literature, film, television, and videogames. In "La función del autor en la circulación literaria" [The Function of the Author in Literary Circulation], Adriana de Teresa, the editor of the anthology, offers a detailed historical overview of the notion of the "author" and shows how it

is still one of the parameters that shape the literary institution. Following Foucault, she states that the author is not an empirical subject that makes a text, but a fundamental principle that defines the way texts exist, circulate, and function in a society. The essay goes on to trace the history of the concept in different discourses, periods, and cultures and shows that, despite our awareness of the concept´s heterogeneity, it remains a powerful notion that shapes the way we read texts.

Andreas Ilg´s "El don de traducir. Ensayo sobre *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers* de Walter Benjamin" [The Gift of Translating. Essay on *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers* by Walter Benjamin] uses Mauss's notion of the gift to propose a new translation of Benjamin's well-known essay on the task of the translator. Ilg's conclusion, echoing Benjamin's sad delight in paradoxes, is both hopeless and hopeful: translation can only recover pure language when it is able to accept loss. This is a previously published text that was revised for the anthology. The next selection, by Paul B. Armstrong, first appeared as a book chapter and concludes the first, more theoretical section of the compilation. Armstrong's "El conflicto interpretativo y la validez" [The Interpretative Conflict and Validity] follows the arguments of Eco, Culler, and Ricoeur on the possibility of establishing criteria to define whether an interpretation is correct or not. Discussion and debate are placed at the center of interpretative communities, and their aim is to draw a non-authoritative limit to pluralism.

"Dar las cosas: la (im)posibilidad de la naturaleza muerta" [Giving Things: the (Im)Possibility of Still Life], by Irene Artigas Albarelli, is an essay that makes visible how the representation of things always alludes to a person, either their owner, their maker, or their user. Drawing from various pictorial and literary examples, the essay traces the history of the representation of things on their own, and shows how the use of different resources, such as metaphor, personification, or the shaping of fiction, overcomes the impossibility of having a world without subjects.

"El festín del famélico:  una aventura gastronómica a través de la literatura inglesa" [The Feast of the Famished: A Gastronomic Journey through English Literature], by Charlotte Broad, was originally published as a booklet. Broad focuses on food and exchange in several texts in the English literary tradition by such writers as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Behn. Its structure is that of a culinary feast where the mouth is seen as the source of two acts: one that articulates words and another that turns a corporeal need into literal and symbolic pleasure. As readers of this essay, we are invited to sit down and enjoy the different courses resulting from the juxtaposition of food and literary tradition.

The compilation ends with two perspectives on American literature: Julia Constantino's "Memoria e identidad en la literatura afroestadounidense: de las narraciones de esclavos a las novelas de esclavitud" [Memory and Identity in African American Literature: From Slave Narratives to Slave Novels], and Nattie Golubov's "Una identidad en ciernes: las pesadillas del sueño americano" [A Budding Identity: the Nightmares of the American Dream]. The first was written

for the seminar and the second is a revised paper. Constantino shows a change in the status of slave narratives from an entirely testimonial, sociological, and political one to another, which complicates the aesthetic and literary solutions to historical, political, and social issues. Constantino finds that memory, representation, and narration are the topical and strategic features central to this development, and points out the circulation and gradual modification of a literary genre and an experience, both personal and collective, that is shaped and reshaped in the literary realm.

Analyzing Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* and T. Coraghessan Boyle's *World's End,* Golubov asks us to consider the notion of the "American dream" as a narrative rather than as a static concept, because it articulates a set of actions that transform one situation into another: the result is a complex web of meaning. She maintains that if we understand the "American dream" as a metanarrative that guides the desire and behavior of the individual's search for happiness, we will see that both novels, through their endings, implicitly contain the impossibility of fulfilling such a dream because, in a consumer society, no one will ever attain an "absolute and complete" state of repose.

This review would not be complete without mentioning the "Presentation" and "Introduction" written by Adriana de Teresa and Mónica Quijano, respectively, both very useful guides for readers. The book is co-edited by the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM, and Bonilla-Artigas Publishers, and represents a good example of how comparative research is conducted in our university.

Julia Constantino and Nattie Golubov,
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# HISTOIRES COMPARATIVES DES LITTÉRATURES NATIONAUX / COMPARATIVE HISTORIES OF NATIONAL LITERATURES

**Azade Seyhan.** ***Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel in a Comparative Context.*** **World Literatures Reimagined 2. New York: Modern Language Association of North America, 2008. xii + 237 pp. 978-1603290319.**

"Nothing allows us a more insightful access into other times and cultures than narratives," states Professor Seyhan, appropriately, at the very beginning of her remarkable study of "the modern Turkish novel in a comparative context." Narratives, she argues, that spring "from the desire to reclaim what is lost or beyond reach . . . connect us to our pasts and to others in a web of intimacy and memory as well as webs of enmity and error." Such narratives "respond to the universal human need for identification or affiliation with a clan, a community, a religious or ethnic group, or a state" (1). This brief yet sophisticated treatment of the Turkish novel is informed by a deep awareness of the essential connection between universal concerns of literature, on the one hand, and specific features of a national literary tradition or the particularistic focus of specific literary works, on the other.

It is through a cogent articulation of these connections that the book being reviewed succeeds in contextualizing the modern Turkish novel coherently and vividly within the broader field of the humanities. That in itself is a singular achievement, given the lack of familiarity, until recently, with Turkish literature among the English-speaking readership. Only a handful of novels had been translated from Turkish throughout the last century, and the study of literary texts was pursued by very few specialists, most of whom were attached to Middle Eastern departments which emphasized research in the social sciences and professional training at the expense of the humanities.

When this reviewer, for instance, proposed, some three decades ago, that Turkish be included in a new comparative literature program being designed at a major East Coast research university in the United States, he received overwhelming support from colleagues from a range of departments, but soon after the program was launched, it became clear that there was hardly any interest on the part of the students. Given their lack of exposure, Turkish literature seemed so remote and unreachable to them that they would be discouraged to invest time to begin to form any idea about it; the need to develop the necessary language skills in order to have an access to the original texts extinguished any enthusiasm some of them

might have had to explore a different literary tradition.

It is gratifying to observe how much of that has changed by now. The book being reviewed points to a new era in the reception and study of Turkish literature in the English-speaking world. It includes, for example, a four-page bibliography of modern Turkish novels in English translation; meanwhile, new translations have been appearing at an increasing pace since Orhan Pamuk was awarded the 2006 Nobel Prize. The publication by MLA of *Tales of Crossed Destinies,* moreover, reflects a growing interest in academic circles, particularly among comparatists, in the study of Turkish literature.

*Tales of Crossed Destinies* introduces and analyzes seventeen Turkish novels written between the 1920s and the current decade, fifteen of which are available in English translations. In addition to the availability of translations, the novels examined were selected according to their significance in terms of the categories the author chose to analyze. Although, as the author notes, many significant works could not be included in this study because of the lack of English translations (except for two novels that were considered to be indispensable for gaining an understanding of the Turkish novel), the choice of categories of analysis lends itself well to conveying to the reader the development of the genre in its socio-cultural context.

The modern Turkish novel owes its origins to the Ottoman reform movement of the nineteenth century. By that time the Ottoman intelligentsia had become convinced that the only way to reverse the decline of the empire and to enable it to stand up to the pressures of the major powers was to implement sweeping reforms with the objective of "catching up with contemporary civilization." For them, progress meant taking example from Europe in order to achieve political, economic, and technological advancement (means of civilization) but not necessarily altering their manners, values, or beliefs (aspects of culture) in the process. Selective borrowing thus came to characterize the Ottoman reform movement, which sought to establish the kind of institutions that were considered to be essential for achieving progress. The novel was thus imported, and adapted at the same time and in the same manner as such significant institutions as the Sciences Po, constitution, and representative assembly were adopted. Just as the latter gave legitimacy to the government, so, too, the novel gave educational and intellectual legitimacy to the study of literature because of its didactic and utilitarian potentials. For the Ottoman modernizer, traditional tales and stories that levitated to the realms of fantasy, and bore no resemblance to reality, represented useless waste, while the novel proper provided a means for examining the interplay between human beings and their social environment. The first Turkish literary critic who passionately promoted the works of French realists was also one of the authors of the 1876 Ottoman constitution; he wrote a novel and several plays and, as member of the bureaucratic elite, served as the governor of an important province. The early Turkish novelists relentlessly pursued realism; unsurprisingly, naturalism appealed to them even more because of its scientific pretensions.

This unique background of the Turkish novel is presented in Chapter 2 in the context of the "Emergence from the Spirit of Cultural Reform." Although

no analysis is made of any of the early novels (none of which are available in translation), this chapter locates the genre in its national context and thus serves as an introduction to the analytic treatments that follow. Two essential features of the early Turkish novel—its roots in westernizing reforms and, as a consequence, its pursuit of realism—would become determining factors in shaping the course of its development. Fundamental changes following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's war of independence, and the founding of the modern nation-state form the backdrop of the early republican novel. Unlike their predecessors who pursued realism in their depiction of social exchange, manners, and morals among the urban middle classes of the Ottoman capital, the early republican novelists were moved to take into account the transformation of the state and nation, and the emergence of a national consciousness. They identified the cultural cleavage that pitted traditional society against modernizers, the particularistic values of Muslim communities against the universalistic aspirations of nation builders, or the periphery against the center, as posing the singular polarizing and dividing threat to the modern republic's national unity. All four novels analyzed in Chapter 3 dwell on this cultural cleavage that remains the chief source of ideological tension in Turkish society today.

The parameters of the cultural cleavage appeared to have changed with the rise of social realism following World War II, only to revert back to the traditionalist versus cosmopolitan divide after the demise of the Soviet Union and the loss of communism's appeal in the face of globalization. In the three decades beginning with the late 1940s, there appeared what seemed to be an indigenous genre named the "village novel" that depicted the mistreatment of the peasant (or the worker in the newly industrializing country) by the dominant land-owning or rising capitalist classes. Although the village novel was by far the most popular genre, and although it had a prominent place in a national tradition that showed a marked preference for political engagement, the Turkish literary scene was not devoid of writers who focused on the aesthetics of narrative, who pursued psychological explorations, and who experimented with a variety of avant-garde techniques. A rigorous discussion is presented in Chapter 4 of six novels, published between 1950 and 2000, representing a broad variety of approaches. These range from Yaşar Kemal's modern epos, *Memed, My Hawk* (by now an internationally recognized classic), to a complex, nightmarish, stream-of-consciousness novel by Bilge Karasu, a name hardly known outside Turkey until very recently. The inclusion of Orhan Pamuk's well known *Snow* among the analyses presented in Chapter 4, "Social Responsibility and Aesthetic Imperative," gives the reader a chance to observe how the perception of cultural cleavage had been transformed since the early republic and how it had come to manifest itself in the form of deadly polarization among different political forces crowding the periphery, represented by the remote city of Kars in the northeast.

A richness of contrasts is also achieved in Chapter 5, in which three very different novels by three most prominent modern masters are analyzed. The unifying theme is "Istanbul: City as Trope and Topos of Crossed Destinies." On one

side, Yaşar Kemal's *The Sea-Crossed Fisherman* carries a powerful indictment of greed that brings environmental destruction, loss of values, alienation, and dehumanization, and that ultimately results in the separation of the human from its organic ties with the community as well as nature. Yaşar Kemal's evocative language captures vividly the sounds and colors of a vibrant city that barely hides its bubbling tensions and conflicts beneath the surface.

On the other side, Orhan Pamuk's *The Black Book* "was written," in the writer's own words, "with the motivation to say everything about Istanbul at once." It is "a sort of collage, bits of history, bits of future, the present, stories that seem unrelated . . ." (149). The unity and coherence of this work, however, are sustained by a central allegory that holds up a mirror to "the crisis of values and identity that characterizes modern Turkish society" (154). Tanpinar, whose work has been the primary source of inspiration for Orhan Pamuk, also dwells on the opposing influences of the east and west on Turkish culture and society. *A Mind at Peace*, which depicts middle class life in the mid-century Istanbul, constitutes a highly sophisticated and deeply sensitive consideration of the encounter between east and west and their coexistence in that urban environment. It has so far escaped the attention of critics that Tanpinar's work does not dwell on the cultural cleavage in the same way as most Turkish novels do: Tanpinar was interested more in the interplay between tradition and modernity (or between different traditions, for that matter) than in the rivalry among opposing traditions. With his deep appreciation of classical music, European painting and literature along with that of Ottoman literature and culture, Tanpinar himself represented a synthesis of high culture, east and west.

The east/west dichotomy, or the centrality of cultural cleavage, recedes to the background (though it does not completely disappear) in the three novels analyzed in the final chapter, "The Modern-Postmodern Will to Fiction." The analysis, however, shifts away from the national context and, in the author's words, "researches the international ties between Turkish writers such as Pamuk, Latife Tekin, and Asli Erdogan, and their literary relatives, Borges, Calvino, Kundera" (20-21).

It is ultimately the author's sophisticated articulation of the "interconnectedness" between texts as well as literary traditions that accounts for the depth of this treatment. It is not merely the selection but the critical analysis offered that links the cultural specificity of the works considered "to overarching human interests and themes." Early in the Introduction a reference is made to the German poet Heinrich Heine's argument "that the only institution to lend Germany a sense of unity in the absence of any unifying political structure was modern German literature" (2). This argument was echoed by Prosper de Barante, French statesman and historian who, "in writing about the ideas behind the French revolution," stated, "In the absence of regular institutions, literature became one." Having quoted Barante in his landmark study of French realism, Harry Levin flatly declared:

> The fact, though it has long been obscured by a welter of personalities and technicalities, is that literature has always been an institution. . . . Once we have grasped this fact, we begin to perceive how art may belong to society and yet be autonomous within its own limits, and we are no longer puzzled by the appar-

ent polarity of sociological and formal criticism. These, in the last analysis, are complementary frames of reference whereby we may discriminate among the complexities of a work of art." (Levin 21)

*Tales of Crossed Destinies* is fully informed by that complementarity. It approaches literature "as an institution *par excellence* of memory and a universally employed mode of expression," and by doing so it is able to relate particular concerns of individual works to the aesthetic concerns of formal criticism. Azade Seyhan, Fairbank Professor in the Humanities and professor of German at Bryn Mawr, has made an impressive contribution to the study of literature. Her provocative and thoughtful treatment should be essential reading for any serious comparatist ready to take on new challenges.

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**Référence / Work Cited**

Levin, Harry. *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists.* New York: Oxford UP, 1963.

**Hélio J. S. Alves. *Tempo para Entender: História Comparada da Literatura Portuguesa*. Casal de Cambra, Portugal: Caleidoscópio, 2006. 204 pp. 9898010231.**

L'histoire de la littérature portugaise, telle qu'elle est transmise dans les écoles et même étudiée dans les universités, est fondée depuis toujours sur un objectif d'affirmation de la langue et de la culture portugaises qu'Hélio Alves s'est mis en devoir de contester dans ce livre.

Adoptant une approche comparatiste, ce spécialiste de la littérature du 16e siècle remet en question tout un ensemble d'idées ancrées et de stéréotypes concernant non seulement quelques-uns des grands textes du canon littéraire portugais, mais aussi de la critique littéraire, nationale et internationale et interroge avec pertinence les modes d'écriture de l'histoire littéraire et de construction des canons esthétiques.

L'ouverture du premier chapitre annonce d'entrée la "thèse" développée au long du livre: "A primeira condição da literatura é a de ser migrante": c'est le caractère "migrant" de la littérature qui intéresse tout d'abord Alves. Ce caractère mouvant et multiple des textes, indépendamment de la "pureté" des langues et des sens fixés par les traditions, les critiques et les canons est le propre de la littérature et définit pour lui la littérature portugaise en particulier: "Ce livre ne raconte pas une histoire d'endogamies—de la patrie, de la nation, de la langue . . . mais plutôt une histoire, dure et difficile, de migrations. Parce que l'histoire de la littérature (portugaise) est, effectivement, une histoire de migrations."

Il s'agit donc, pour Alves, d'envisager les textes littéraires portugais moins comme des signes de "portugalité" [*sic*] que comme signification artistique tout court, en dialogue avec d'autres textes de la littérature européenne, indépendamment des hiérarchies canoniques et, souvent, contre les discours critiques qui les supportent. Cette démarche le mène soit à confronter sans complexe des œuvres

de Shakespeare et Gil Vicente, ou de Camilo Castelo Branco et Gogol, soit à "relativiser" l'épopée de Camões ou certains textes de Fernando Pessoa, ou encore à réhabiliter d'anciens ouvrages et auteurs oubliés, entraînant par sa démarche un autre regard, à la fois critique et lucide, sur les auteurs et les textes qu'il étudie.

Dès sa préface, l'auteur expose très clairement son parcours et définit son point de départ: la contestation des idées dominantes dans l'histoire de la littérature portugaise depuis le 19e siècle, enracinées dans une conception de la littérature comme expression "d'une Nation et d'une Langue" originales, avec les conséquences qui en découlent, dans la définition du canon comme dans celle de la périodisation littéraire.

Son projet: proposer une histoire *comparée* de la littérature portugaise, remplaçant la notion de "nation" par celle de "pays" et le choix de la "langue" par celui des "discours." Quant aux considérations autour de la "valeur esthétique" des oeuvres, jugées "impraticables," elles sont remplacées par des analyses critiques de "l'éloquence," définie comme "l'ensemble de procédés discursifs que les écrivains utilisent pour produire des images plus ou moins durables de leurs œuvres et d'eux-mêmes dans ces œuvres." Cela entraîne une approche différente de la périodisation littéraire, définie maintenant "à travers les codes fondamentaux qui règlent les discours et à travers le rapport que chaque période établit avec ces codes," ce qui aboutit à une division de la littérature portugaise en quatre grandes périodes, aux correspondances flexibles dans les littératures européennes: Moyen Age, Renaissance, Modernité et Révolutions.

Cette démarche, assumée avec ironie et même un peu de provocation dès les premières pages du volume, aboutit ainsi à une sorte de "canon alternatif," puisqu'elle porte un nouveau regard sur les auteurs du canon et fait connaître des écrivains tombés dans l'oubli:

> Gil Vicente, symbole du Peuple Portugais au plus haut moment de son Histoire, se mue en Castillan . . . António Ferreira, le défenseur de la langue, et Luís de Camões, son représentant majeur, plutôt que des modèles de l'équation langue/nationalité, semblent conditionnés jusqu'au plus profond d'eux-mêmes par d'étranges langages. De leur côté, Jerónimo Corte-Real et Vasco Mouzinho, auteurs oubliés par l'histoire littéraire, récupèrent les fortes identités individuelles qu'elle leur avait volées. Camilo Castelo Branco n'est plus le grand épigone de la "portugalité" et devient parfaitement comparable à un écrivain ukrainien. Le poète António Nobre, dont le volume *Só* [Seul] fut célébré comme "la voix de la Race," et Fernando Pessoa, le poète des hétéronymes et centre de la littérature portugaise contemporaine, échangent leurs rôles respectifs et exhibent le caractère révolutionnaire de leur temps et du nôtre.

Dans le premier chapitre—"Histoire Littéraire"—l'auteur développe une réflexion critique sur les principes d'écriture de l'histoire littéraire (portugaise), les critères de périodisation littéraire et les définitions du canon portugais et propose un tableau synoptique contenant les grandes lignes des quatre périodes littéraires considérées et qui seront l'objet des chapitres suivants.

Le deuxième chapitre, "Fin du Moyen Age," commence avec Gil Vicente. L'auteur compare la disparité abyssale de la réception de Gil Vicente et de Shakespeare au Portugal, qui ne relève pas, pour l'essentiel, de questions esthé-

tiques, mais plutôt du caractère réducteur de la réception de Vicente. Le manque d'études et de productions dramatiques des œuvres de Gil Vicente au Portugal découle d'une approche critique trop étroite, fondée sur la réduction des personnages à des stéréotypes sociaux et sur l'étude du langage des "Autos." Ces pièces de théâtre médiéval destinées à la moralisation et au divertissement du public suivaient des modèles traditionnels et traitaient de sujets religieux ou profanes, sur un ton sérieux ou facétieux. L'œuvre de Gil Vicente, écrite dans un mélange de portugais et d'espagnol, inclut des « Autos » religieux et profanes, dans la tradition médiévale, tout en mettant en scène des situations et des portraits critiques de la société portugaise des Grandes Découvertes. L'étude proprement esthétique des textes permettrait non seulement de faire apparaître la complexité des personnages, mais également de percevoir des thématiques dont le symbolisme structure entièrement les pièces, produisant la force artistique de cette œuvre. La deuxième étude de ce chapitre, consacrée à Bernardim Ribeiro, propose une lecture de *Menina e Moça* (1554) qui tient compte de la "précarité" et de l'inachèvement du texte, ainsi que de "l'énigme" de l'identité de son auteur, considérant ce texte comme un exemple majeur des conflits qui, sur le plan textuel, marquent le passage d'une poétique médiévale à l'art verbal de la Renaissance.

Le chapitre "Renaissance" comprend trois études qui, comme les précédentes, soulignent ce caractère "migrant" de la littérature par une lecture des textes dans leur contexte historique et leurs contextes discursifs, et dans leurs relations avec des textes et discours hétérogènes. "Cataldo Sículo et l'imitation du merveilleux classique" analyse les mélanges théologiques (mythologie et christianisme) dans les récits de la renaissance, dans le cadre des débats sur la légitimité de l'utilisation de la mythologie au même plan que l'affirmation du christianisme. Quant au "plus cosmopolite des humanistes portugais," Damião de Góis, il est étudié comme un pur produit de son cadre discursif, l'Humanisme étant considéré par Alves, à la suite de Kristeller, non comme une école ou philosophie, mais plutôt comme un art discursif: "L'*expérience* dans l'acception humaniste consiste dans la *pratique verbale* . . . il s'agit d'expérimenter des points de vue, des arguments, des positions, par le langage . . . *expérimenter* la Nature des Choses à travers des discours renouvelés." L'ambivalence fait ainsi partie d'un discours conçu comme moyen incontournable et radical d'atteindre la connaissance des "choses humaines."

Le troisième volet de ce chapitre étudie la "confrontation obligée" de la poésie portugaise de la renaissance avec celle de Pétrarque, au moyen de trois poèmes, d'António Ferreira, Camões et Vasco Mouzinho reprenant l'image pétrarquiste du soleil—configuration du pouvoir poétique d'Apollon—dans le poème épique *Afrique*. Il s'agit ici d'analyser la représentation métaphorique du poète dans le texte, ainsi que l'affirmation de "canonicité" construite par le poème. Les différentes reprises de l'image pétrarquiste par les poètes portugais ébauchent des rapports différents à leur modèle qui correspondent assez exactement à la place qu'ils occupent dans le canon littéraire, prouvant que le degré de canonicité des œuvres ne dépend pas uniquement de facteurs extérieurs, mais s'inscrit dans les œuvres elles-mêmes—par la représentation de l'auteur qu'elles véhiculent et la manière dont elles assument leur postérité.

Le chapitre "Modernité" porte sur la "construction du sujet moderne." Alves commence par relativiser les grands consensus de la critique anglo-américaine à propos de Shakespeare, qui tendent à "effacer" les contextes esthétiques et historiques, considérant notamment que la grande innovation d'*Hamlet*—la création d'un langage intime ou subjectif à détermination difficile—gagnerait à être étudiée dans le contexte des relations historiques littéraires et intertextuelles.

Il rappelle que la redécouverte de la *Poétique* d'Aristote, contemporaine de l'œuvre de Shakespeare, a ouvert la voie à l'affirmation de l'art du poète et à l'autonomisation de l'esthétique verbale menant au privilège des poétiques de composition, ce qui a fait changer radicalement l'approche des œuvres littéraires. Il rappelle également la publication de *La Jérusalem Délivrée* (1581) qui met en scène la souffrance du héros comme action d'intimité, rapprochant les personnages de Tancrède et d'Hamlet et analyse des antécédents "pré-Tassiens" de ces "voix de la conscience dramatique," surtout dans la poésie. En ce sens, il étudie deux poèmes épiques, de Vasco Mouzinho (1596 et 1609), où des personnages féminins exceptionnels, aux caractères et aux pensées à la fois bien individualisants et à résonance universelle "illustrent la formulation poétique individuelle consciente de soi" (147).

Le dernier chapitre, "Révolutions," se penche, avec deux exemples, sur la contingence qui caractérise la littérature des dernières 250 années et la fragilité des tentatives de classement d'expériences artistiques fondées sur des principes de fluidité et de renversement. Le premier consiste en une étude comparée du roman *A Brasileira de Prazins*, de Camilo Castelo Branco (1882) et de *Les Ames Mortes* de Nikolai Gogol (1842), suivant les études de Bakhtin sur le carnavalesque. Alves identifie, dans ces deux textes, radicalement différents, des structures fondées sur l'auto similitude et les changements d'échelle produisant un relativisme ironique et renvoyant à une même manière de "regarder le monde." Le deuxième exemple, consacré à la poésie portugaise du passage du 19$^{e}$ au 20$^{e}$ siècle, conteste la réception dominante de la poésie d'António Nobre depuis le début du 20$^{e}$ siècle—véhiculée notamment par Fernando Pessoa—dans la mesure où elle tend à mettre au premier plan le "nationalisme" de la poésie de Nobre. Inversement, Alves y voit, textes à l'appui, un "nationalisme" ironique, la poésie "d'un migrant entre territoires et temps," décrivant plutôt l'impossibilité de décrire le pays et la présence du poète dans ce pays. Nobre représenterait ainsi toute une génération de poètes portugais étrangers aux nationalismes littéraires, avec Cesário Verde, Camilo Pessanha ou Ruy Belo—les poètes qui auraient remplacé "la patrie" par "le pays."

Cette "équivoque" dans la réception de Nobre comme dans bien d'autres cas résulte (Paul Ricoeur) d'une confusion entre "comprendre" (les signes) et "interpréter" (les symboles): on traite les symboles comme s'ils coïncidaient avec les signes. C'est cette démarche simpliste, intégrée dans une approche de l'histoire littéraire trop marquée par une optique de "l'utilisation des textes" dans l'acception d'Umberto Eco (cf. *Lector in Fabula* et *Les limites de l'interprétation*), que *Tempo para entender* remet en question de manière très pertinente et stimulante.

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# OUVRAGES COLLECTIFS ET ESSAIS
# COLLECTIVE WORKS AND REVIEW ESSAYS

**Daniel-Henri Pageaux. *Littératures et cultures en dialogue*. Sobhi Habchi, ed. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007. 338 pp. 978-2296037816.**

***Plus Oultre. Mélanges offerts à Daniel-Henri Pageaux*. Sobhi Habchi, ed. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007. 478 pp. 978-2296037823.**

***Komparatistik als Humanwissenschaft. Festschrift zum 65ten Geburtstag von Manfred Schmeling*. Monika Schmitz-Emans, Claudia Schmitt, Christian Winterhalter, eds. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2008. 422 pp. 978-3826039010.**

Many pessimists (myself among them, I must admit) think that the discipline of Comparative Literature is caught in an irreversible and sad decline. I hope they/we are wrong. In any case reading volumes such as those here reviewed and reflecting on the figures celebrated in and through them, provides delight and encouragement. Both Pageaux and Schmeling are in their mid-sixties, and fortunately are not lacking in energy and in future projects. I am convinced that we may count them among the true role-models for younger comparatists.

Of the three volumes to be discussed here the best is undoubtedly the anthology of the writings of Daniel-Henri Pageaux. This is due to a good extent to the meticulous and intelligent work of his disciple Sobhi Habchi, who wrote a comprehensive introduction, selected the texts, composed an excellent bibliography, and accompanied most chapters with detailed and helpful notes.

It should be said, for those who do not know, that Pageaux has since 1975 been professor at the prestigious Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III University. His thinking and writing derive from a triple source. He began as a Hispanist and has remained one to this day. Second, he soon inscribed himself in the glorious tradition of French comparatism: Le Carré and Bataillon, through the lens of Jacques Voisine. Thirdly, he was touched deeply by the critical modes of Roussel, Starobinski, and Raymond, in fact the Geneva School in general. Let us add to this Pageaux's extension toward the francophone literatures south of the Mediterranean, and we obtain the image of a complex and authentic comparatist, one who like many other illustrious figures (Vossler, Auerbach, Curtius, Dámaso Alonso, Gaston Paris, Auerbach, or Spitzer, to name just a few) started as a true scion of the age-old "Romanistik" before growing into a full-fledged comparatist in time. He wrote diligently and abundantly; I counted 15 scholarly volumes, 4 editions, 6 textbooks (mostly in collaboration, but translated into half-a-dozen languages),

and even (!!) two novels (under a pseudonym).

Habchi selected the most theoretical pieces among Pageaux's writings, which are not necessarily his best, as the editor himself admits (9). Pageaux is not primarily a theoretical critic, but he is well able to provide a theoretical skeleton to his work. Not all the texts in the current anthology are of maximum interest; thus I do not find his considerations on "imagology" among the best that has been said on this topic. Nevertheless, the essay on voyages (17-24; originally published in 1985) which opens the volume is quite outstanding and touches on all the key points of this kind of literature; I am hard-pressed to think of a better comment. As an expansion of this piece in a certain sense, one can read "De la géocritique à la géosymbolique: littérature générale et comparé et géographie" (97-128; originally published in 2000) which shows that Pageaux is more inclined to resort to *genius loci* than to *genius stirpi* as a support and confirmation of literary comparatism. Finally one should remark that Pageaux distinguishes acutely between "multiculturalism" and "interculturalism" (best outlined 163-78; originally published in 2003); he does not hesitate to show himself as an adversary of "political correctness" and rightly thinks that Comparative Literature is respectful of the personality and autonomy of separate cultures, which are complementary, and should not be subjected to an artificial and obligatory leveling. For him Comparative Literature is an adversary of uniformity.

The two *Festschriften* dedicated to the two admirable scholars are somewhat uneven, as all such productions are bound to be. Virtually all articles have some substance and merit, but not all are of immediate interest for a larger intellectual audience or have the kind of density and depth that can make them outstanding. I will therefore focus on those that really raised my own interest and that I can feel I can recommend to the reader. (Inevitably, my own judgment will be somewhat subjective, but, perhaps, not disastrously so.)

In the volume dedicated to Pageaux there are two sections. One comprises mostly contributions on images (mutual or not) of diverse countries in the eyes of another country or group. The second is more theoretical. Inevitably the first part mostly contains pieces that are of value for smaller groups of specialists. Nevertheless I found at least two essays of eminent interest (and unpredictability) that deserve to be brought to the attention of my colleagues.

One, by Gérard Siary, has the long title "L'Odysée du Capitaine Daikoku Kodayu dans la Russie de Catherine II: Une encyclopédie japonaise de l'empire russe au XVIIIe siècle *Hokusa Bunryaku*, de Katsuragawa Hoshu" (233-43) The shipwreck of Captain Kodayu took place in 1782, his diary was published in 1937 (though known by Japanese specialists earlier), and a French translation appeared in 2004; to judge by this article, the Japanese presentations surpass the European ones in objective description and lack of prejudice. The other, by Michel Cadot, speaks about "Sergey Alexandrovitch Sobolevski en médiateur interculturel au XIXe siècle" (17-28); Sobolevski was a cultivated and cosmopolitan man, equally a friend of Turgenev and of Prosper Mérimée, who contributed to the mutual

understanding of the West and of Russia, and who deserves more attention on the part of serious comparatists.

The second and more theoretical part is richer in remarkable articles. Pedro Aullon de Haro, Paolo Proietti, Yves Chevrel, and others theorize in substantial manner on the "literature of voyage." Perhaps the most incisive and daring amongst the articles on these topics is Mehmet Emin Oczan's "Voyager et comparer: le role du récit de voyage dans la formation de l'esprit comparatiste" (445-54) which argues pointblank that, without voyage literature, literary comparatism might have remained incomplete or impoverished.

I was both intrigued and outraged by Michel Collomb, "Citation et ironie chez Ricardo Bofill et Jean Echenoz: pour une étude comparatiste de l'architecture et de la littérature contemporaines" (419-31). Intrigued because the type of comparison he proposes is worthwhile and all too seldom attempted, although it was proposed as early as Victor Hugo in *Notre Dame de Paris*. Outraged because Bofill's "masterpiece" (the Antigone complex in Montpellier, which I have visited twice) seems to me nothing short of freaky: a good example of the "fascist modernism" depicted by Richard Griffin. Thus Collomb's theories are not too well supported and illustrated by himself.

"L'Oubli et la nécessité de la mémoire: Goya, Schnitzler, Rembrandt" (397-406) by Francis Claudon and "l'Eau, la pierre, la lumière: Yves Bonnefoy ou le quotidian transfiguré" (355-60) by Stéphane Michaud (although it is about a somewhat overrated author) are pieces of profundity that prove, if nothing else, how the literary overlaps with the philosophical.

I have left to the end the two essays that I enjoyed most, and that I would like to highlight here, namely "Les blancs de l'aphorisme" (247-68) by Alain Montandon and "L'epiphanie faite poésie ou la vie outre mesure" (269-82) by Nella Arambasin. Montandon deals with a very rich topic, one that is mined regrettably seldom: the aphorism as literary genre, and its specific poetics. His observations resemble up to a point those of Ernst Jünger on the same subject, but his contributions on the *generic* aspects are quite original; besides, the emphasis on *silence* links the examinations of Montandon more closely to modern critical methodologies. Arambasin explores parts of the interfaces between religion and literature; epiphany is characterized by her as a mode of dealing with alterity, and the examples from Italian, French, and Romanian literature indicate both kinship and difference among the ideological, the poetic, and the religious in a fresh and intrepid fashion.

Manfred Schmeling may be seen, like Pageaux, as a practitioner of "Romanistik." He was a Professor at the University of Saarbrücken beginning in 1992, but had previously studied and taught in France. He is the current President of the ICLA, but has held numerous important positions for many years earlier in the Association. Much of his written activity belongs to organizational initiatives of a considerable variety, but the total (so far!) of his personal publications is quite impressive. Small wonder therefore that the *Festschrift* dedicated to him is placed

beneath the sign of general humanism and of what the French call "sciences humaines."

The very configuration of Manfred Schmeling's mind and career explains why the *Festschrift* is constituted by a considerable variety of articles and topics. Let us take a look at the most important among them. Gerald Gillespie's "The Ethical Burden of Realism in the Novel; From *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *I am Charlotte Simmons*" (343-52) is marked as always by overwhelming erudition; his dip into the ocean of questions regarding the ethical/aesthetic interface is refreshing although it leaves us asking for more. Some of this "more" is provided by two articles that open the volume: "Second Life: Thoughts on Literature and Human(-ism)" (49-56) by Isabela Capeloa Gil and "Ethische Entscheidungsmomente der Humanwissenschaftler/Literaturwissenschaftler" (57-66) by Elrud Ibsch and Douwe Fokkema, both of them essays of significant philosophical depth. These three contributions are important, if for nothing else than for their inscription in the train of thought set in motion as early as Plato's dialogues, the kind of interrogations that have nagged us ever since, whether we were literary scholars or politicians, or even regular and otherwise indifferent passers-by.

The emphasis on this family of issues is enhanced by essays such as "'Gottesvernunft': Über Thomas Manns *Joseph und seine Brüder* und über den Vergleich als Methode herauszufinden, was Humanität ist" (117-28) by Anke-Marie Lohmeier and particularly "De l'humanisation du divin à la divinisation de l'humain: La Passion selon Avancini" (179-88) by Pierre Behar, which complete the ethical by a religious dimension. Behar rediscovers an all but forgotten playwright (1611-86), a Jesuit professor of rhetoric, and later of philosophy and theology at the University of Vienna who, among other things, wrote a tragedy on the plot of the Gospels. The compatibility between the tragic genre and Christian material is a long-debated issue; Behar comes to conclusions that are somewhat parallel to those of Hans Urs von Balthasar in his *Theodramatik* (1975-1981, 4 vols.), whom he does not cite (or perhaps is altogether unaware of); however he closes with a splendid quote from Marguerite Yourcenar. Lohmeier tackles a topic that for me is of maximum interest, that of the "very long novel" and religion. The novel she talks about with both subtlety and depth is certainly the best of Mann's novels, and perhaps of the German 20th century in general. More important is that she cautiously brings to light some of the religious implications of the book's admirable aesthetic values.

The variety of contributions of high-merit in this volume dedicated to Manfred Schmeling is quite surprising. Thus Alain Montandon in "Anthropologie et douleur: Mirbeau et Kafka" (pp. 201-10) provides a first-class example of what comparatism is or ought to be. The parallel between suffering/punishment/torture in the writing of two authors who are very close in time, but very different in style and intention tells us a serious story about human nature, as well about the solidarity of literary endeavors. Another truly comparatist piece is Manfred Engel's "Literarische Anthropologie *à rebours*: Zum poetologischen Innovationspotential

des Traumes in der Romanik am Beispiel Charles Nodiers *Smarra* und Thomas De Quinceys *Dream-Fugue*" (107-16) which, among other things, has the great merit on continuing (in its own way) the admirable project of Albert Béguin, which, unjustly, as well as surprisingly, seems marginalized nowadays.

In a sense even more spectacularly comparatist is Dorothy Figueira's "Merchants, Missionaries, and Miscegenation: Sixteenth-Century Travel Narratives to India" (223-32). I call it more spectacular because the number of scholars familiar with Sanskrit and other Indian languages is tiny, as is the number of those who are truly able to engage in detailed examinations of cultural interactions at the European/Asian level. Figueira is certainly one of the leading among them and one learns quite a bit from reading her work. What I picked up above all is how the Western expansion—at least in the 16th and 17th century—had multiple causalities, the religious, the military, and trade being just some of several.

On the other hand, it is the case that in this volume the number of intriguing or unexpected contributions is considerable. Thus Fritz Nies in "Drang ins Weite, Blick fürs Ganze: Juristen als Übersetzer" (333-39) covers the period of approximately 1240 to 1790. As opposed to the interesting topic, the results are slightly disappointing; more numerical than anything. Still, this is a promising beginning and one finds useful news (or reminders), such as the fact that Turgot was a tireless and abundant translator.

Likewise, I enjoyed Monika Schmitz-Emans' " Reflexionen uber Präsenz: Poetikvorlesungen als Experimente mit dem Ich und mit der Zeit" (377-86), primarily for subjective reasons. She has penetrating comments on Oskar Pastior-Capesius, once my old colleague in college at the University of Bucharest; otherwise, although the topic is interesting, there are patches that are heavy-handed and somewhat unclear.

Steven Sondrup in "Paradisarheimt and Utopian Aspirations" (387-96) reminds us that the great Icelandic novelist Halldor Laxness had a long life and the Communist fellow-traveler stage thereof (which made him famous) was only *one* part of it. Sondrup discusses in a welcome and able fashion some major achievements of Laxness, particularly his *Paradise Reclaimed* (1960).

Bernard Kramann with "Retour à la nature mit Hippokrates: Zur französischen Medizin im Jahrhundert der Aufklärung" (67-74) offers an ingenious piece of cultural morphology. He shows how the shift in philosophy and literature toward the original and the primitive/natural finds its analog in the medical shift (or return) to the empirical in French scientific circles (the model being again the "classical" tradition.)

Another good instance of cultural morphology is provided by Patricia Oster in "Die Verzeitlichung der Gefühle in Texten und Gemälden der französischen Frühaufklärung. Eine Untersuchung zur vergleichenden Medienästhetik" (139-58). She relies a great deal on theories produced a number of decades ago by the scholar Alfred Baeumler, today largely forgotten, in examining the depiction of this short, surprising moment in literature and in painting (for example Marivaux vs. Watteau). It might be useful to read Oster's paper together with chapter IV

of the brilliant Karl Heinz Bohrer's *Ekstasen der Zeit. Augenblick, Gegenwart, Erinnerung* (München: Carl Hanser, 2003).

Maria Moog-Grünewald in her "Ästhetisierung neostoizistischer Ethik: Schiller und die französische Klassik" (75-84), whatever the additional and ulterior motives of the article, discloses how serious and profound Schiller could be in placing his plays half-way between Stoicism and Kantianism. Even more captivating is Karlheinz Stierle's "Friedrich Nietzsche und die klassische Moralistik in Frankreich" (85-91) who traces the otherwise well-known influence of La Rochefoucauld all the way back to Pascal, thus rooting Nietzsche in the realm of religious paradox where, in my opinion, he actually belongs.

Perhaps even broader is the splendid contribution of Albert Gil, "Rhetorik als Humanwissenchaft. Anmerkungen zur rhetorischen Dimension des dialogischen Denkens" (283-94), one of the all-too-rare-attempts of linking in such essential ways the traditional and the "ultra-modern"—an initiative that would well deserve to be pursued and expanded.

Well, we know that Comparative Literature is a slow and meticulous craft (after all, so are most other sciences). Any construction is built out of small bricks, carefully placed together. Many good comparatist contributions limit themselves to issues such as the image of Slovenia in French Romanticism, or else to critical speculations about common patterns in Scandinavian literature. This explains why larger enterprises such as Asian/European connections are approached with some hesitation.

Despite this kind of slow progress (or precisely because of it) I continue to be convinced that in the current socio-historical circumstances Comparative Literature is even more necessary than in the past. Globalization abandons the resources of Comparative Literature at great risk: the impoverishment and reductionism that will ensue are almost inevitable. Why is this state of affairs (so obvious to many of us) not recognized more widely? I believe that there are at least *two* great causes that act as obstacles to a broader recognition of the necessity for Comparative Literature. One is "nationalism," that is to say the isolation of separate cultures and literatures; it occurs often out of simple ignorance (of languages, of history, of mentalities) and results in somewhat simplistic research publications that merely pretend to be comparatist. The second is the arrogant attraction toward "cultural studies." This is the result of an excessive reliance on the faculty of reason, and of a marginalization (not to say elimination) of others, such as imagination, emotion, inventiveness, playfulness. I was glad to see that in the three volumes here briefly reviewed there were but faint traces of these fallacies.

In the light of these considerations, can we draw any useful conclusions after reading these three books? Do we learn anything about what true literary comparatism is or ought to be? I strongly believe that we can and we do. Let me explain how.

Some of the essays in all three volumes are written with fortitude, others with softness, but one never encounters *vehemence*. On the contrary, the purposes pursued by the authors are ones of sedate coherence. One recognizes in virtually

all of them a sincere quest for the truth. One recognizes in the great majority of the contributions a genuine love for imagination and for the beautiful. Their discourse is imbued with the sweetness of reasonableness. The essays display multiplicity and the coexistence (or, at best: the collaboration) of diverse ideas in their inquiry of each other.

As I have said elsewhere, Comparative Literature is *par excellence* the field that allows and encourages historical progress, without the contempt for or the ignorance of the past and of tradition. Progress and modernization are made possible by the model of Comparative Literature in a smooth and painless way, as opposed to the political-economic (not to say violent, military) methods that we habitually encounter in our surrounding world, particularly in the last two centuries.

This is what justifies, above all, our field of activity. I can only hope that Comparative Literature will be able to maintain itself, not crumble again into "parochial" (well, strictly national) domains. I can only hope that the ideologies rooted in the social sciences will not impose their abstract patterns and exert their reductive and diminishing impact upon a project that, at its best, has already proved itself both noble and helpful.

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**Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel, and Bernard Dieterle, eds. *Romantic Prose Fiction*. A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages, 23. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008. xxi + 733 pp. 978-9027234568.**

This impressive volume offers a wealth of insights into the interrelationships of Romantic fictional prose throughout most of Europe and parts of the Americas, with additional glances toward Asia. Like its four predecessor volumes in the "Romanticism subseries" of the *Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* (devoted, respectively, to Romantic irony, drama, poetry, and non-fictional prose), it is the result of a massive team effort by international scholars whose essays constantly interweave, reflecting on many of the same authors and works yet linking them to ever new texts and contexts. While roughly a third of the contributors are based in the United States and another third in German-speaking Europe, the team as a whole is thoroughly international and dozens of national literatures are represented in the volume. Editors Gerald Gillespie, Manfred Engel, and Bernard Dieterle have done a remarkable job of coordinating *Romantic Prose Fiction* as a team project, stimulating contacts among the contributors during the preparatory phase and reflecting carefully on the contours of the volume in their Introduction and Conclusion. They show a particular concern with the hermeneutics of studying Romantic fiction today: how to account for its continuing influence while stepping sufficiently outside that compelling legacy to be able to write about it analytically. As Gillespie states in the Introduction, "the volume provides . . . a sense of how certain powerful moments or factors in culture—here in the

instance of Romanticism—become built-in as active elements of the cultural repertory, maintain a certain discursive potency, inspire new imaginative writing, and serve as motivation or pretext for attempts to veer away in new directions" (xx).

In their Preface, the editors confront the challenge of making a volume of 733 large, closely-printed pages "user-friendly," and detail some of the choices they have made with regard to referencing, indexing, and the translation of original-language titles and quotations. These choices are successful in producing a very accessible volume. Another useful organizing principle is the division of the book's thirty-six essays among three parts, sub-titled "Characteristic themes," "Paradigms of Romantic fiction," and "Contributions of Romanticism to 19th and 20th century writing and thought." While there is inevitably a heuristic dimension to this structure, the three sections represent distinctly different approaches, and the reader accordingly feels that the mode of reflecting on Romantic literature undergoes interesting shifts over the course of the volume.

The thirteen essays in Part One, "Characteristic themes," address the identification, historical contextualization, evolution, and dissemination of themes, motifs, and character-types that appear repeatedly in Romantic fiction. While appropriately diverse in subject matter, many of these essays share a certain normative structure: they identify the "characteristic theme" and briefly discuss its history, then illustrate the theme's development and variation across a number of literatures, devoting a paragraph or so to each novel or story discussed. Most of the essays combine diachronic and synchronic perspectives, looking back to the Enlightenment or, even further, to the Classical roots of the theme in question in order to demonstrate the continuity or discontinuity of its Romantic incarnations.

Leading off the volume, Gerhart Hoffmeister's essay on "The French Revolution and prose fiction" grounds *Romantic Prose Fiction* in an epochal historical event, which Hoffmeister analyzes in terms of its treatment in several German novels and one later novel each from England (Dickens) and France (Hugo), concluding with some valuable synthesizing remarks on narrative and generic distinctions between history and romance. The following essay, Bernard Dieterle's "Wertherism and the Romantic *Weltanschauung*," also seeks an origin for the distinctively Romantic world-view and locates an alternative starting point, of sorts, to the French Revolution in the Werther phenomenon. Dieterle's dazzling, truly comparatist survey of the way Wertherism evolves in conjunction with Romanticism is further contextualized within a helpful summary of traditional differences in period concepts among major European literatures.

Three essays follow on the theme of the artist and inter-arts perspectives in Romantic fiction: "Romanticism and the idealization of the artist" (Gregory Maertz), "Unheard melodies and unseen paintings: The sister arts in Romantic fiction" (Mihály Szegedy-Maszák), and "Music and Romantic narration" (Claudia Albert). While each of these papers has individual priorities, they complement one another well. Szegedy-Maszák's important discussion of music and painting in terms of periodicity and the Romantic interpretation of history, for instance, provides a frame of reference for Albert's identification of patterns in the use of

musical motifs and musician characters in Romantic narrative.

The next three "Characteristic themes" relate to the quintessential Romantic topic of landscape. In "Nature and landscape between exoticism and national areas of imagination," Wilhelm Graeber surveys the use and meaning of natural settings across several literatures, showing how exotic landscapes convey emotional, spiritual, and symbolic significance, how landscape then becomes a repository for national identity and later, with Balzac, enters a phase of realistic depiction. Paola Giacomoni addresses a similar canon (featuring Rousseau, Goethe, Tieck, and Foscolo, among others) in her essay "Mountain landscape and the aesthetics of the sublime in Romantic narration," deriving penetrating insights from her focus on the sublime mountainous landscape as "a dynamic element, a place of transformation" (108). André Lorant turns to the different but not unrelated theme of "The 'Wanderer' in Romantic prose fiction," where he traces the evolution of the wanderer-figure in relation to landscape, history, and—most importantly—consciousness.

Monika Schmitz-Emans' long contribution on "Night-sides of existence: Madness, dream, etc." is exemplary in many ways: its range over several national traditions; its insightful analysis of the theme on both a macro- and a micro-level; its effective illustrations, that range from more extended readings to briefer, detailed citations of characters and texts; and its self-reflective quality (of which more later). Two further essays continue to explore the darker sides of Romanticism. In "Doubling, doubles, duplicity, bipolarity," Ernst Grabovszki seeks to link the motif of split bodies and psyches with alienness in the sense of the bipolarity of different cultures, while Michael Andermatt's "Artificial life and Romantic brides" takes on a typical, idiosyncratic Romantic motif. The remaining two essays on "Images of childhood" (Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer) and "Romantic gender and sexuality" (Thomas Klinkert and Weertje Willms) address important topics—indeed, topics that seem broader and more pervasive than the rest of the "characteristic themes" this section seeks to explore. It would have been good to see gender, in particular, feature more prominently as a dimension of other topics treated in the course of the volume.

Part Two of *Romantic Prose Fiction* is further subdivided into two sections, dealing respectively with generic types and narrative modes. In Subsection A, "Generic types and representative texts," the major genres of Romantic prose fiction are well covered by essays on the Gothic novel (Hendrik van Gorp), the *Bildungsroman* (Manfred Engel), the historical novel and romance (Markus Bernauer), and fairy tales and fantastic tales (Jörn Steigerwald). Three additional essays address generic types that perhaps come less immediately to mind as typical of Romantic fiction, but that persuasively round out the delineation of Romantic-era genres: detective stories and novels (Gerald Gillespie), short prose forms (Santiago Rodriguez Guerrero-Strachan), and the idyll (Sven Halse). All these essays reveal the value of a broad comparatist perspective for an understanding of the complex history, evolution, and variation of genres. Engel's essay, for instance, uses a comparison of *Bildungsroman* texts in German, English, and French

to define and desynonymize the term "Bildungsroman" itself, seeking to sort out the "confusion" that has resulted from the "anachronistic origin of the term and its successful globalisation" (263). Similarly, Rodriguez Guerrero-Strachan argues that Romanticism was the period in which generic distinctions among forms of short fiction—récit, story, tale, novella—were first established, and uses a survey of texts from half a dozen national traditions to analyze these terms according to narrative mode and purpose. Bernauer's equally impressive contribution productively complicates our picture of the historical novel and historical romance by weaving a fascinating network of international and literary-historical connections around the central place occupied by Walter Scott. In Steigerwald's essay, the international perspective generates an analysis of the fairy-tale genre in terms of several phases: Enlightenment fairy-tales evolve into marvelous and psychological Romantic fairy-tales after 1800; this genre is in turn countered by the fantastic tale that originates after 1815 and continues to develop later in the nineteenth century. Halse, in an essay that opens up a perspective on Scandinavian Romanticism for the first time in the volume, discovers a similar, multi-stage development in the Romantic idyll, by which the idyll derives from a world-view characterized by revolt in the pre-Romantic period, then develops into an intense form in the High Romantic era and a more resigned form in the Biedermeier period. Last but not least, Gillespie elucidates the genealogy of the detective story and relates its subtypes to one another both diachronically and synchronically.

The essays in Part 2(B), devoted to "Modes of discourse and narrative structures," are among the most complex and theoretically innovative in the volume. This productive complexity begins with Frederick Garber's "Address, relation, community: Boundaries and boundary crossing in Romantic narration," which persuasively demonstrates through readings of Walpole, Goethe, Radcliffe, Hoffmann, and Poe how Romantic narrative displays an "additive-causal" structure whereby forms of *address* lead to *relation*, which in turn establishes (or fails to establish) *community*. Equally original is Monica Spiridon's discussion of Romantic fiction in terms of the narratological distinction between homophony and polyphony. She shows how Scott, Hugo, Novalis, and others use polyphonic modes that involve the incorporation and manipulation of other genres (e.g., poetry) and other art-forms within their prose. These forms of multivocality have the effect of calling attention to the fictionality and rhetoricity of the text itself. Remo Ceserani's and Paolo Zanotti's essay on "The fragment as structuring force" puts forward a theoretical argument about the dialectic between fragmentation, on the one hand, and totality, purposefulness, or *Bildung* on the other, drawing its examples from a wide range of prose forms beyond the novel in order to pursue "a tentative typology of fragmentary prose writings in Romanticism" (461). Sabine Rossbach's contribution, entitled "Mirroring, abymization, potentiation (involution)," pursues an argument heavily informed by German idealist philosophy through the challenging categories in its title as well as several others that are introduced in sub-headings (e.g., the Romantic journey; irony; Britain; Hoffmann's Serapiontic principle; dream and madness; parallels in Romantic painting). The

following essay on "Romantic novel and verse romance" begins in similar territory, with Friedrich Schlegel's ideal of the *Roman*, which John Claiborne Isbell uses as a guiding principle with which to examine the evolution of prose and verse romance forms across Europe and the Americas in an essay that represents a truly encyclopedic tour de force.

Two shorter contributions follow, in which Dorothy Figueira and Virgil Nemoianu use myth and history-writing, respectively, to highlight some distinctively Romantic explorations of identity and society. Nemoianu's emphasis on the conservative tendency of the historical novel then finds an interesting contrast in Annette Paatz's "Romantic prose fiction and the shaping of social discourse in Spanish America." In the American context, Paatz shows, Romantic novels are typically patriotic and progressive: their functionalization of European models and their double dialogue with Europe and with Spanish-American audiences leads to the development of new sub-genres and generic hybrids. With this essay, the stimulating subsection on narrative modes comes to an end—although Paatz's essay leads directly on to other essays dealing primarily with Latin-American literature in Part Three.

"Contributions of Romanticism to 19th and 20th century writing and thought" is the most diverse part of the volume in both geographical and historical terms. The eight essays in this section reach—as Jüri Talvet suggests with the allusion in his title to Iurii Lotman's notion of "periphery"—into the far-flung margins of the Romantic world whose center was traditionally defined with reference to a "golden triangle" formed by Germany, Britain, and France. Talvet's essay discusses Romantic fiction in Spain and Latin America, calling attention to narrative techniques, generic hybridity, and the strategic use of paratextual elements such as chapter titles in novels written in the Spanish-speaking peripheries. Throughout Part Three, themes, motifs, and narrative modes that have been discussed in earlier parts of the volume are re-encountered from intriguing new perspectives, reappearing in geographically far-flung locales and in twentieth-century genres and media. José Ricardo Chaves' "Romanticism, occultism, and the fantastic in Spain and Latin America," for instance, resonates not only with the other essays that address Spanish-language literature, but also with Steigerwald's study of the nineteenth-century fantastic tale and Joel Black's essay on the legacy of Romanticism in modernism and beyond. Jeanne J. Smoot also echoes a theme that appears in several earlier essays which narrate the "life-cycle" of a Romantic theme or genre: namely, the survival of Romantic characteristics in a muted form within realist fiction. Smoot foregrounds this interpretation in her essay on "Romantic thought and style in 19th century Realism and Naturalism," showing how a gentler realism, tempered by Romanticism, developed in America and, more selectively, among some Russian, Italian, Spanish, and Norwegian realist authors.

Other re-evaluations of the Romantic legacy trace an even longer historical trajectory. Countering the established belief that Romantic subjectivity exerted its major influence in the poetic fictions of decadence and modernism, Joel Black looks beyond modernism to demonstrate the persistence of more complex

Romantic attitudes, including Romantic irony, in a "postmodernist prosaics (or metapoetics)" and in the notion of a "literary absolute" during the later twentieth century (603). Briefer essays by Steven P. Sondrup and A. Owen Aldridge focus, respectively, on the persistence of Romantic irony in the mammoth mid-nineteenth-century *Törnrosens bok* by Swedish writer C. J. L. Almqvist, and on ludic prose from Sterne to Fuentes. Two valuable contributions on the far-flung influences of Romantic fiction remain to be mentioned. Takayuki Yokota-Murakami takes on the challenging topic of "Romantic prose fiction in modern Japan" in a fascinating essay demonstrating that Romantic ideas occupied an entirely different place in the literary history of Japan: instead of a response to Neoclassicism as in the West, Romantic themes and modes appeared in Japan as a reaction "against the grain" to the more dominant Naturalist movement of the later nineteenth century. While they have come to be primarily associated with the *Literary World* poets and critics of the 1880s and 1890s, Romantic and Gothic forms can also be found, as Yokota-Murakami demonstrates, in other idiosyncratic Japanese prose writers of the early twentieth century. In the final essay of the volume, Elaine Martin surveys the large number of Romantic prose works—especially German ones—that have been made into films, highlighting the considerable adaptation necessary in order to bring them to the screen and the multiple different adaptations that the most compelling texts have received.

What common ground can be derived from a volume of this magnitude and diversity? Remarkably, the contributors return often enough to a few common points of origin, and a small number of highly canonical writers are cited so often that, as a whole, *Romantic Prose Fiction* does have the effect of reaffirming a fundamental genealogy of European Romanticism. Among other things, this genealogy derives Romanticism from Rousseau and Goethe's *Werther*, regards Horace Walpole as the father of the Gothic novel, and locates an end-point of sorts with Balzac, whose fiction is repeatedly cited for taking an exhausted or overworked Romantic theme and shifting it into a new, more realistic frame of reference. The primary authors who are referenced most often include Goethe, Jean Paul, Scott, Poe, Pushkin, Balzac, and, above all, Tieck and Hoffmann. While this canon reaffirms the importance of the German and British Romantic movements, it is also interesting to note how the extremely diverse and wide-ranging contexts in which these and other canonical writers appear has the effect of radically reshaping the contours of these dominant national Romanticisms themselves. In contrast to the current shape of British Romantic studies, for instance, this volume's consideration of English Romantic fiction in the context of its European and global influences, and its concomitant shift of attention from English High Romanticism to a later era, means that Poe and Dickens are more prominent than Jane Austen or William Godwin.

There are relatively few explicit cross-references between essays in the volume, but, given the density of interconnections, fuller cross-referencing would have been distracting, if not impossible. Instead, the conscientious reader will be well rewarded for seeking out cross-references on her own, whether by read-

ing multiple essays or by taking advantage of the user-friendly index. Perhaps the most rewarding achievement of the volume is the opportunity it provides to encounter and re-encounter familiar authors in different contexts and from new perspectives, in conjunction with diverse literary traditions and in the company of lesser-known or geographically far-flung contemporaries. The theoretical and critical approaches on offer are equally diverse, perhaps only somewhat sparing when it comes to explicit considerations of history and nation-building (as the editors themselves note in their Conclusion), and the conditions of nineteenth-century print culture. Some of the authors in the volume pay significant attention to literary-cultural systems, for instance by taking into account such influential systemic developments as the huge expansion of the periodical press in many national markets during the Romantic period. Only occasionally, however, is Romantic fiction linked with media history or with important technological developments such as changes in book and paper production.

A final, noteworthy feature of *Romantic Prose Fiction* is the editors' brief but courageous "Conclusion": six pages that take on the task of summarizing the significance of the preceding 700 pages, evaluating what was attempted, what has been achieved, and what remains to be done. The self-reflective quality of the Conclusion—as it considers the constant need to rewrite literary history with a consciousness of the critical context of the present as well as the continuing legacy of the Romantic past, but without subservience either to Romanticism's image of itself or to contemporary critical fashions—echoes the valuable dimension of self-reflection found in the volume's best essays. The most adventurous and intriguing of these studies propose new theories and definitions of Romantic genres and forms, or even of seemingly straightforward concepts like "national literature." Schmitz-Emans, for instance, notes that national "varieties" do not strictly line up with national literatures, and her essay analyzes texts of the "French variety" even when they turn up within German literature. Equally thought-provoking is the way some authors (including Engel, Bernauer, and Steigerwald) use the evidence provided by the international scope of their investigation to disprove or substantially qualify common assumptions that may have been formulated on the basis of a single national tradition, or to make previously vague definitions more precise. Most of the contributors do not stop at applying generic definitions, narrative modes, concepts of periodization or of national literature to Romantic texts. Rather, they also reflect on how these concepts and definitions are themselves legacies of the Romantic movement. *Romantic Prose Fiction* is thus a remarkable achievement, not only for the rich scope of materials and insights it offers, but for its valuable sub-text of self-reflection on the way a comparative study of Romanticism helps at times to clarify—and at times to problematize—our modern critical consciousness.

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**David Damrosch. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. xiii + 324 pp. 978-0691049861.**

***The Buried Book: The Loss and Rediscovery of the Great Epic of* Gilgamesh. New York: Henry Holt, 2006. 315 pp. 978-0805087253.**

***The Longman Anthology of World Literature, Compact Edition.* David Damrosch, David L. Pike, et al., eds. 2nd ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2008. xxvi + 2878 pp. 978-0321436900.**

The three books under review, two authored and one co-edited by the distinguished American comparatist David Damrosch, represent three ways of thinking about world literature. Tackling the issue through a series of illustrative case studies, Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* is theoretical in ambition. *The Buried Book*, meanwhile, focuses on the history, rediscovery, and subsequent fortunes of *Gilgamesh*, the earliest masterpiece of epic literature to have reached us from antiquity. Finally, in *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, compiled in collaboration with a team of experts in the various periods and traditions of world literature from the second millennium BCE to the near present, Damrosch puts the picture the other two books propose to a practical test.

As Damrosch reminds us in the introduction to the first of these books, the term "world literature" (*Weltliteratur*) is the invention of a single man, the polymathic German poet, dramatist, and novelist, Goethe. The notion of a global literary inheritance is, then, a local coinage of the German nineteenth century, a condition shared with the later German invention of comparative literature itself, dating from the publication of the world's first journal devoted to the discipline, Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz's *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literatur* (1877). These two facts are intimately related, and not just because, once we start comparing literatures, there is no logical place to stop. The very idea of world literature emerges as part of the effort to secure for the "minor" literature of the German-speaking world a status in every way comparable to that enjoyed not only by the Western classics, as by the Sanskrit and Semitic traditions in whose modern reconstruction German scholars also played a pioneering role, but by the already well-established "national" traditions of Renaissance Italy, Golden Age Spain, and modern France and England. The point of this reminder of the historical localness of the concept of world literature is to drive home how densely perspectival it is. Like "literature" itself, a word whose notorious porousness has been a staple of literary studies since the structuralist 1960s, "world literature" is a function term. Far from designating a ready-made body of writings awaiting a label, it refers to those texts that a particular group of people single out by *calling* them "world literature" for often ill-examined reasons of their own. The term's scope and meaning are thus determined by the shifting motives and circumstances that prompt its use.

As the foregoing suggests, the great merit of Damrosch's approach lies in its acknowledgement of this fact. For one thing, it provides a theoretical platform from which particular uses of the term become historically legible. As he notes in the introduction, "World literature has often been seen in one or more of three

ways: as an established body of *classics*, as an evolving canon of *masterpieces*, or as multiple *windows on the world*" (15). Each of these methods has its virtues, especially in the pedagogical context in which the question of world literature most commonly arises at least in the United States: that of putting together courses likely to attract the large numbers of students university administrators like to see. But each also falls under the net of often heated skeptical challenge that puts the whole enterprise at risk. "Classics," for example, are in principle self-designating, and lend the proceedings a comfortable air of providing value for money. The trouble of course, as with comparable sets in the national literatures themselves, is that such lists are endemically subject to controversy and change. One can always challenge the criteria for choosing one list over another; nor do the standards employed remain intact from one generation to the next. The "masterpieces" option meets this challenge by arguing that, while canons do necessarily evolve over time, the works that get enlisted are assumed to recommend themselves by virtue of their intrinsic value as, precisely, *masterpieces*. The problem here is not just that the lists are subject to constant debate and revision; the criteria used to decide what makes a masterpiece do as well. Whence the irresistible appeal of the "windows-on-the-world" approach, making a virtue of necessity by treating the partisan choice of texts and worldviews as the point to be got across. The advantage in this case lies in the frank espousal of diversity. What is deemed to have enduring literary value will invariably shift as a reflex of the different standpoints we adopt, just as the world looks differently depending on how we look at it. The disadvantage however is that, in factoring in the irreducible contingency of valued works and standpoints, we not only sacrifice the illusion of authoritative consensus that the other two approaches supply; we foster a false, because facile, sense of cross-cultural equivalence that homogenizes the very contrasts we want to highlight.

Damrosch cuts through these tangles by embracing them: if there is indeed one theme that runs throughout his book, it is just the sense of complex historical, linguistic, and cultural entanglement we meet the moment we set seriously about reading *any* text under *any* circumstances. The result is the elegantly minimalist definition of world literature offered near the start of the introduction: "I take world literature to encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (4). Since world literature will be whatever body of texts we agree to grant that name, it makes no sense to try to define it further; and it certainly makes no sense to try to define it for all time, as something independent of the contingent choices we are led to make. This does not mean that we will have no interesting reasons for choosing the texts we do or that we will make no useful discoveries in comparing them. It is just that the actual *readings* our choices make possible are what matter, together with the discoveries to which these readings lead.

This wisely pragmatistic definition determines the general structure of the book. Part 1, on circulation, explores three case histories chosen for the light they shed on how books move between different worlds. The nineteenth-century British

discovery, decipherment, and restoration of the cuneiform tablets containing the ancient Assyrian *Epic of Gilgamesh*; the sixteenth-century *Cantares Mexicanos* and *Romances de los Señores de la Nueva España*, collections of post-Conquest Nahuatl poetry whose hybrid composition ironically preserved the language and verse forms of pre-Columbian Aztec culture by transporting them to Italian libraries; and the increasingly (though always imperfectly) non-Eurocentric evolution of American anthologies of world literature over the course of the twentieth century—all vividly bring out what Damrosch calls the "elliptical" because bipolar character of the relations between cultures such movements mobilize. World literature is the product of the fields of force generated by competing purposes and understandings that, in creating works we come to identify as world-literary, reveal the overdetermining investments in operation at both ends of the transaction.

Part 2 takes up translation, an intervention on the part of the culture of reception without which circulation would inevitably be limited. In analyzing the problem of rendering ancient Egyptian love poetry, the writings of the thirteenth-century German mystic Mechthild of Magdeberg, and the fiction of Franz Kafka in tongues often radically different from those in which they were originally composed, Damrosch documents at once the deeper dimensions of the refractions already in evidence in part 1 and the critical opportunities these difficulties open up. In seeing, for instance, how and why Egyptian love poetry remains untranslatable in contemporary English or the degree to which, like medieval Church Latin versions before them, modern feminist takes on Mechthild's accounts of her mystical experiences reframe the emancipatory experiences Mechthild couched in her native German, we achieve not only a sharper grasp of what makes these texts different, and so valuable, but a clearer feel for the refracting medium of our own cultural engagement.

Finally, in part 3, on the production of world literature, Damrosch examines how the novel "windows" on the rich diversity of the world that circulation and translation make available are not the neutrally transparent element the windows metaphor encourages us to imagine. The processes of circulation and translation actively *construct* world literature in a dual sense. On the one hand, to take up an argument Damrosch borrows from the sinologist Stephen Owen with reference to the contemporary Chinese poet Bei Dao (19-22), we wind up making world literature in our own image by creating a market for it, leading to the manufacture of works from alien cultures that, far from spontaneously exploring their own time, place, and traditions, are more or less systematically configured with us in mind. But, on the other hand, in Damrosch's upbeat revision of Owen's paradox, transactions like these also serve as the medium by which our growing consciousness of the world in its diversity shapes the expression of that diversity to challenging effect. This leads to readings of the work of three twentieth-century writers who, each in his or her own different way, produce texts about one part of the world expressly for the use of readers in another. First comes P.G. Wodehouse, shuttling back and forth across the Atlantic to compose a version of the US for the

English market and, in the Bertie Wooster novels and stories, a version of England originally meant for Americans. The example of Wodehouse is followed by the notorious case of Rigoberta Menchú's fictionalized autobiographies: horrifying accounts of the murderous violence suffered by the indigenous Mayan population of Guatemala whose scandalously ambiguous truth-status Damrosch interprets as the both natural and just expression of the shameful political realities they bring to world attention. The discussion of production reaches a close with the Serbian Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars*: a collection of viciously xenophobic and anti-semitic diatribes meant not only to shock its foreign readers, but to leave them feeling implicated in the unquenchable ethnic hatreds to which it lends its uniquely poisonous voice.

As rich and provocative as I find *What Is World Literature?* to be, Damrosch's second contribution seems to me more valuable still. There are many remarkable things about *The Buried Book*, but, for lack of space, I will confine myself to only one: the book's dual chronological orientation, deliberately modeled on that of the archeological excavations that are a central part of the tale Damrosch tells. To begin with, the book recounts the forward-moving story of the discovery, restoration, and decipherment of what turned out to be the earliest known epic in the world. But in following the story of the ever deeper understanding of *Gilgamesh* forward in time, Damrosch is led ever further *back* toward its original composition in the second millennium BCE. The fruit of this arrival at the poem's origination point is of course a reading: Damrosch's moving as well as convincing effort to understand *Gilgamesh* on its own terms, as an expression of the culture for which it was first written down. In this sense, the book aims to bring us ever closer to the text itself even if few of Damrosch's readers are likely to be equipped with a working knowledge of ancient Assyrian history and language. By the time we get there however, we have been made vividly aware of how this work of recovery has been a tale of elliptical refraction from the start: one whose presiding theme moreover is the successive layers of assumption, prejudice, error, and sheer muddle without which, paradoxically, we would never have got to know the text at all.

For one thing, the discovery of *Gilgamesh* was largely an accident: the unearthing of the clay tablets on which the text was recorded, many of them not only broken but scattered in different places around the site at which they were found, took place during excavations in search of something very different: massive monuments like the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs. Having realized that the curious wedge-shaped markings on the tablets were a form of writing, scholars in London, where the tablets had been shipped, set about piecing the fragments together in order to decipher them properly. This literally heroic labor of imagination was greatly energized when one of the scholars involved, the pious lower-middleclass autodidact George Smith, spotted the tale of an ancient flood in which he saw confirmation of the account of the corresponding story in the Old Testament. As we understand by the end of Damrosch's book, one of the byproducts of the intellectual as well as colonial adventure thus set in motion was the

demolition of the kind of literalist interpretation of the Bible that guided Smith. Nevertheless, much of the original impetus behind the text's reconstruction was the desire to rescue the Bible from the historical reductions precipitated by archeology, the deciphering of ancient non-Biblical languages, and the techniques of "higher criticism" first developed to deepen mastery of the literary remains of ancient Greece and Rome but eventually brought to bear on Scripture as well.

Western orientalism also played a major role in the story. Indeed, the excavations that led to the recovery of *Gilgamesh* formed an integral part of British imperial policy in the Middle East and, if only for this reason, enlisted the collaboration not only of professional scholars like Smith but of gifted amateurs in the diplomatic corps and the military. The colonial dimension of the enterprise is further reflected in the affecting story of Hormuzd Rassam. A native Iraqi, Rassam participated in the early digs on the site of the ancient city of Nineveh, near present-day Mosul, in part in order to fulfill his ambition to turn himself into a gentleman scholar in the English mode. The story ends in the main unhappily: in particular, the credit for much of Rassam's work was stolen from him by Sir Henry Rawlinson, his senior at the British Museum as well as a native-born Englishman. The fact remains that the difficult life-path Rassam chose led him to make the decisive discovery of the buried library of Ashurbanipal to which the recovered text of *Gilgamesh* belonged. The indigenous self-made son of empire thus helped reconstruct the lost glory of ancient Assyria on which, as Damrosch relates in his final chapter, Saddam Hussein would base his own, specifically anti-British as well as anti-American political legitimacy in the century to come.

The recovery of the text of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is thus firmly embedded in the often heart-breaking grain of its contingent historical moment. And yet something of real and lasting value was recovered just the same. *Gilgamesh* is now a staple of the field of world literary studies and of the anthologies in which the field presents itself to the wider English-speaking public. It owes this place to being the earliest masterpiece of world literature both in point of antiquity and by virtue of its standing as that text with which, more than any other, world literature first came into possession of itself as a genuinely global enterprise. Damrosch's narrative of its restoration is accordingly not just an episode in the intertwined histories of scholarship and empire; it is a parable of world literature's ongoing self-invention, a process whose promise is measured just by the obstacles that, however inadvertently, all of those involved helped overcome in giving us the text we know today.

Much of what Damrosch discusses in *What Is World Literature?* and *The Buried Book* gets into the Longman anthology. *Gilgamesh* is there as part of a strikingly balanced representation of the Western and non-Western myths, epics, hymns, and secular verse of the ancient world; Nahuatl poetry takes a turn in a section on global "perspectives" closing out the early modern portion of the book; and Kafka gets a look-in among the selections representing the twentieth century. Other features of the anthology also reflect the ideas Damrosch's earlier books ex-

plore, and in particular the series of perspectives to which I alluded a moment ago, where an attempt is made to set the main body of texts against a wider planetary background that brings out points of comparison as well as contrast dramatized by the usually if by no means uniformly violent contacts between Greeks and Persians, Spaniards and Aztecs, or Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The book as a whole nonetheless suffers from the defects of the genre.

The editors certainly make more room than their predecessors for non-Western sources, especially in the earlier sections devoted to the ancient and medieval worlds: the admirable range of Chinese, Egyptian, Sanskrit, and Arabic material is as illuminating as it is welcome. Thanks moreover to the interludes of correlated "perspectives," the anthology is sure to stimulate discussion of the variety of directions from which the world can be imagined and experienced. The baseline nonetheless remains fundamentally Western, a fact evinced in particular by the system of periodization used. Though I would have preferred a shift to the indefinite plural, I have no objection to beginning with "The Ancient World" since all literary cultures share a fascinated debt to antiquity; and while the calendar involved remains Western even when presented as a "common era" rather than in terms of the years of the Christian God, identifying the selections for more recent times as belonging to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries poses no major problem. Still, the substantial mid-sections of the book obey an entirely Western logic: the Middle Ages, early modern period, and what the editors' call the "age of enlightenment" (i.e., the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) only make sense in a historical scheme whose fulcrum remains the European Renaissance even when that term is deliberately replaced by the less overtly teleological "early modern." The result however is not simply to shoehorn the world's literatures into a specifically European scheme of periodization but to skew the European selections themselves. There is surely something wrong with any attempt to see the later European seventeenth century as belonging to the same cultural formation as the century to follow. It is not just that this overweights the importance of France and more particularly England since the dates used (roughly 1670 to 1760, leaving a curious forty-year gap before the nineteenth century begins) correspond more closely to the long English eighteenth century from the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 than to the short French one that, beginning with the death of Louis XIV in 1715, ends in the Revolution of 1789. In under-representing other parts of Europe, and in particular Italy and Spain, the anthology's periodization both drops the baroque from the picture and makes the mode of rationality associated with the neoclassical reaction to the baroque disappear. We accordingly lose the dynamic tensions that the European eighteenth century provisionally resolves in favor of forms of literary expression (the novel preeminently, but also intellectual enterprises like Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*) that the anthology pretty much completely overlooks.

The anthology is thus a disappointment. And yet it does have the advantage of confirming the wisdom of the minimalist definition of world literature that

Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* formulates. World literature is indeed finally a reflex of the *use* to which we put it—a use however that, as in the anthology, leaves us prisoners of our own assumptions, prejudices, and errors only so long as we fail to negotiate it with others. It may well be that, where anthologies of any kind are concerned, a genuinely world-wide vision of world literature is impossible not only because we cannot include everything in a manageable form people could actually use in the kind of courses for which they are intended, but because no anthology could really accommodate the variety of perspectives it would have to entertain. What, for example, would world literature look like from China, Nigeria, or Brazil? Supposing the question would arise at all, this is a matter no conceivable anthology could settle except insofar as it is *somebody else's*, assembled in accordance with standards entirely unlike any we ourselves would apply. Still, if nothing else, *The Longman Anthology* compels us to ask such questions, leaving us the wiser to that extent at least.

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**Hershini Bhana Young. *Haunting Capital: Memory, Text, and the Black Diasporic Body.* (Hanover, NH/London: University Press of New England, 2006). ix + 235 pp. 978-1584655190.**

This is an ambitious work, both politically and theoretically; Bhana Young outlines her "project" (dedicated to her Ancestors) as "an utopic cry for a revolutionary healing from the 'nervous conditions' that characterize our survivals as the black bodies of the African diaspora" (215). In the Introduction she elucidates her sub-themes—"Memory, Text, Body"—and announces her aim of "theorizing the underrecognized injury of the black body," described as "the racial injury that erupts from European modernity" (1-2). Her central and theoretically perhaps most contentious claim is positing the notion of "our collective black body" (3)—the first person plural staking a claim of "recollection" and actual "pain" shared by the author and (it seems) all black-identified subjects. What is somewhat bewildering is an oscillation between what Bhana Young describes as "our strategic self-definition as peoples of the African diaspora" (4) seemingly referring to African-Americans with slave ancestry, but which is made to absorb fairly privileged U.S. immigrants (where the author, who describes aspects of growing up in South Africa, apparently places herself). There is little recognition of the extensive intra-African dispersals and no reflection on the fate of those Africans finding themselves elsewhere in the Americas or in Europe in this "strategic self-definition."

A major trope is that of "re-memory," which Bhana Young takes from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: suggesting that even if the image or experience causing pain or fright in the present is not a personal recollection nor recalls an actual familial association, it signposts one's incorporation in the shared, embodied sufferings of black people. One underlying function of the Introduction would then seem to be to establish that the texts chosen for detailed discussion become comparable in

being interpreted by as well as linked through Bhana Young herself, who insists on the need to recognize the need for and the validity of the affective dimension in academic analysis. She writes:

> No black body can be seen as autonomous in light of larger racialized communities, forged not out of biological essentialism but out of acts of identification necessitated by the violence of modernity and its racial regimes. The black body is thus always collective as it remembers both its ghosts and that which has traumatically marked it as Other. [. . .] This body [. . .] can only survive by acts of (aesthetic) identification that create community. (6)

While Bhana Young insists that "[c]entering slavery undertheorizes continental Africans' identity" (11), the latter phrase indicates the problematic category issue that haunts her interesting text: the enormous diversity of causes and conditions of African experiences and remembrances of suffering. It is difficult to see how her theoretical position could, without radical adaptation, be made to fit to contemporary texts by African authors detailing (say) wartime atrocities and the experiences of child soldiers; gender violence; state corruption and oppression—and creative, courageous responses to address these and other issues, such as the ravages of AIDS and persistent gender oppressive traditionalism (or: works not primarily tragic in their focus?). Not all "inequalities" were "inherited from colonialism" (15), nor has "white, male, middle-class, imperial subjectivity" (17) remained the chief source of othering on the African continent or within its diasporas. Bhana Young's analysis is, then, both highly contemporary and sophisticated *and* curiously dated. While noting "the melancholia of the nation-state" (35) and decrying and denying essentialism, Bhana Young declares that she "attempt[s] to define just who *the* black woman is" (22) and that "[b]lackness is a historically and culturally *specific* embodied discourse" (25) (emphases added in both cases).

Perhaps the best section in the text is the discussion of Gayl Jones's wonderful, harrowing novel *Corregidora* (1975); it is also the longest of the book's six chapters. *Corregidora* concentrates on the fiercely lived but damaged lives of four African-American women of successive generations—all of them unable but also unwilling to erase the traces of the harm a particular slave-owner, Corregidora, left on their bodies and memories; he violently fathered both the grandmother and mother of Ursa, who is the focalizing character. Ursa was brought up on the various narratives of Corregidora's sexual exploitation of her great-grandmother and subsequently her grandmother, respectively the mothers (by this man) of her grandmother and her mother. She experiences her "gold" skin color as the mark of his contamination of their family and is raised on the ethos that the "Corregidora women" need to have daughters so as to transmit, as embodied witnesses, the record of his evil. Yet Ursa is left sterile after marital violence, and eventually makes her contribution as a blues singer to transmit the stories she feels need re-telling. Bhana Young's theoretical terms are well suited to this novel's complex exploration of a haunting past of human degradation and sexual humiliation

which it is imperative, indeed a matter of prideful identification, to maintain and articulate, so that the wrath of the dishonored can retain its passion and force. Bhana Young nevertheless (in her excellent, subtle account of the text) notes that while the Corregidora women's stories are "Trojan horses, patiently waiting and quietly unraveling the seams of hegemony," the novel "is also a warning against collective memory with its continual reinscription of trauma" by "mov[ing] away from the romanticization of collective memory" (93). In this way, Bhana Young's overarching theoretical perspective is also refined and presented in a more nuanced way, as led by the novelistic text.

*Corregidora* allows the critic to identify strategies of resistance *within* oppression (101) as well as the "complex layer[ing] of recollection" (106). In elucidating the alternative modes in terms of which the four generations of Corregidora women recall the monstrosities of the slave system, Bhana Young distinguishes the more viable and creative ways of doing so from instances of persistent (psychic) entrapment. She also enlighteningly distinguishes the harm that the text's black men recall or suffer, from the damage which they themselves inflict on the Corregidora women. Jones's vivid yet carefully nuanced evocations of the troubling ways in which sexual desire itself is undermined or at least dreadfully complicated by the kinds of trauma the female characters have undergone is delicately traced in Bhana Young's account. Less satisfactory is the following example of a personalized, interventionist theorization that compares and links Jones's Corregidora women with the critic and all black female contemporaries:

> How can *the* "unrelieved crisis of desire" force *an* embodied retheorization of categories of sexuality and identity that resist the denial of *our* agency as black women and that alleviate *the* trauma that accompanies *our* re-memories? (125, emphases added)

I am troubled by the homogenizing and consequently shallowing, even cheapening effect of describing trauma in the terms cited above; here the critic seems to have lost sight of her own earlier insistence on maintaining distinctions between the characters' individual sufferings and [re-]memories.

The following (fourth) section of the book discusses Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) under the title "Hungry Women." Bhana Young's perspective on this famous Zimbabwean novel emphasizes the class differences addressed in the text, linking up with a 1995 essay (on this novel) by Therese Saliba. Since the term carries inevitable condescending overtones as well as being a class marker, I am not sure that Young's references to "the bourgeois African elite" and to "the bourgeois nature of the writing African woman" (135) are altogether happy, even if, elsewhere in this chapter, she refers to "the *different* ways in which we manifest *our* ill-health" (139, emphases added) just after evoking a distinctly middle-class [African-]American scene of shared fright (139). Again the blurring of categories as superimposed on apparent recognition of their distinction is problematic. Bhana Young's careful, probing analysis of the trope of dirt (and its multiple ironies) employed by Dangarembga works very well, though. Particu-

larly astute, too, and convincingly argued, is her insistence that "[e]ssential to understanding the novel is a charting of the symbolic and real economy of food that saturates *Nervous Conditions*" (157).

Despite appreciating these valuable insights, a stickler for consistency might well criticize the fact that in this chapter notions of haunting recurrences, the supposedly overarching theme of Bhana Young's text, are not much in evidence. Towards the end of the section she does pick up on Nyasha's declaration to her cousin Tambu that "nearly a century" (*Nervous Conditions* 201) of colonial seduction and entrapment of Africans are expressed in her own nervous eruption. In Bhana Young's words: "the native body is racked with dis-eases that are inextricable from the larger dis-ease of colonialism"; her preceding remark that "[t]he only cure therefore has to be independence" (171) is unfortunately short-sighted, however, in view of post-colonial power abuses in Zimbabwe—again indicating a certain insufficiency in Bhana Young's engagement with contemporary African conditions.

In the next chapter Maryse Condé's earliest novel, *Hérémakhonon* (originally published 1976) is the focus of analysis. [The unusual title of the novel was preceded in a later version by *En attendant le Bonheur*, to translate the Malinke term few readers would have recognized.] The complicated and not altogether appealing narrator and central figure in the text is Véronica, a woman brought up in the Caribbean (Guadeloupe), who studied in France for nine years before deciding to go search for the roots of her racial-cultural discomfiture in an unnamed African country [recognizable as the Republic of Guinea during Sékou Touré's tyrannical rule]. She is a diasporic subject marked by "her alienation and isolation" (183), whose misguided and inept attempts at cultural recovery the novel represents somewhat sardonically.

Bhana Young evidently found the text amenable to her themes of "haunted capital" and of the "black diasporic body," because Véronica finds herself troubled and her dreams haunted by certain African figures; however (as she notes) Véronica goes to West Africa with a quite selfish focus on her personal issues, predictably ending up in a politically and sexually compromised role, despite her largely (even infuriatingly) passive nature. I like Bhana Young's resistance to a simply critical reading of Véronica's yielding and self-indulgent nature, though, as articulated in her remark that "Condé insists on the inextricability of the individual from the collective, on the difficulties inherent in gender, race, and middle-class identity formation" (186), so that she does not misread the author's "technique of dis-identification with the narrator/protagonist [which] has also been used by other diasporic writers such as Caryl Phillips" (187). Moreover, Condé's exposure of the "despotism" and "masculinism" of the post-colonial African society is noted (191) and Bhana Young recognises Condé's "engagement with a contemporary nationspecific Africa" (192) despite her own choice of a rather older novel by this author. Although Bhana Young chides Véronica for "elid[ing] the historical differences of blackness" and the specificities of racial discursive formation" (192) in her engagement with Condé's text, I am not sure that she herself does not also do

so in the way she sets up her theoretical framework. Her castigation of Véronica's stereotypification of "Africa [as] the masculine warrior" (204) is nevertheless appropriately balanced by her observation that Véronica's character is emotionally damaged by the multiple displacements of her personal history.

Bhana Young concludes her work with a not altogether successfully structured short story: titled "Coda" and sub-titled "The Haunting Distance between Two Places—South Africa and South Carolina." With further hints of autobiographical touches, the story sets up the experience of a haunting (in the more conventional sense of being troubled by a ghost who embodies a dead person's personality making recurrent, interventionist appearances in a living person's sphere, and *also* in the critic's extended sense as a reminder of earlier, widespread sufferings erupting in the life of a black person). The "ghost" is a white American girl in a troubled, slave-owning family, intended (it seems) to indicate Bhana Young's recognition of parallels between the racist behavior of South African whites during apartheid and slavery in the U.S. The critic prefaces the story with instructions on what we must take to be its meaning, such as: "[the] white girl moves us [. . .] to illustrate a structural white privilege that rests on the creation and subjugation of Otherness" and "the black girl unsteadily learns to refuse racist consolidations of her self" (221). By the end of the story, the white girl/ghost has come to recognize her own ghoulish purpose: "*In death, I have discovered the pleasure of plunging into the black bodies around me, ways of feeding on people's pain, on their basic 'niggerness' and living forever*," while the black girl knows only, incontrovertibly, that she "*must stop her*" (232; original emphases); a powerful racial-moral binary is thus established here.

The least satisfactory section of the literary analytical chapters in *Haunting Capital* is the first one, on Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1974). It is also the briefest of the literary analyses (surprisingly so, given the immensely complex nature of Head's novel), sharing the chapter with a detailed description of an artwork or art installation. A certain conceptual creakiness in Bhana Young's work is in evidence here, since there is hardly even an attempt to compare the Caribbean visual artist's work with Head's African text—the two seem yoked side-by-side in this chapter for no better reason than that the art-work and artist were encountered while Bhana Young was working on Head's novel and since both indicate types of haunting, in the form of reincarnated or re-presented abuse of black subjects. The part of the chapter evoking the artist Deborah Jack's exhibition titled "SHORE" (dated 2004) bears the heading "Salt, Slavery and Other Hauntings," and is vividly and rather beautifully described by Bhana Young; clearly Jack's evocation of slave workers harvesting salt on the island of her birth, St. Martin, and of the slave ships who had brought them there, coincides well with her own vision and theory. The problem with the commentary on Head's text is, I think, that Bhana Young's reading redirects or obscures some of the novelist's most crucial points.

Head's well known but difficult novel evokes the "nervous breakdown" of a South African exile living in Botswana, whose mind is invaded by imagined, demonic figures who relentlessly, torturingly, humiliate her over a prolonged period.

In her "daylight" life she works with a mixed group of people on a vegetable garden project. She eventually escapes the mental torture by noticing the "ordinary" decency of those around her and by dedicating herself with a sense of "belonging" to her new land. Yet the frightening realization that absolutely anyone is susceptible to corruption by power and that anyone with power will ruthlessly hurt those accessible to them can never be forgotten. Bhana Young writes appropriately that "Elizabeth's haunting demonstrates both the affective dimensions of a racial and sexual injury, and resistance to the structures of power in the first place" (59). What she overlooks is the terrifying discovery made by Elizabeth (Head's protagonist) that the groundwork for those power structures exists even in victims of racial and sexual abuse. Bhana Young attempts to solve the "problem" (given her perspective) that Elizabeth's imagined haunters/abusers are all black/African by contorting Head's representation of Dan, Sello, and Medusa as Elizabeth's terrifying abusers to read the male figures as themselves haunted—"Dan and Sello, for example, are both haunted by the viciousness of a history where the black man is hypersexualized and infantilized" (60), she writes. Head was indeed aware of the haunting power of such abuses, but her novel exhibits imagined versions of experiences she (as a mixed-race woman) experienced in Botswana and referred to in her letters: in 1969 (for example) she wrote the following: "Perhaps I did not realize how much, what is known as a mixed breed, is really deeply hated by African people" (*Gesture*, 89).

Mainly, though, Head insisted throughout her life that even though "[t]here are really wicked people on this earth [. . .] THEY ARE NOT IN CAMPS" (*Gesture*, 54—Head's capitals). Similarly, James Baldwin wrote in 1985: "The object of one's hatred is never, alas, conveniently outside but is seated in one's lap, stirring in one's bowels and dictating the beat of one's heart" ("Dragons" 686).

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**Amelia Sanz and Dolores Romero, eds. *Literatures in the Digital Era: Theory and Praxis.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. 349 pp. 978-1847182913.**

*Literatures in the Digital Era: Theory and Praxis*, edited by Amelia Sanz and Dolores Romero of the LEETHI (Literaturas Españolas y Europeas del Texto al Hipertexto/Spanish and European Literatures from Text to Hypertext) group, is an ambitious attempt to assess the relationship of literature to our current digital environment. The volume looks at the creation of new literary texts, the process of reading digital literature (particularly hypertexts), how digital innovations can be used in scholarly research and editing, and finally how the digital era is creating new paradigms for both theory and praxis. The 21 essays and five introductory pieces are a selection from among talks presented at the International Seminar on "Literatures: from Text to Hypertext" held in September 2006 at the Complutense University of Madrid. The seminar was jointly organized by the LEETHI research group and the International Comparative Literature Association research committee. The volume is dedicated to ICLA/AILC president Tania Franco Carvalhal who commissioned the initiative and whose tragic and unexpected death kept her from taking part in the seminar.

The challenges to our usual habits of reading, analyzing, and writing literature in our digital age are considerable. Some of us had hoped to escape the arduous process of thinking about hypertexts and digital media, thinking that perhaps we would not have to face these challenges in our academic life times. Our students and our cultural context seem destined not to allow us this luxury. This collection of essays picks up the gauntlet. Researchers from Cairo to Tel Aviv, Spain to the Americas and Eastern Europe bring to bear training ranging from linguistics, literary theory, mathematics, electrical engineering, media and communication studies to languages and comparative literature. This geographical as well as disciplinary diversity makes for a very lively discussion that examines hypertexts and activity on the internet from several perspectives.

In the introduction to this volume its co-editors, Amelia Sanz and Dolores Romero, pose a number of provocative questions about what kinds of effects hyper-technology might have on national and international identities as well as on those of individuals who are now habituated to communicating virtually and participating in vast social networks that allow them either to be very public or almost anonymous. They also ask what new skills scholars might need to examine texts whose sub-text is a mathematical rather than verbal language. What new models of authorship might these new technologies spawn since not only a creative writer and a programmer might be involved but also multiple contributors to a communal narrative on an internet space? What new kinds of connectivity—or isolation—might be involved? Many of these questions are explored by the contributors.

Each of the book's four main sections: Hyper-Paradigm, Hyper-(W)reader, Hyper-Editing, and Hyper-Praxis is introduced by a short piece by Maria Goicoechea, who provides a brief contextualization of the issues and a roadmap of

the essays in each section. These are very helpful in allowing the reader to situate herself in what is a very complex debate. In the Hyper-Paradigm section, for example, Goicoechea sketches the technophile and bibliophile paradigms that favor technology as a generator of new forms of knowledge and new ways of reading versus the book as the core cultural artifact. Within this spectrum, she situates the study of George P. Landow, who explores the advantages of hypermedia and stretchtexts in allowing for new versions of critical editions aided by new technology. Such new scholarly works would highlight the many links that any text has to language, politics, biography, and other media. They would reveal the nature of scholarly collaboration and the many sources involved in critical analysis. Marko Juvan's "Postmodernity and Critical Editions of Literary Texts: Towards the Virtual Presence of the Past" also contemplates the ways in which hypertexts could allow the critical presentations of versions of a text as well as how e-archives could help to make new scholarly activity possible. Jola Skulj picks up the thread of the discussion of E-archives and the ways in which they would facilitate the shift towards a complex, networked presentation of the history of literary phenomena "not as a text with a fixed, linear structure, but using a kind of spatial (hypertext) system" (197).

María Clara Paixão de Sousa examines digital texts from a material perspective revealing the complex process of text codification and reception—and warns that digital programming systems can also cause a loss of information. Apostolos Lampropoulos in "Always Already-Known Hypertexts: A Recent Debate in Old Terms" looks rather at the theoretical underpinnings of scholarship on digital media. He criticizes the theoretical foundations of cybercriticism by challenging the use of concepts from French theory (particularly de Certeau, Foucault, and Derrida) by cybercritics who appropriate theoretical concepts by analogy, apply them to the study of cyber space, and thereby blunt their original provocative and subversive force. Lee Scrivner shares some of Lampropoulos's caution. Scrivner looks askance at claims that hypertexts provide new freedoms by subverting the "tyrannies of linearity in old-school left-to-right print, fixed meanings and one-way flows of signs from subject-author to object-reader" (280). He demonstrates in a number of earlier texts (Sterne's *Tristram Shandy,* for example, or Duchamp's declaration that "the spectator makes the picture") that non-linearity and interactivity are not entirely new concepts. Florian Hartling also takes a critical look at some of the claims regarding the internet and the formation of new concepts of authorship. He examines the "death of the author" concept that asserts that the internet allows for more participation in writing and emphasizes collaborative literary compositions. He also cites examples in which the author disappears and is replaced by the programming code itself. All of this, Hartling points out, nonetheless retains a human creator and generates a rebirth of the author in various new forms.

Ziva Ben-Porat's "Actualizing Allusions: Hypertext and Cognitive Literary Research" examines attempts to analyze the ways in which we process information in inter-textual situations. She hopes to repeat in a hypertext environment

a study she first undertook in 1976, which sought to study the ability of readers to comprehend texts by providing them with information about underlying allusions to other texts that would make the primary texts clear. She then posits that she could "judge the validity of a particular interpretation in exact terms" (68). Interestingly, Ben-Porat provides an example of the study that uses a passage that discusses "a house joined to a house, a field added to a field . . . ," which is a biblical allusion to Isaiah V:8-10 that begins "woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field." Despite the negative attitude the biblical passage provides for this community expansion, most test readers insist on reading the first passage positively. And among those who are most recalcitrant in their apparent misreadings are "participants with backgrounds in literary studies" (70). Ben-Porat hopes she can improve her test results using hyper-texts. It is curious in this instance that Ben-Porat never asks what would seem to be the central question—not why can't these readers get it right, but why do they interpret as they do? What political, social, educational, or cultural context might impel them to read the expansion of housing and cultural communities into new territories as positive despite the biblical disapproval? I am not sure that adding hyper-text technology to the study will necessarily render different results.

In Part II, Hyper-(W)reader, Juan B. Gutiérrez is also interested in how the brain reacts when reading narrative, but he focuses on the differences in the experience of reading printed narrative versus digital narrative. Noting that a 2004 National Endowment for the Arts study reports "a drop in levels of reading of printed narrative in all groups studied between 1982 and 2002" (85) (a fact curiously contradicted by Tötösy de Zepetnek's assertion that "the vast majority of surveys on reading . . . show that there is more reading today . . . than ever before" [171]), Gutiérrez wonders if digital texts will make a difference. His observations about which parts of the brain function while reading printed texts versus video games was quite suggestive for the future of the culture of reading. His further discussion of kinds of interactions in digital texts and of a symbiosis between digital narrative and printed narrative (such as the *blognovela Más respeto que soy tu madre* by Argentinean Hernán Casciari). For those of us new to these genres, this is a very enlightening study. Ana Pano Alamán also examines digital texts and the way they function. She analyzes the ways in which hypermedia components "are by themselves narrative sequences that tend to overcome the primary narrative sequence traditionally rooted in the text" (302), and in this way hypertexts enable paratactic structures that contribute to the volatility of meaning.

Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's "Aspects of Scholarship and Publishing in the Age of New Media Technology" looks at the digital age from a practical perspective. He recounts the cautious nature of humanists when they confront new media technology and the skepticism of department heads and review committees regarding tenuring faculty who publish in such venues. I must say that this scenario sounded all too familiar. At a time when many science journals are going exclusively to digital presentations, the humanities still see such publication as suspect.

Our libraries are cooperating in mounting e-repositories of research articles open to all—partly in order to offset the impossible cost of print journals but also to make research available more widely and more quickly. And yet too many of us remain reluctant to embrace this new scholarly venue. When university presses are cutting back on scholarly manuscripts in the humanities, I can only agree with Tötösy de Zepetnek that "the availability of scholarly material on line (including public access peer-reviewed journals online) is a vital necessity" (180).

Laura Borrás in "*Lector in Machina:* Towards an Erotic of Reading," explores the sensory sensations involved in reading digital texts and links those "screen sensations" (123) to those of reading medieval manuscripts. This study reminds us that all aspects of digital media are not necessarily new even while describing attempts to enlist the other senses (smell and taste) in the experience of digital exploration. Alexandra Saemmer explores the sense of vision, and particularly animation, as it functions in hypertexts. She too reminds us that digital experiments are linked to earlier literary experimentation (such as that of the *Nouveau Roman*, for example), but she also presents some of the most fascinating use of text generators and programmed art.

In the vein of linking earlier literary activity to hypertextual structure, Dirk Van Hulle explores the writing processes of Proust, James Joyce, and Beckett to demonstrate that hypertextual architecture may be a helpful way of visualizing the complex structure of their works and their writing methods. Anastasia Natsina also contemplates the ways in which hypertexts might help us to theorize short story collections in her essay, while Marie-Thérèse Abdel-Messih provides a fascinating examination of calligraphy and the ways in which it functions in a multi-media context.

Thus a number of pieces explore models generated by contemplating digital media which might help us all to understand traditional printed texts in new ways. Others (Priscilla Ringrose's study of warblogs or Perla Sassón-Henry's essay "From Hypertexts to Blogs") look to the more recent development of blogs and what this new digital form adds to the hypertext paradigm. Ringrose examines blogs and lifelogs from Iraq posted on the internet and analyzes their function as social action as well as communication and possibly gratifying (if politically dangerous) moments of self-disclosure. She reveals the potential importance afforded by such products of the information economy in countering official proclamations. Sassón-Henry examines specific Latin American hypernovels both in their digital particularity and in their relationship to earlier textual traditions.

While all the essays in this volume introduced new territory to those of us used to the older codex technologies, some essays were more difficult to process than others. We can, for example, follow the argument when Susana Pajares Tosca in "Ludology Meets Hypertext" contrasts hypertext scholars and "ludologists" (from Latin *ludus* or game—therefore, those who study games). She demonstrates the underlying assumptions of those scholars who examine "a text plus links" and favor narrative metaphors versus those who concentrate on computer games with

"emergent structures" in which freer interaction takes place. The game analysts are wary of allowing "'alien' disciplines such as literature" to colonize the new technology. And the term "ludology" itself conjures up models less constricted than traditional literary theory. On the other hand, following the "more or less simplified" vector diagram and analysis provided by Alckmar L. Dos Santos in "Some Notes on the Reading of Digital Literary Works" was more of a struggle to this math-challenged reader—although I found his descriptions of the vertigo of dealing with a seemingly infinite array of possibilities quite compelling.

In general, I found that each of the essays challenged me to rethink my own literary paradigms and to conceive of reading, editing, and curating digital literary texts as a new field of study—one that might indeed be worth some serious work such as that undertaken by this group of adventurous scholars pooling their knowledge to produce new insights. The only shortcoming of the volume is that technology keeps moving at a furious pace. A mere three years since the original conference at which these essays were presented has seen whole new uses of the internet and social networking sites. Facebook and MySpace continue to create new collaborative forms that will ongoingly push our theoretical paradigms of reading, authoring, and interacting. And ironically, one of the most recent phenomena of digital communication, Twitter, did not even launch until 2006. With the advent of the IPhone, my students are more and more exploring an internet in miniature, which pushes them not toward the complexity of hypertexts but rather toward simplicity and brevity. Twitter and text messaging have engendered the extremely short (140 characters or fewer for Twitter) and the abbreviated. We can only wonder at this point what these new digital innovations will produce and what brain activity will mark the 21st century.

These new developments do not, however, diminish the value of this scholarly volume on the Digital Age. It is well worth reading and contemplating as we move forward into new digital territory.

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**AZUMA Hiroki. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Jonathan E. Abel et al., trans. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. xxix + 144 pp. 978-0916653522.**

Eugene Eoyang once problematized the imbalance in the terms of criticism: we use Western concepts to understand Eastern literary phenomena, but not vice versa. We speak of a Chinese "tragedy," but not of a Western "*Shih ching*" (11). This is a valid point, and efforts have been made to correct the imbalance and to find operational concepts free from Eurocentrism. These have been, however, on the whole unsuccessful. Theoretical discourse is still full of concepts and jargon originating from Euro-American criticism. In this context the term *otaku*, the analysis and the evaluation of which constitute the major task of Azuma's book, may be a breakthrough.

In fact, the word *otaku* is acquiring recognition in the English-speaking world.

*The Oxford English Dictionary* entered it in an on-line draft in 2008 and explained it as: "Originally in Japan: a person extremely knowledgeable about the minute details of a particular hobby (esp. a solitary or minority hobby)." *The Webster's New Millennium Dictionary* (2003) gives the following definition: "an avid collector or enthusiast, esp. one who is obsessed with anime, video games, or computers and rarely leaves home." It also notes that *otaku* is slang with a derogatory nuance. One might think, on the basis of such definitions, that it is a marginal cultural phenomenon, concerning only maniacs. It really *was* such when the type was first recognized in the early 1980s. Yet, it has now acquired an all-Japanese, or even universal, significance.

According to Azuma, "Otaku culture, as exemplified through comics and anime, still often maintains an image as a youth culture. However, the generation of Japanese people born between the late 1950s and the early 1960s—thirty- and forty-year-olds holding positions of responsibility within society—are actually its core consumers. They are no longer youths enjoying a period of post-college limbo and freedom before taking on social responsibility. In this sense, otaku culture already has some deep roots in Japanese society" (3).

These "deep roots" have been variously described by critics. In a critically acclaimed book *Learning from Akihabara: The Birth of a Personopolis*,[1] Morikawa depicts how Akihabara, which used to be a part of Tokyo with thousands of electric/electronic appliance shops, symbolizing Japan's productive capitalism, has turned into an area serving otaku, i.e. a town with computer/anime/comics-related goods. Morikawa sees this change as representative of the nationwide shift of the social/economic/cultural structure of Japan.

Azuma is in line with these critics. The uniqueness of his book lies, however, in its contexualization of the otaku phenomenon in postmodern thought. The original title of the book literally translates, to use the idea of the English translator, into *Animalizing Postmodernity: Japanese Society Seen through Otaku* (xix). What does Azuma mean by "animalization"? The reference is to Aleksandre Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. Kojève, expanding Hegel's philosophy, believed that mankind was facing the end of history, i.e. the end of rationality, formulated by the Enlightenment, and that this process was actually occurring in the United States, and, more significantly, in Japan where "all Japanese without exception are currently in a position to live according to totally formalized values—that is values empty of all 'human content' in the 'historical' sense" (161). Azuma essentially endorses Kojève's view, further arguing, however, that this mode of stylized life is typically observed among otaku.

Azuma thus situates his work and the concept of otaku in the broader critical discourse of the West, expounded not only by Hegel and Kojève, but also by such postmodern favorites as Baudrillard, Derrida, Lacan, Žižek, and so on. I highly esteem Azuma's attempt, especially because he is not simply trying to apply Western concepts to explain away Japanese cultural phenomena, but to revise the former in the light of the latter.

For instance, one of the highlights of Azuma's ideas propounded in the book

is his concept of "Database consumption," which the author considers to be characteristic of otakus', and, thus, postmodern, reception of media. Characteristically, their reception takes the form of falling in love (*moe*) with Lolitaesque heroines, for example, Ayanami Rei in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. According to Azuma, otaku fall for (*moe-ru*) Rei not because of the role she plays in the grand hero/heroine-saves-the-world narrative or in a small narrative (an *Evangelion* episode), or because of her character, but because of the various "elements" she possesses. Azuma calls them "*moe*-elements" and insists that they are stored in the otaku database. The example Azuma gives is a character, called Di Gi Charat, who consists of such *moe*-elements as green hair, cat ears, a tail, a maid's uniform, loose socks, etc. *Moe*-elements are, when necessary, derived from the database, combined, and turned into a new character for whom otaku fall. Azuma considers such a character, constructed on the basis of the database, as a simulacrum. The database itself is, however, neither a simulacrum nor an original. Thus, Azuma complicates Baudrillard's theorization.

Naturally, Azuma's conceptualization of otaku sexuality, which is original and intriguing, is not immune to criticism. For one thing, Azuma more or less limits his scope of the explanation of otaku mentality to their fascination for *bishôjo* (cute girls).[2] Another of otakus' main realms of interest is science fiction, especially featuring robots. These narratives are predominantly historical epics (take the *Gundam* series, for example) that Lyotard would reject as a modern grand narrative.

Secondly, there is a question of whose database Azuma is referring to. Apparently, this database is not individual or completely random: otaku share a community, and, therefore, a database in contradiction to the common belief that otaku are incapable of communication.[3] One has to ask, then, what are the economic/ideological forces that have crystallized this specific database and in what historical manner. The question of class, gender, or any social group does not receive proper attention in Azuma's book, a lacuna which Azuma himself acknowledges.

Thirdly, in spite of his efforts to revise Western theory, does not Azuma sometimes perpetuate the Western paradigm by locating otaku in the conceptual framework of Western thought? Let us, by way of an example, consider the problem of anthropocentrism. Although Kojève's ideas have largely influenced poststructuralists, some Hegelian notions surely retain a conventional mark in his thought, from which the postmodern thinkers are not free, either. Lacan, for instance, writes in *Écrits*, possibly echoing Kojève: "[A]s a fact of an animal at the mercy of language, man's desire is the desire of the Other" (264). Kojève's residual anthropocentrism has already been pointed out. Judith Butler writes of Hyppolite's critique of Kojève's version of Hegelian metaphysics: "Hyppolite initiated his own studies of Hegel in part to continue and revise Kojève's effort to ground Hegelianism in a post-historical time . . . Hyppolite sought to escape the anthropocentric biases of Kojève's heroic narrative of the human spirit" (79).

In contrast to Butler, Azuma rather unproblematically subscribes to Kojève's conceptual framework which is in the last instance humanistic, that is, based on the human/animal distinction.[4] This seems to me to be all the more questionable

since otaku themselves are, with their fragmentary, database-like sexual desire and their fascination in cyborg/robot-like humanity (take *Ghost in the Shell*, for example), definitely deconstructing such anthropocentrism. Their rejection of humanity is achieved not by choosing to be an animal (as Azuma appears to be suggesting), but by dislocating the boundary and invalidating its significance.

I am not recommending that Euro-American philosophical concepts be totally rejected in favor of Japanese indigenous notions, though. On the contrary, I think one of the most significant merits of Azuma's book lies in its repudiation of parochial paradigms. The above-mentioned Japanese critics who write on otaku tend to consider the phenomenon as purely Japanese. Tosho Okada, self-proclaimed "OtaKing," in his *Introduction to Otakuology*[5] argues that otaku although they used to be stigmatized as perverted maniacs, should now be regarded (and respected) as creators and market leaders, badly needed in this era of information society, and that they are the authentic inheritors of the traditional Japanese aesthetic ideals/techniques of *iki* or *tsū* (connoisseurship), developed during the Shogunate. Azuma, harshly censuring such nationalistic versions of "otakuology," writes: "I absolutely do not perceive the emergence of otaku culture as a uniquely Japanese phenomenon. . . . [I]t should be grasped as one manifestation in Japan of a grand trend toward the postmodernization of culture. . . . It is precisely for this reason that otakus' works transcend national borders to be well received around the world" (10). Azuma's cosmopolitanism, thus, opens up a better possibility for the concept *otaku* to be used as a theoretical, conceptual tool in Western critical discourse.

*Otaku* is, perhaps, then, neither a universal nor parochial concept. The cultural condition, in which the dichotomy of universality and parochiality is dissolved—probably, that is the significance of the age of the "postmodern" and the otaku that Azuma expects to discover soon.

At this juncture, I would like to return to the primary question that I raised at the beginning of this review: Can we overcome the Eurocentrism in critical discourse; can non-Western concepts attain cultural significance in Western or global societies?

Whether the concept *otaku* may acquire currency in (Euro-American) critical discourse must depend on the prevalence of the burgeoning cyber media (anime, comics, games, etc.) and the new mentality that accompanies them. This may be yet to come. It is said that the most popular "character" (once again, to deconstruct anthropocentrism) of the *Pokemon* series in Japan is Pikachu whereas in the United States it is Ash Ketchum. Japanese viewers are interested in the encyclopedia of the monsters with cute "elements" while American viewers are more into the narrative of a hero-boy and his growing up. Nevertheless, the recent sharp rise of interest in America and Europe in Japanese anime and comics, or the enormous popularity in the States of an artist such as Takashi Murakami, who consciously incorporates anime-like "cuties," may be indicative of a profound change that is taking place in postmodern, transnational cultural spheres. If so, it may eventually revolutionize the critical language that we comparatists use as well.

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**ENDNOTES**

1 The English title is given by the author himself. Literally, it may be translated as *The Birth of a Hobby-Town: Akihabara, the Town that Makes One Feel an Itch* (*moeru*)." (*Moe-ru* is a verb, widely used by otaku, which denotes their cyber [and detached] sense of male heterosexual desire.)

2 For an analysis of the obsession of comics/anime fans with cuteness (*kawaii*), cf. Lent.

3 This is a view that was disseminated by an influential study, *Discommunication Syndrome*, by Adzusa Nakajima. Otaku, although they may be exclusive, are enormously fond of (cyber-)communication, as is shown by their interest in blogging, etc.

4 Denial of the human in favor of the animalistic is not anti-humanism, but, on the contrary, reinforces humanist metaphysics. A Russian philosopher, Vasilii Rozanov, in such a vein encouraged a more positive attitude toward animals: "Seek God in the animal; seek in life; seek Him as the lifegiver" (58).

5 The English rendition of the book's title is the author's, as is the coinage "otakuology."

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# OUVRAGES INDIVIDUELS

# INDIVIDUAL WORKS

**Hans Bertens. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 2008. ix + 248 pp. 978-0415396714.**

This second edition of Hans Bertens' 2001 guide to literary theory comes with a new chapter on Ecocriticism, which gives it new arms for the fierce competition in the market of introductions to literary theory and criticism. It takes its place with Terry Eagleton's venerable *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minnesota 1983 and 1996), Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (Prentice Hall, 1999), and Keith Green's and Jill LeBihan, *Critical Theory and Practice: A Coursebook* (Routledge: 1996), striving to be more up-to-date. (Full disclosure: my *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, is a another competitor in this market, although unlike Eagleton and Bertens it eschews the school-by-school approach.) Bertens, who teaches at the University of Utrecht, writes for the English language market, but from a salutary position outside England or America, and he works hard to keep that position of detachment unmarked by other national orientations. Somewhat oddly, for instance, there are no references to German theorists here, save Marx and Engels and Freud, though German theoretical perspectives loom large in literary studies in the Netherlands. And perhaps because of this position of detachment, the book bears some strange marks of the author's attempt to identify with his imagined undergraduate audience: "meaning resides not so much in individual elements but in the relationships between them—an admittedly improbable claim" (47). Roman Jakobson's definition of the poetic function of language is "as uninviting as the title of his 1960 article, 'Linguistics and Poetics.'" What an off-putting title!

Though Bertens calls his book *Literary Theory: The Basics*, he does not ask what literary theory is nor seem interested in whether there is or should be a distinction between literary theory and just "theory," and without some sort of attempt at definition, it is hard to grasp what "the basics" of literary theory might be. The book's treatment suggests that theory is the assumptions on which literary interpretation is based, but instead of defining the basics as a set of questions to which different theories or theorists give different responses, he presents literary theory as a series of schools. To acquire the basics of literary theory, then, would be to know a bit about each of these schools. Fortunately, Bertens' approach is capacious and wide-ranging: starting with Practical Criticism and the New Criticism,

he backs up to glance at Russian and Czech Formalism and early structuralism before turning to Structuralism, to Political Reading of the 1970s-1990s (Marxism, Feminism, and the study of Race), Post-structuralism (Derrida, deconstruction, and postmodernism), Poststructuralistm continued (Foucault, Lacan, and French feminism, which means Cixous and Kristeva), New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, Postcolonial criticism and theory, Sexuality, literature and culture (Gay and Lesbian studies and Queer theory) and Ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is not presented as a new theory but as a thematic and above all evaluative perspective. One virtue of this book is the emphasis on Marxism, once allegedly dead but now newly relevant.

A challenge for an introduction that takes a school-by-school approach to theory is always evaluation. Do you try to expound a theory or an approach as sympathetically as possible and then offer a judgment, or do you try to avoid evaluation, or do you build the evaluation into your exposition? In some ways the best solution is Terry Eagleton's: announce your evaluative perspective, so that you can give as sympathetic a presentation as possible before declaring that however interesting this approach, it does not advance the interests of the workers. The most common but perhaps least satisfactory mode is to try to occupy a sympathetic middle-of-the-road position: each theory has some validity but in focusing especially on X, Y, or Z, it *goes too far*. Bertens describes theory as "a frontal attack on common sense" (210)—commonsense assumptions have turned out to be based on unfounded prejudice—but he frequently appeals to common sense, either in his own name or by citing the sensible appeal to common sense by unnamed others: "to many people this position seems unnecessarily radical. . . .We can perhaps agree . . . however" (47). To many, "Derrida's critique of logocentrism seems extremely far-fetched" (104). He refers to "a growing impatience with the poststructuralists' attack on identity and agency and with post-structuralism's insistence on instability and heterogeneity" (172). Needless to say, impatience is not a theoretical position, and it is of course what one expects arguments about the problems of identity and agency would encounter. It is scarcely an answer and scarcely what a book on the basics of theory ought to promote or value, but this does seem to be Bertens' position. After a sympathetic exposition of Spivak, he nonetheless concludes, "In order to be relevant for the twenty-first century, postcolonial studies would have to distance itself from radical poststructuralism" (173).

I would suggest that this is the worst position for an introduction to theory to adopt. It is the antithesis of the theoretical attitude, and it invalidates what one might properly call the basics of theory: the idea that one should push an argument as far as it can go, even when it repudiates what common sense tells us, since common sense is a construction designed to make the world more bearable or to perpetuate power relations. Eagleton's strategy is far superior—to identify the standard of judgment as a particular choice of values.

Finally, Bertens implies that one of the major questions for theory is "whether true knowledge is out of reach"—a formulation that begs the question, presuming that there is a truth and that the only question is whether it is within reach or not.

Most theories, of course, lay claim to some sort of truth, even if they present truth as a construct. But in fact, Bertens is not much interested in this question since he sees poststructuralism as having been a period of excess, to be reined in by common-sense, not by truth.

Whatever its virtues, the book is marked by a good deal of carelessness. Almost all the page references in the index are wrong—usually 3 pages beyond the actual appearance of a name or term (perhaps it was transposed, unrevised, from the first edition). We are told that Colin MacCabe and other British critics have shown that the realism of the 19th century English novel is not so realistic after all and that *Jane Eyre* and *Middlemarch* hail us just as ideology hails us" (68), but there is no bibliographical reference (and the reference to MacCabe in the index is wrong). Bertens tells us that Saussure distinguished between *langue* and "*paroles* (plural)" (sic, 43). Of course, Saussure distinguished *langue* from *parole*, a truth that could indeed be regarded as basic to theory. The back cover tells us that the book now includes new coverage of "the latest schools of thought, including ecocriticism and post-humanism," but there is no reference to post-humanism in the index, or in the text that I noticed, and it is not clear whether post-humanism is a strand of ecocriticism, to be praised for its vision, or part of poststucturalism, to be impatiently condemned for its harping critiques of identity and agency. Beginning students of theory deserve better. They especially deserve more of an initiation into the theoretical attitude rather than a survey implying that the common sense of readers who find "Linguistics and Poetics" "uninviting" is an appropriate standard by which to judge theory.

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**René Girard. *Mimesis and theory: Essays on Literature and Criticism, 1953-2005.* Robert Doran, ed. and introd. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2008. 310 pp. 978-0804755801.**

René Girard rassemble ici, par ordre chronologique de publication, vingt articles s'étendant sur plus d'un demi-siècle. Il serait intéressant de recouper l'ordre chronologique par une dichotomie qui permettrait d'y voir plus clair: d'un côté les articles "ponctuels," consacrés à un écrivain ou à une œuvre, de l'autre des contributions plus générales et théoriques.

Dans le premier groupe, le plus important par le nombre, j'introduirai une seconde dichotomie: si certains articles se penchent au gré des lectures sur de grands écrivains du passé (Valéry et Stendhal, l'historiographie de Voltaire, Stendhal et Tocqueville, Proust, Marivaux, Racine, Hugo, *Yvain,* Dostoïevski, Shakespeare), d'autres présentent l'immense avantage de montrer René Girard réagissant "en direct" à la vie littéraire française de son temps. Ainsi en est-il des textes sur Simone de Beauvoir (en 1961 après la publication de *La force de l'âge),* sur Sartre (en 1965 après la publication des *Mots),* qui nous révèlent l'empathie

profonde de René Girard pour ces écrivains, et constituent de véritables essais explorant, par exemple, l'œuvre antérieure de Sartre relue à la lumière des *Mots*. "Pride and passion in the contemporary novel" explore les métamorphoses du désir mimétique, concept central de la pensée de René Girard, dans le roman contemporain. De même l'essai "Mimetic desire in the underground," explore ce même concept dans *Mémoires écrits dans un souterrain.*

Les articles sur Valéry et Stendhal, par exemple, permettent de repérer des aspects méthodologiques fort intéressants: point de considérations générales, mais examen minutieux de points précis et particuliers de l'œuvre des écrivains concernés, par exemple Valéry lecteur de *Lucien Leuwen,* ou Stendhal lecteur ô combien admiratif de Tocqueville. Inutile de dire que l'on gagne en précision et en pénétration ce que l'on perd en étendue. Certains de ces articles gagneront évidemment à être mis en parallèle avec les autres écrits de René Girard sur ces mêmes écrivains, par exemple en ce qui concerne Shakespeare, Proust ou Dostoïevski. D'autres articles s'attachent à des aspects relativement inaperçus des écrivains concernés. L'article sur l'histoire dans l'œuvre de Saint-John Perse nous révèle une strate peu explorée de ce poète, et ceci en 1953, c'est-à-dire à une date où son œuvre était encore pour une bonne part à venir.

Les essais 9, 13 à 15, 17, 19 sont d'orientation nettement plus théorique et nous font revivre, grâce à leur ordre chronologique, quelques uns des grands moments ou des grandes oppositions de la critique des quarante-cinq dernières années. Ainsi l'essai 9, écrit en 1963, nous montre un René Girard pesant les atouts et les failles de grandes orientations critiques de l'époque, essentiellement le structuralisme et l'herméneutique.

Le problème des relations de la critique littéraire avec les sciences de l'homme et la philosophie constituent une ligne directrice essentielle de ces essais théoriques, comme en témoignent "Critical reflections on literary studies" qui nous fait revivre les conflits du temps (1966) entre R. Picard érigé en symbole d'une Sorbonne fossilisée et les "nouvelles critiques," celle de Roland Barthes en premier lieu, mais aussi toutes celles qui à l'époque s'efforçaient d'apporter de nouvelles perspectives dans les études littéraires.

La réflexion de René Girard se fait plus offensive encore lorsqu'il entreprend, confrontant les textes de Freud et ceux de Proust (*Jean Santeuil* aussi bien que *A la recherche . . .)* de revisiter un concept psychanalytique aussi central que celui de narcissisme dans "Narcissism: the Freudian myth demythified" (1978). René Girard écrit: ". . . *narcissism, [is]* a theoretical construct for which psychoanalysis claims scientific status but which is really mythical. I personally believe that the descriptions of desire in *Remembrance of things past* and a few other literary works amount to a critique of narcissism which is really decisive and much more 'scientific' than anything psychoanalysis has to offer on the same and related topics." On peut ou non accepter les conclusions de cet essai, mais son intérêt réside de toute évidence dans la comparaison ainsi esquissée entre textes scientifiques et textes littéraires, comparaison sur laquelle repose par ailleurs une

bonne part de la production critique contemporaine.

Dans "Theory and its terrors," (1989), René Girard dresse un large panorama de l'état de la critique littéraire à cette date, mais bien des remarques conservent vingt ans plus tard une parfaite validité, notamment sa dénonciation des critiques formalistes qui incriminant un prétendu réductionnisme des critiques inspirées des sciences de l'homme réduisent de fait le texte littéraire à un jeu de signifiants tournant à vide et vidé de tout référent. Il plaide de façon fort opportune pour la restauration de l'idée de référence au sein des études littéraires, avec toutes les conséquences méthodologiques qui en découlent. Mais il ne s'agit pas davantage pour lui de se jeter sans discernement vers des sciences de l'homme qui ne lui semblent jouir d'aucun privilège susceptible de leur conférer une position de supériorité vis-à-vis de la littérature. Se tournant ensuite vers le déconstructionnisme qui faisait rage à cette époque dans bien des universités américaines, il en dénonce les limites dans des termes qui rappellent en tous points les arguments que formulait René Wellek sensiblement à la même époque sous l'expression "New nihilism in literary studies*"* (in *Aesthetics and the Literature of Ideas, Essays in honor of Owen Aldridge,* F. Jost, ed., Associated UP, 1990). La leçon permanente à retenir de ce remarquable essai est le plaidoyer pour la restauration de la notion de *contenu* à l'intérieur des œuvres littéraires, et nul ne peut dire vingt ans plus tard que ce plaidoyer soit devenu archaïque ou gratuit.

L'article est au critique ce que la nouvelle ou d'autres formes brèves sont au romancier, le nocturne ou le prélude au symphoniste. Ils donnent à entendre une voix plus intime qui éclaire souvent d'une lueur particulière les œuvres plus longues et plus publiques. Ce recueil se fait justement plus intime et plus autobiographique dans l'essai 19 qui retrace l'itinéraire intérieur qui conduisit l'auteur, au moment de son tout premier livre, de Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoïevski et Proust à une profonde conversion intérieure au Christianisme. Ce recueil d'articles se lit évidemment avec les grands textes critiques ou anthropologiques du même auteur en filigrane; mais il possède une unité propre qui en fait une œuvre à part entière et pas seulement un complément ou un appendice d'autres textes.

Il serait tout à fait injuste, enfin, de passer sous silence l'excellente introduction de Robert Doran qui fournit en quelques pages denses et ramassées l'un des meilleurs panoramas qu'on puisse lire sur l'ensemble de l'œuvre et des théories de René Girard.

Au total un livre fort bienvenu qui permettra au lecteur déjà informé d'approfondir sa connaissance du grand critique, et au néophyte d'en prendre une première vue d'ensemble susceptible de faciliter grandement ses lectures ultérieures.

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**Rick Altman. *A Theory of Narrative.* New York: Columbia UP, 2008. 377 pp. 978-0231144292**

As a fundamental cultural area, narrative can be profitably set against three main landmarks: the *narrated world*, be it real or imaginary; the *discursive configurations* which account for it; and last but not least, the world of the receiver which, by his interpretive activity, *reconfigures* narrative discourses. In retrospect, scholarly narratology dating back to Plato and Aristotle has privileged the sharp opposition between the first and the second.

Since the early twentieth century, theories of narrative have been divided between two opposite poles. Usually identified as *logical* or *paradigmatic*, the first builds up a series of so-called *universal grammars of the narrative—taxonomic* models of the pre-narrative universe, distinct from its discursive embodiment in a narrative text. In the wake of the pioneering endeavor of Vladimir Propp, the French formalist-structuralist school (Claude Bremond, A.-J. Greimas, Roland Barthes, and Tzvetan Todorov) in particular devised hypothetical models of this narrated world: a rational *langue* totally indifferent to the diverse materiality of narrative production.

Initiated by the Russian formal school (Shklovsky, Eichenbaum, Tomashevski), the second, and the more productive theory departed from the Aristotelian definition of *mythos* and endeavored to construct a narrative theory based on the clear-cut gap between the narrated universe (*fabula*) and its discursive representation (*sujet*). Their main followers—the Anglo-Saxon School (Henry James, E. M. Forster, Percy Lubbock, and Norman Friedman), the German School (Harald Weinrich, Eberhardt Lammert, Franz Stantzel, Käte Hamburger) and a series of independent scholars such as Lubomir Dolezel—shared the fundamental assumption that identical events (*fabula, story, histoire, das Erzählen*) depend on the narrator's discursive configurative activity (*sujet, discourse, discours, das Erzählte*). In their convergent views, constructing a narrative inevitably involves choosing a temporal order and a perceptual perspective (position, angle of aperture, and depth of field) assigned to an interventionist or to an invisible narrator. From this particular point of view, the more the discourse distorts, the more the narrator's presence becomes obvious.

The history of modern theories of narrative can be seen as a progressive shift from the formally defined, *logical, paradigmatic, taxonomic* models, towards *these integrated communicational models*.

As a matter of fact, the most efficient and the best articulated contemporary contributions in the area (Gérard Genette, Seymour Chatman, Mieke Bal, Paul Ricoeur, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Michael J. Toolan, Gerald Prince, Robert Scholes) converge in their axiomatic assumption that narrative analysis of a text identifies discourse as *a representation of events* which are conceived of as independent of any particular narrative perspective or presentation. As the main theorists in the area have constantly maintained, the world of the story is accessible to us only *through the discourse* that brings it into being, and it is presented into the

text through the double mediation of an eye that sees and of voice that speaks. In the simplest terms, in a narrative the story is the "What" that is depicted, while the discourse is the "How"; and, consequently, identical story events depend on the narrator's virtually countless discursive options. The real challenge faced by contemporary narrative theories was to find the proper analytical categories (temporality, perspective, and voice) to account for the translation from the narrated world to the narrative construction.

Set against this old and impressive background, Rick Altman's recent book is fueled by a highly ambitious project: "It is time to break free from the traditional understanding of narrative and the limited form of narrative that it has produced" (2).

The book consists of two, quantitatively and qualitatively, asymmetrical parts. In the first section the author's avowed focus is on an all-encompassing deductive matrix, forged according to three types of minimal narrative criteria. Unfortunately, we are unable to guess if these analytical areas belong to the narrated or to the narrating universe (*story* or *discourse)* or to both of them. Moreover, this theoretical section fails to define the object of its study in any way. It is only towards the end that the study attempts to define narrative as "a process which assumes the constitution of characters as well as a particular relationship between a narrator and those characters" (291).

The first area, the *Narrative material,* encompasses only the minimal textual characteristics necessary to produce a narrative: the action and the characters. The *Narrational activity*, consisting mainly of following and framing, shows the presence of a narrating source, committed to presenting and to organizing the narrative material. The author appears to see this as a discursive area. Only apparently, because he almost immediately decides otherwise: "The process of following," he maintains, "simultaneously highlights character and narrator, *diegesis* and narration. It is precisely this simultaneous emphasis *on two different levels* (my emphasis) that constitutes narrative" (16). In this case, would Altman's category of *diegesis* be the same as the Platonic category defined in *The Republic* as opposed to *mimesis*? There is no hint about this thorny issue. Aside from the confusing demarcation of narrational activity, a supplementary variable occasionally operates in this area without prior notice: the receiver. "Identifying the characters and actions meaningful to their specific context, the 'spectator' performs the narrational function of following individual characters and framing separate narratives" (19), contends the author.

Fortunately, the third analytical area, the *Narrative Drive,* is explicitly assigned to someone: the receiver. In Rick Altman's terms, narrative drive designates "a reading practice required for a narrative material and narrational activity to surface in the interpretive process" (10).

In the inductive and applicational section of his book, the author instrumentalizes the filter he has provided by aiming to distinguish between three narrative types grounded in historically parallel narrative traditions: "The history and practice of narrative have long been dominated by three major following patterns" (27).

Almost invisible theoretically, the reader becomes ubiquitous in the applicational part of Altman's enterprise.

According to Altman, the first pattern called *Single Focus Narrative* would fit better into the causally connected, beginning-middle-and-end model that has long dominated definitions and practices of narrative. It is worth noting that in this section of the study, the author provides plenty of insights regarding his particular approach: the point of view of the reader, his preexisting knowledge of the narrative rules, and his patterns of interpretive expectations, which are historically unstable: "The structure of single focus narrative is predicated on continuation of the curiosity that first brought the reader into the text. The Single focus readers are forever projected forward toward an unknown" (180). Single-focus texts can usually be illustrated by genres such as biography, confession, romance, and novels of many sorts—psychological, memoir, realist, naturalist, and detective.

Within the basic pattern labeled *Dual Focus Narrative*, the following process regularly alternates between two groups whose conflict provides the plot. In order to grasp what the author means, we need to keep in mind that in this area too the transmission belt of the genres operates as a mediator between production and reception. The author underlines that many of the texts that display the Dual-focus pattern are of a popular nature, ranging from the medieval popular epic to comic strips and science fiction and from the Alexandrian romance, the Gothic novel, and roman feuilleton to the Hollywood Western.

Lastly, the *Multiple focus Narrative* is described as a hybrid category, displaying a discontinuous, fragmented following pattern and resisting consistent reader identification. As we can immediately notice, this type of narrative is above all a way of narrative consumption: "The possibility of constructing a multiple-focus text out of several single-focus or dual-focus texts reminds us that multiplicity of focus may even be a question of the reader's interests" (255). Altman's textual typology emphatically stresses the part played by reception in the process of the narrative build up. "From the Grail romances to Victorian novels and from Brueghel to cubism, multiple-focus texts set multiple pieces into unexpected patterns, calling into question the comfortable habits of *readers and viewers* ( my emphasis) alike" (262).

In the end, what are the profits and costs, the benefits and risks of a radical reform like the one undertaken by Altman's ambitious project?

As regards the benefits, although the part played by the receiver in the reconfiguration of the narrative is not formally elaborated by the author, in his applicational section Altman seems predominantly interested in the patterns of narrative expectation specific to various historical periods. Over the last decade or so, it has been frequently emphasized that reading is in itself a narrative activity and that genre constraints, for instance, set up certain expectations on the part of readers. In his applications to an extensive body of narrative texts, Altman follows this new line of approach. It is not surprising that the narrative types identified by Altman perfectly overlap with a long list of consecrated visual or verbal genre patterns:

detective fiction, romance and melodrama, soap opera, pastoral, biography, and so on. It is true that the author doesn't innovate or radically change anything in the theoretical fundamentals of narratology, as advertised in his theoretical part. However, his analytical endeavor points to a less systematized area of study of utmost importance, identified in passing as the rhetoric of narrative.

As far as the costs are concerned, the author sways confusingly between unclearly delimited theoretical levels, which he does not set against the basic dichotomy of narrative: *story* versus *discourse.*

Altman doesn't seem to acknowledge that to make narratives objects of study, one most begin by distinguishing narratives from non-narratives. "If narrative is defined as the representation of a series of events, then the analyst must be able to identify these events, and they come to function as a non-discursive, nontextual given, something that exists prior to and independently of narrative presentation and which the narrative then reports" (Culler 171).

Rick Altman pays a huge price for ignoring or simply not paying due attention to this basic axiom. In the most surprising manner, his analyses detect narrative almost everywhere: in a heteroclite range of artifacts—such as the cubist painting—or even in the sheer facts of life—such as everyday social and economic activities. "Since narrative is an abstraction, a mental construct, *it may be easily transferred to the events of daily life*" (327), maintains the author. The most confusing follow up on this theoretical fallacy consists of the many pages dedicated to the narrative analysis of . . . the social organization and of the exchange of goods, as present in peasant economy versus market economy.

As a concluding remark, it would be fair to say that Altman's recent book irresistibly stimulates us to rephrase one of his main contentions, "Narrative theory aims to *describe human activities*" (338), as narrative theory aims to *describe discourses that account for* human activities.

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**Dorothy M. Figueira. *Otherwise Occupied: Pedagogies of Alterity and the Brahminization of Theory*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008. viii + 163 pp. 978-0791475737.**

This is a book fueled by indignation. Its main targets are multiculturalism, postcolonial criticism, nomadism—theorized by Deleuze and Guattari, Rosi Braidotti, and others—and other poststructurally inflected frameworks for dealing with the "Other," a term that as we may expect mostly stands for "other-than-white," but occasionally, as in the references to Foucault, includes the oppressed and victimized in general. But *Otherwise Occupied* also devotes a chapter to responses to

9/11 and examines in another chapter the consequences of affirmative action in both India and the United States. What according to Dorothy Figueira these at first sight not too closely related subjects have in common is that they are all characterized by posturing and by the pervasiveness of various forms of self-serving hypocrisy.

*Otherwise Occupied* does not mince its words. Let me offer a number of examples. Multiculturalism "deflects attention away from social issues such as discrimination, unequal access, and hierarchies of ethnic privilege that are far from being resolved" (28). It "leaves the centers of power uncontested" (28) and "can be seen as a strategy of an academic elite seeking to displace, diffuse, and thus intensify class, gender, and racial contradictions" (29). In fact, "[t]he case can be made that the culturalist abuse of ethnicity serves to mask hegemonic domination under the pretext of pluralist tolerance" (29). Multiculturalism, then, is a conscious strategy of appeasement that to the casual observer would seem to meet the justified demands of minorities for cultural recognition (and for tenure-track appointments), but that in reality offers only safe and assimilationist versions of the "Other" while simultaneously serving to keep minorities in their place, that is, teaching low-rated multiculturalist courses. "Some minority faculty have been known to get uppity," Figueira tells us, "expecting to teach courses in fields where they have trained. This, too has been managed thanks to multiculturalism" (27).

Postcolonial criticism cannot very well be accused of being a similar institutional ploy to safeguard the interests of a white hegemony since its major figureheads—Said, Bhabha, Spivak—are not white (even if Figueira tells us not without innuendo that "Indians' belief in their intrinsic 'whiteness' as Aryans has never disappeared," 45). It is, however, similarly self-serving and hypocritical. With the exception of Edward Said, postcolonial critics thrive and have thrived in an "'alterity' industry" which is "a self-enclosed affiliative network whose validity consists of cross-referencing each other" (43). The politics of postcolonial criticism "can be seen as being complicit with late capitalism's drive to maintain its ruthless hegemony over the world's multitude, especially its people of color" (44). It allows "the Other" to disappear behind the critic's conception of otherness; it "reduc[es] the facts of exploitation to the status of discourse and intertextuality" (43) and more generally disregards the empirical world and its history. Because of this focus on language it leaves "existing property relations and asymmetries of actual power relations" in for instance India "untouched" (38). Finally, and perhaps most damaging, its discussions of power never examine the "critics' class interests as bourgeois intellectuals ensconced in metropolitan institutions" (36).

Nomadism—in which the nomad is a metaphor for the truly free (and therefore progressive) intellectual who is even free from the confines of a fixed identity—comes in for similar criticism. Its "metaphoric exile robs the forced exile of his voice of protest" (82); it does not reflect actual reality (in which it exhibits no interest anyway) and its spokespersons, the nomadic critics, operate in "a cooperative venture with the white academic power structure" (81). This is the same structure that the postcolonial critics also serve so well because, like multicultural-

ism, postcolonial studies allows university administrations and deans ("the monolingual, white, male scientist dean usually still determines how cultures come together and are taught," 124) to appoint token "others" and to create token courses in which "otherness" is completely robbed of its singularity and made harmless.

This is pretty strong stuff, even if we have heard some of these accusations before. And just in case we hadn't, Figueira quotes liberally from earlier misgivings concerning conceptions of, and dealings with, "otherness" in the West's universities. Figueira's "*j'accuse*" even speaks of "Spivak's jesuitical-brahmin logic" (74)—doubling the opprobrium—and makes pretty clear that Spivak and Bhabha, whom she repeatedly charges with self-aggrandizement, belong to those critics who have consciously adopted a postcolonial discourse of decenteredness and marginality that has made possible a "direct transfer of the third-world elites to American elite positions," in other words to "renumerative posts in the metropolitan center" (47).

Dorothy Figueira presents a view of the academic world in which the just-mentioned third-world elites—which in *Otherwise Occupied* are largely identified with India—and left-leaning white academics cynically fashion identities, and build careers, out of a mostly feigned interest in the oppressed and marginalized "Other," while equally cynical deans and university presidents in their turn use that feigned interest to earn bonus points in the equal opportunity game, which they, too, feel at best lukewarm about. As if this is not bad enough, virtually everybody involved is guilty of intellectual dishonesty. What also connects multiculturalism, postcolonialism, and nomadism is their presentation of an idealized "Other" and their refusal to deal with both the actual and historical reality of "otherness." As Figueira puts it in her introduction, "Examining the East to see if it too might be cluttered with stereotypes or misconceptions was never a sustained part of [their] critique. Focusing on the past sins of the colonizers and the present-day threats from globalism draws attention away from the dehumanizing trends in the East towards itself and its Other, the West" (3). In fact, by making colonialism "the source of all social evils, postcolonial critics foreclose the possibility of interrogating and transcending the endemic social and cultural dysfunction that predates colonialism and lives on after the colonial masters have left" (68).

It is this bias in treatments of alterity that provides the link with Figueira's attack on those responses to 9/11 that showed understanding for the terrorists or even argued that the attack had been provoked by American foreign policy. And it also provides the link with Figueira's at first sight rather puzzling inclusion of a discussion of the consequences of affirmative action in India and the United States. According to Figueira, affirmative action in India—which has the world's oldest affirmative action programs—has been effectively manipulated and exploited by the relatively more prosperous at the expense of the most disenfranchised for whom the programs are intended. American affirmative action would seem to have fared no better. Poor blacks have been pushed aside by a good many groups who are not particularly disadvantaged, such as "elites from the third world" (117). "They slide easily," Figueira tells us, "into American society where a premium is placed on setting aside disadvantage. [. . .] In the case

of Indian postcolonials, with decades of experience manipulating a preferential system and caste privilege, the transition is seamless" (117).

We can see now that what holds her book together is Figueira's anger at what she perceives as a widespread exploitation of victims and victimhood. While ostentatiously idealizing them, the multiculturalists, postcolonialists, and nomadists use and abuse the world's oppressed "others" to further their own careers and add insult to injury by claiming a sort of victimhood by proxy for themselves. A similar victimhood by proxy is claimed by those who regarded 9/11 as a more or less legitimate attack on American imperialism by its Muslim victims and empathized with the oppressed. And again another form of victimhood is claimed by those highly educated Indians who exploit their third world and immigrant status to qualify for affirmative action at the expense of those who are infinitely more deserving.

It is not hard to sympathize with Dorothy Figueira's broadside, intemperate as it often is, although it won't sink, or even seriously damage, the enemy's fleet, not in the least because it is almost out of shooting range. It is not only that some major postcolonial critics have, as she puts it herself, become "born-again comparatists"(126), but new developments in for instance postcolonial studies have since the turn of the millennium left literature largely behind to focus on exactly the political and economic realities that she wants to see addressed. But her attack, even if it comes somewhat late in the game, reminds us that much postcolonial criticism is indeed self-satisfied and intellectually mediocre, if not downright trivial.

Without empirical data, however, it is much harder to judge how much her suspicions of the underlying motivation of deans, university presidents, prominent critics, and others might be justified. Although there is no reason to doubt her own testimony, there is also no reason to accept apodictic generalizations on the basis of personal experience. Figueira creates a court of justice in which suspicion and accusation are enough for a conviction, with no possibility of appeal.

There is yet another reason why we must be wary of Figueira's verdicts. Human nature being what it is, it would be a miracle if there were no postcolonial critics who exploited victimhood. But such abuse would not invalidate postcolonial criticism, just as widespread abuse in the field of theoretical physics would not invalidate, say, quantum mechanics. In fact, even postcolonial criticism's obvious shortcomings—such as its neglect of economic, political, and historical factors—does not necessarily invalidate what it has to say about those things it does address. Many of the shortcomings that Figueira quite correctly points out derive directly from the fact that postcolonial criticism's primary concern is with literary texts and not with the world at large, even if a number of critics have on the basis of such texts offered rather irresponsible generalizations. It is hard to see how comparative literature, which she holds up as vastly superior to postcolonial studies would do much better without turning itself into economic, social and political history—which is exactly postcolonial studies' new direction.

Although it is fairly obvious that the exploitation of a specific theoretical framework for personal or institutional advancement does not say much about that framework's intellectual validity—if it did we could close down the univer-

sity as such, including the most piously Christian institutions—that supposedly widespread abuse is Figueira's strongest argument against postcolonial studies. It is closely followed by the idealization of the "Other," which she finds everywhere she looks and not all that convincingly traces back via Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, and Derrida to Lévi-Strauss. In this she is absolutely right. Multiculturalism, postcolonial studies, and nomadism have always presented themselves as political interventions and have never attempted impartiality. Although that not-so-secret state of affairs should indeed invite our skepticism, it does not, again, a priori invalidate their arguments or findings. We must treat them with due caution, but that applies to all political interventions and, I might add, all polemics, *Otherwise Occupied* included. The few times that Dorothy Figueira actually engages in more detailed analysis of postcolonial criticism, her readings are so unconvincing that they backfire and expose her own agenda. Let me offer two examples. The first one concerns what Figueira apparently sees as Edward Said's self-proclaimed status as a Palestinian exile:

> When Said claimed that exiles feel "an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people," he suggested that the politically committed can also claim exile status. Thus Said's advocacy for Palestinian rights made him a bona fide exile, even if other criteria were lacking. (76)

It is hard to see how Figueira can arrive at this conclusion. Said may or may not have been a "bona fide exile," but this sort of reasoning will not do.

The second example concerns Homi Bhabha. Quoting one of Bhabha's (indeed unnecessarily dense and obscure) passages in which he speaks of the "'social'" and of "a public 'truth,'" Figueira tells us that "the critic's placement of 'social' and 'truth' within quotation marks effectively reduces the real world struggles of the disenfranchised to a discursive problem," and thus refuses to "privilege praxis" (62). She misreads this passage in the same way that she misreads quotations from other poststructuralists. To have quotation marks suggest that the "social" and that "truth" are cultural constructions in no way precludes social action. One would wish those quotation marks on all those believers whose absolute truths incite them to commit atrocities.

*Otherwise Occupied* is a forceful polemic against some of the major intellectual strands within the "theory" revolution of the last thirty years. It fights its fight, however, not so much in the intellectual arena as in the institutional one. The intellectual damage it does to multicultural or postcolonial theory does not amount to much, but the effects of its merciless focus on that time-honored, but also very Foucauldian question of *cui bono*—who benefits?—are rather more damaging and will change the perspective of most of its readers. Dorothy Figueira can lean back and be satisfied.

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**John D. Caputo. *How to Read Kierkegaard.* London: Granta Books, 2007. 132 pp. 978-1862079151.**

This book is one of the later additions to the ever-expanding field of introductory guides is the "How to Read" series. The main idea, according to editor Simon Critchley, is that in order "to get close what a writer is all about, you have to get close to the words they actually use and be shown how to read those words." Each book includes original extracts which are commented upon by an expert, who thereby shows us "how to read" Freud, Sartre, Nietzsche, Beauvoir, and others. This invitation to wrestle with original texts rings well in the ears of most literary scholars, and justifies, I think, yet another series.

For those familiar with Caputo's work, it comes as no surprise that he should write on Kierkegaard. Indeed, Kierkegaard appears like Ariadne's thread throughout Caputo's work on the religious turn in deconstructive thought. Kierkegaard is, for Caputo, the name of a religious passion, desperate to get out of philosophy and bourgeois "Christendom" alike, striving himself to become a true Christian, on his knees, in fear and trembling, before God.

In Caputo's other works, even in his other guide-book *On Religion* (Routledge 2001) this passion is obvious. In *How to Read Kierkegaard* the temperature seems slightly more reserved, more academic and distanced. Although this might put off those expecting Caputo's usual fervor, I do not see this as a disadvantage. Rather he is, as expected in this series, closer to the original texts, letting Kierkegaard's irony and heavy seriousness take center stage. He is also, as I shall show, more sensitive to some of the disturbing tenets that run throughout Kierkegaard's work.

The book is divided into ten chapters, each one starting with extracts from original works in chronological order. The chapter headings predictably reflect major, general themes in Kierkegaard's work, like the three stages, subjective truth, and the issues of pseudonomity. Some chapters are less predictable, like "The Present Age" or "World Weariness." Such chapters contribute to highlight aspects of Kierkegaard's work that are often played down in introductory guides where existentialism and freedom of choice often dominate. In addition the book contains a useful section with suggestions for further reading.

A noteworthy strength of this guide is the author's ability to show us how to read Kierkegaard *today*. In the chapter "The Present Age" Caputo bases his reading on Kierkegaard's work *Two Ages*. Here he shows how Kierkegaard's critique of his time is strikingly relevant today—a potential "opinion column in tomorrow's New York Times" (84). In this critique Caputo rightly recognises "one of the earliest and most incisive looks at the ambiguity of cultural life in a technological age" (89). With an exponential increase in mechanical reproduction, the inner life of the singular individual is caught up in external definitions and ready made images of "the good life." Caught in this "abstract noise," it becomes increasingly harder to stay in touch with what is true for me, as a singular individual. Caputo indicates the parallels here between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, claiming that despite their different views on Christianity, they criticized their time for depriving

the individual of "the intensity of a passionate singularity" (88).

Throughout the book, Caputo, with sophistication unusual for introductory guides, alerts us to the more troubling aspects of Kierkegaard's work. Specifically this arises as "the power of eternity abolishes the significance of time" (51). *Fear and Trembling* is a "first sign of trouble . . . a flashing red alarm signalling trouble of the road ahead" (51). Nonetheless, Caputo openly reveals his deep fascination with this classic and troubling text. And he chooses to end his discussion with a reference to Derrida's more fruitful reading in his *The Gift of Death*. I remain unsure, however, how helpful this reference is. Even though I know Derrida's text well, I find Caputo's short summary slightly dense and difficult to grasp, and therefore more confusing than edifying in this format. In the last chapter "World Weariness," Caputo, with a certain note of sadness and regret, dwells on the late Kierkegaard's tendency to betray his earlier work and his conviction that every single individual must find what is true for him or herself. Caputo here finds a world weary, cynical Kierkegaard who is convinced that eternal happiness requires total renunciation of all earthly joys, including marriage and children. Caputo insists that however unpleasant and unlikely these comments are from the hand of Kierkegaard, we cannot—"in the name of the very honesty Kierkegaard stood for" (114)—ignore them. Although I agree, I think it is possible, and even necessary, to keep reading the earlier writings independently of these late musings, marked more, it seems to me, by Kierkegaard's depression and personal weariness than by his philosophical insight.

The title of this book initially caught my attention because I believe that the experience of *reading* is central to our understanding of Kierkegaard, and, vice versa, that our understanding of Kierkegaard can challenge our views of reading. As we know from *The Point of View of My Work as an Author*, Kierkegaard considered the pseudonyms to be the only way to communicate the Christian truth. His problem was how could he, as the author, communicate a truth that must be subjective and personal, and that hence would have to originate in the reader? Briefly put, the pseudonyms were designed to confront the reader with various voices and perspectives through which the reader would be inspired to discover his own voice and truth. A lesson in "how to read" Kierkegaard is therefore also a potential lesson in how reading might bring about a conversion or the discovery of a new, personal truth. The stakes of reading are raised, and it is this move that interests me as a literary scholar. How does Kierkegaard employ literary means in order to make his texts a potential occasion for the leap of faith? What kind of hermeneutic experience is required? Caputo does discuss the importance of reading, noting for example that "the reader must not be merely reading a book but coming face to face with himself, before God" (77). I think, however, he could have made more out of this point in a book called *How to Read Kierkegaard*. My point being that reading, in Kierkegaard, is indirectly presented as the mode of passion, as the leap. In short reading is where it happens.

This call for more reflection on *reading* is probably more symptomatic of my disciplinary background than it is of Caputo's achievement. More importantly,

Caputo's guide *works* in the sense that it sent me straight to the bookshelf to read more Kierkegaard. This, I think, is symptomatic of Caputo's talent as a scholarly writer, which is to impart enthusiasm and personal engagement, without its affecting his lucidity or his depth of thought. Instead of reproducing older guides, he sends us in the direction of Kierkegaard with a perspective stemming from our time, and hence opens the possibility that we can read—and reread! —Kierkegaard today, in our present actuality.

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**Marcus Bullock and Peter Y. Paik, eds. *Aftermaths: Exile, Migration, and Diaspora Reconsidered*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers UP, 2008. 244 pp. 978-0813544069.**

Cet ouvrage rassemble dix articles, textes d'interventions présentées, pour la plupart, lors d'un colloque qui s'est tenu à l'Université du Wisconsin (Milwaukee), en avril 2004. Les diverses contributions sont organisées en quatre sections: "Exile as Origin," "The Spirituality of Exile," "Diasporas and the Reinvention of the Local," et "Migrant Fantasies." Comme l'indique le titre, *Aftermaths: Exile, Migration, and Diaspora Reconsidered*, la visée de l'ouvrage est de renouveler les approches conventionnelles des phénomènes liés aux déplacements de populations à l'ère de la globalisation, en s'attachant à des expériences individuelles ou collectives, des moments historiques et des productions esthétiques spécifiques qui, dans leur déploiement, suscitent l'émergence de nouvelles lectures, lesquelles sont autant de remises en cause des paradigmes théoriques généralement utilisés concernant ces questions. A la variété des objets abordés (l'index est, en ce sens, fort utile) répond la diversité des approches disciplinaires (anthropologie, études cinématographiques, philosophie, sciences politiques et analyse littéraire).

Pour rendre compte de la complexité de ces phénomènes, certains lieux—qui l'illustrent au premier chef—ont été privilégiés: l'Irlande et les Caraïbes. L'Irlande inspire deux interventions. La première, "What They Left behind—The Irish Landscape after Emigration," peut être considérée comme emblématique du volume. La photographie de couverture, un bronze du sculpteur Rowan Gillespie, représentant trois êtres faméliques accompagnés d'un chien, y répond d'ailleurs directement. Ce groupe de statues conçu pour la commémoration du 150$^{e}$ anniversaire de la grande famine est aujourd'hui installé au centre de Dublin. Chaque personnage tourne le dos aux imposants buildings de verre du quartier financier. Cette vision s'inscrit dans une passionnante lecture de la géographie culturelle irlandaise, menée par Andrew Kincaid. Par ce biais, le pays produit une forme de réécriture de son histoire et célèbre sa dimension désormais européenne, à travers la réinvention de paysages urbains et campagnards plus conformes à l'image du "Tigre celtique." Dans une tout autre perspective, Conor McCarthy explicite les choix et positions réciproques qu'expriment Seamus Deane et Edna

Longley dans leurs œuvres critiques. McCarthy retrace la trajectoire de ces deux éminents intellectuels—le premier affilié à la République, le second à l'Ulster—tous deux nés en 1940. Il parvient à montrer la cohérence de leur pensée en tissant avec brio leurs positions, à la fois politiques et existentielles, avec les axes qu'ils ont privilégiés dans leurs lectures du patrimoine littéraire irlandais. Abordant un tout autre univers, trois autres articles s'attachent aux Caraïbes. A travers une étude de cas, Paul Brodwin montre l'impossibilité de penser les diasporas de façon globale. Chaque communauté adapte son comportement au contexte rencontré. En Guadeloupe, la communauté haïtienne, symbole pour les insulaires d'un passé colonial honni, tente de renverser les stéréotypes négatifs qu'on lui attribue. Natalie Melas, pour sa part, s'attache à l'opposition entre "pays rêvé" et "pays réel" qui hante l'imaginaire de la communauté créole et de sa diaspora. Elle s'appuie sur les deux grandes tendances de la production littéraire antillaise incarnée l'une par Césaire—la négritude, une vision mythique de l'Afrique—l'autre par Confiant—la créolité, la revendication d'une identité spécifique et cependant ouverte. A partir du roman *The Farming of Bones* d'Edwidge Danticat, Ricardo Ortiz plaide quant à lui pour une révision de l'identité *latina*, telle qu'on la pense aujourd'hui aux Etats-Unis. Il montre l'ambiguïté de cette notion dans un territoire comme Hispaniola, une île divisée par une frontière qui sépare Haïti de la République Dominicaine, frontière dont la mémoire demeure ensanglantée par le massacre des Haïtiens, perpétré par les homme de mains de Trujillo en 1937. Pour distinguer les Haïtiens, les bourreaux demandaient aux journaliers employés dans les champs de canne de prononcer "*perejil*" ("persil" en espagnol), mot systématiquement écorché par les créolophones, prononciation fautive qui décidait de leur mort. Dans ce contexte, l'opposition traditionnelle entre l'anglais et l'espagnol que l'on associe aux *Latino/a Studies* s'effondre. Le créole devient la langue de revendication de soi contre l'espagnol (dans un roman de langue anglaise écrit par une Haïtienne), image d'une latinité pour le moins complexe. Même s'il est difficile de rendre compte de la richesse de ces différents articles en quelques lignes, on voit cependant comment de tels territoires défont, par leur histoire, leurs populations et les migrations dont elles sont issues, l'idée d'un espace insulaire unifié, déconstruisant du même coup les grilles de lecture auxquelles on se réfère généralement.

On retiendra encore deux articles de très grande qualité, celui de Zoran Samardzija, "The Great Migration Elsewhere," et "On the Metaphysics of Exile" de Stefan Rossbach. Dans le premier, l'analyse porte essentiellement sur le beau film de Gianni Amelio *Lamerica* (1994), qui met en scène la transformation de Gino, petit mafieux italien, en un réfugié, fondu dans la masse de pauvres hères qui rêvent de rejoindre l'Italie. Entre temps, le spectateur a suivi le périple de Gino en Albanie, où il cherche un homme de paille pour créer des entreprises fictives et empocher ainsi les aides financières. Peu à peu dépouillé de tous ses attributs d'Occidental (sa voiture, ses papiers et, du même coup, sa superbe et son mépris), c'est une odyssée dénudante que nous donne à lire ce film, magistralement analysé

par Samardzija. Pour sa part, Rossbach aborde, de façon beaucoup plus abstraite et philosophique, le phénomène des déplacements de population. Pour ce faire, Rossbach met en parallèle deux empires: la Rome de l'antiquité tardive et l'ère de la globalisation contemporaine. Dans les deux cas, on assiste à l'émergence de philosophies inspirées de la doctrine gnostique. L'exil de la métaphysique fait place à une métaphysique de l'exil, éclairage qui permet à Rossbach une relecture de Derrida et de son concept de *différance*.

Face à ces articles fort stimulants, encadrés par une introduction de Peter Paik et une postface de Marcus Bollack, textes qui—loin de céder au seul protocole—problématisent efficacement la question et proposent une réflexion sur les différents articles, je serais en revanche plus réservée concernant certaines contributions auxquelles Bollack donne d'ailleurs une place à part dans sa postface. Deux d'entre elles relèvent, en grande partie, du récit de vie. Il s'agit de "Tales of Migration from Central America and Central Europe*"* de Helen Fehervary et de "Coming to the Antipodes" d'Ihab Hassan. Peut-être ce type d'approche participe-t-il de la remise en cause des discours critiques attendus sur la question. Ceci dit, même si le texte de Hassan nie l'aspiration au retour à la terre natale que l'on attribue généralement à l'exilé, il semble dommage que, dans ces deux textes, la part consacrée au narratif tende à évacuer l'analyse. Qui pourrait douter que le travail de tout chercheur—et sa sensibilité "scientifique," au sens large, j'entends—est, en partie, modelé, "visité" par son expérience de sujet pris dans une communauté, une famille, une histoire? Nous le savons tous, mais on aurait aimé que Fehervary—personne elle aussi déplacée, ayant quitté sa Hongrie natale pour devenir, à l'issue d'un long périple européen, citoyenne américaine—développe plus l'analyse du changement qui s'est opéré en elle. Que le fait d'adopter une enfant au passé douloureux, originaire du Salvador, ait contribué à modifier les objets de recherche de cette spécialiste de la littérature allemande, et à faire résonner autrement en elle les textes d'Anna Seghers, exilée politique qui quitta l'Allemagne en 1933 et partit pour le Mexique en 1941, nul ne le conteste. Mais pourquoi faire l'économie de l'analyse, au profit d'un montage de récits de vie qui laisse sans prise? De fait, ces deux textes ont sans conteste un statut à part pour les éditeurs, puisque celui de Fehervary ouvre la première section et celui de Hassan referme la dernière. En revanche, malgré son titre alléchant, l'article de K. E. Supriya, "Bending It Like Beckham. Sex, Soccer, and Traveling Indians," est des plus déroutants. Sans doute Supriya a-t-elle cherché à briser les règles du genre certes académique qu'est l'article, en suivant la philosophie prônée par le film *Bend It Like Beckham*: "bend the rules when they become rigid and inflexible." Ici le film, qui met en scène une jeune Britannique d'origine indienne, membre d'une équipe de football, mais qui ne peut participer à un championnat du fait de l'opposition de sa famille traditionaliste, devient un prétexte pour mener une réflexion—à la logique pour le moins confuse—sur l'image de la femme indienne et sa sensualité.

A cette restriction près, c'est un ensemble tout à fait passionnant, riche et

homogène, que nous donnent à lire les auteurs de ce volume. Le spécialiste de ces questions a le plaisir d'y découvrir des interprétations stimulantes d'objets qu'il aura croisés sur sa route. Le non-spécialiste, quant à lui, y trouvera exposé de façon fort efficace un regard effectivement renouvelé sur les effets de collision ou de négociation générés, dans le contexte contemporain, par la rencontre de subjectivités culturelles et nationales différentes, processus à l'origine même de la constitution d'identités transnationales et minoritaires.

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**Peter Edgerly Firchow. *Strange Meetings: Anglo-German Literary Encounters from 1910 to 1950*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America P, 2008. xiii + 283 pp. 978-0813215334.**

Firchow's *The Death of the German Cousin* (1986) dealt with the perplexity of British modernists who came out of the Nietzschean moment and felt baffled at finding their home culture locked in a bitter struggle in World War I with what, previously, had been regarded a closely related culture, sharing many themes since the mid-eighteenth century and Romanticism. Especially the prominent "secular" types like Forster, Huxley, and Auden occupy center stage in *Cousin*. In *Strange Meetings*, Firchow pays closer attention also to "non-British" writers of English (American and Irish) involved in the epochal tug-of-war of rival cultural claims and ideologies, and considers the interlacing of religious, conservative, and authoritarian impulses in the age's mix. The range and variety of authors treated avoids any danger of a tilted picture. Front and center is the moral dilemma of the "victors" in this repeated tragic catastrophe. Firchow's thesis is that the intense demonizing of Germans and German culture in the British press and culture at large in the interwar and immediate postwar periods exhibits a profound crisis of the civilization that simply cannot be explained "rationally." This is more obvious once those associated with the "victory" finally take into account the horrors of the end of World War II experienced by German-speaking populations, the devastating raids on cities, expulsions, ethnic cleansings, sheer numbers of deaths and injuries, and pillage and rape on the Eastern front, which the British and Americans tolerated while (correctly) excoriating the Germans for any similar actions earlier in the conflict.

This moral dilemma is all the more acute, witnessed in retrospect, because many of the British and other English-speaking participants themselves were tempted by, or caught up in, the same ideological tides (fascism, communism) as the "cousins" who spoke German. These tendencies and passions, as Firchow shows, were not infrequently connected with problems, resentments, unease, and pride over "outsider" status on the British side because so many of the British writers and intelligentsia were homosexual. Much of the literature of the later twentieth century exhibits the inexorable need of authors to take stock and "revise" their own pasts—once the bitter lessons have dug deeper into their consciousness.

Firchow is impressive in his ability to tell the story of quite different individuals and social sets, neither covering over the "all-too-human" foibles, failures, and contradictions, nor neglecting instances of moral courage and clarity. The result is an admonitory look into the heart of Britain (and by implication, of the United States) in the confusion and turmoil of the World War II era.

Chapter one opens up the scene in Munich by demonstrating how T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* is intensely relevant as a response to World War I, a complex "essay" on cultural history; how Lawrence's "triangulation" among Britain, Germany, and Italy helps him discover his own "European" rather than British identity; and how Rupert Brooke's sexual liberation and the freeing of his poetic vocabulary go hand in hand. The extent to which Brooke's cultural awareness included the new directions of painting in Munich is a novel contribution. Chapter two is likewise an eye-opener, because it explores the little known world of the involvement of professors in propaganda. By looking at the activities both of British Germanists and of German Anglicists and focusing on the fate of Shakespeare and Goethe in "enemy" territory, Firchow casts a bright light on the basic moral dilemma: the pressure to distort for partisan advantage, versus the imperative to salvage. Firchow's evidence leads to the conclusion that the English reaction constituted a "greater intellectual iniquity."

Chapter three moves to Berlin as the countercultural capital of the interwar years for many Brits, an alternative to Paris. In Berlin writers could discover the dystopic big-city charms of their age, and feel drawn to the cultural intensity of a center for theater, film, painting, psychoanalysis, avantgardism, and erotic license. Because sexual dispositions and attraction to communism were interwined for so many Brits, the crowd of ambivalent fellow travelers was considerably larger than that of committed activists. Firchow evaluates Isherwood's special contribution to fiction in creating convincing German fictional figures seen from an outsider's perspective (rather than through the eyes of a German author), and by absorbing the "cultural and political ferment of Berlin." Equally interesting is the cogent commentary on Bloomsbury figures in Berlin. Firchow shows his own remarkable critical balance by mentioning what Isherwood "omits" of Berlin life in the 20s and 30s, the misery of the underclasses, and his own share in the general blindness as to what was occurring, while he and the other expatriates were frolicking. How hindsight becomes foresight is illustrated in an analysis of how Spender's works after Nazism try to shade and revise those before Nazism, when his own allegiance to communism blinded him.

Chapter four tackles the thorny problem of how to distinguish between cultural traits that may be racist and/or imperialist, but do not qualify as fascist. The case of Kipling is sensibly treated in illustration. One of the major subjects is how disillusionment after World War I in Britain gets translated into disillusionment with democracy, and the ill ease is compounded by disappointment in many quarters over the postwar alteration of society. The attraction of fascism is also looked at. Firchow argues that Shaw escaped censure because he was actually an

old-fashioned rationalist, not thought of as truly a modernist, but that his kind of flirting with fascist wish dreams was still dangerous for his society. The chapter grows in complexity as Firchow uses the case of Hulme to allege an anti-humanist strain in Modernism, one drawing much from Symbolism and avantgardist desires. The most damning moment of Yeats' "anti-rationalist" tendency toward fascism is his association with the Irish Blue Shirts; yet the fascist streak fortunately does not pervade Yeats' poetry.

Firchow is very careful in tracing Eliot's aversion for vulgar aspects of the fascist movement that kept him from ever avowing anything fascist in his poetry or dramas. While Eliot rejected both communism and fascism as alternatives to democracy and Christian tradition, nonetheless he could only see the possibility of a "restricted" democracy. Firchow nicely states inherent contradictions between Eliot's hankering after a stable, rooted world and his reputation as a Modernist poet mixing a variety of cultural elements. The anti-rationalist D. H. Lawrence equates democracy and degeneracy and, combining this with social Darwinism, for a while seems tending toward a fascist stance. While anti-Marxist, Lawrence reveres the man of power and hates the modern age, but because he like a number of prominent modernists (e.g., Proust and Kafka) died before the ascension of the Nazis to power, it is unclear how he might have reacted to Hitler. On the basis of Lawrence's works over a lifetime, Firchow speculates that he would have found Hitler antipathetic. Lawrence's lasting appeal is because in the longer run he is inherently "oppositional."

Chapter Five presents a remarkable excursus by which Firchow aims to illustrate the terrible problem of coping with one's own manifest guilt and involvement in the muddle of the recent European past. He takes up no less a figure than the highly respected Auden, who in the later years of his life lived half of each year in a rural Austrian village, and there discovered a certain sympathy with an already deceased poet who was associated with the Nazi era. This is a wonderful coda for the book, as it sharpens the focus on the troubling moral question of our (relative and sometimes overwhelming) blindness in the throes of living. The Austrian poet Weinheber, after the debacle, increasingly saw the moral wrong of his own groveling to the Nazi power, but as Firchow argues, and Auden apparently grasped, Weinheber was probably drawn astray from his classically grounded sense of country and heroism, and returned sorrowfully into a kind of retreat. Auden, too, in Firchow's innovative addition to the Auden legend, was ultimately disillusioned with our postwar megalopolitan world and sought refuge not just in an out-of-the-way Austrian village, but in his old predilections, including a genuine and abiding deep love of the German language. His discovery of Weinheber helped him toward recovery of some of the damaged past. Firchow accords high marks to Auden as a productive channel throughout his life in introducing major German writers in English (and reciprocally being himself much translated into German). He helped set an example and convert what started out as a revolt against the earlier francophile generation in Britain into a broader cultural recep-

tion. His strong ties with German exiles during the 30s and 40s contributed greatly to keeping awareness of the "good" German tradition alive. Firchow draws up the account without any sentimentality. Auden, too, he finds, exhibits an impulse to cover over his own past and excuse his earlier Stalinism and other errors. It is a clinical case study of how powerful the revisionist drive can be. Auden displaces recognition of his own desire to be forgiven (for having been taken in by the totalitarian wish dream), as he dwells sympathetically on Weinheber's doubting of his own choices and on his change of heart.

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**Michael Lucey, *Never Say I: Sexuality and the First Person in Colette, Gide, and Proust*. Raleigh NC: Duke UP: 2006. 336 pp. 978-0822338970.**

"You can tell anything [. . .] on condition that you never say *I*." Marcel Proust's famous exhortation to fellow gay writer André Gide—along with similar advice from Oscar Wilde plus a host of quotations in which sexuality collides with "I" in richly problematic ways—serves as the point of departure for Michael Lucey's groundbreaking study of the ways in which Proust, Gide, and Colette simultaneously use and theorize the first person in relation to same-sex sexuality.

Lucey has chosen his subjects well. Colette, Gide, and Proust, who were contemporaries as well as compatriots, were writing at a time when the ways of talking about homosexuality—the words one chose, the literary, journalistic, and social modes of representation, the public's receptiveness to varied sexualities—were rapidly evolving. They were writing in a country, a language, and a literary tradition that made them both heirs to Balzac (an important precursor in the literary treatment of homosexuality whom Lucey cites frequently and to good effect) and innovators who would themselves exert a lasting influence on how sexuality is narrated and how those narratives are structured. Furthermore, the three principal authors well illustrate the significance of crafting a first person for use in interventions on same-sex sexuality, for each (as Lucey cogently demonstrates) takes a distinct approach to saying "I." Gide alone constructs "a literary first person in which to speak not only *about*, but also unequivocally *for* and *as* someone sexually drawn to people of the same sex" (165). Colette and Proust approach the matter more obliquely: Colette's "dizzying set of rapidly shifting contexts" allows her to take up a position "simultaneously inside of, outside of, alongside, aslant the sexual cultures and identities of women together," while the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* establishes "a more or less friendly context in which to watch the cross-cutting relations between same-sex sexual cultures and other social formations" (165).

*Never Say I* is organized into six chapters of varying scope and approach. The first two chapters theorize the first person via a wide range of examples from fictional and autobiographical writings; the two subsequent chapters are individual case studies of Colette and Gide; two final chapters focus on the first person in

Proust's *Recherche*.

For Lucey, the first person is not so much a pronoun as a practice: saying "I" means engaging in a discourse that depends, in a very nuanced way, on context; moreover, this discourse can have real social and literary consequences. The book's first chapter explores this understanding by way of conversations between Gide, Proust, Edith Wharton, and Paul Bourget, as recorded in Gide's *Journal*. In a time of evolving terminology for homosexuality in France, Gide tailored his word choice—his "lexical preference," one might say—to his interlocutor, taking into account the public or private context of the conversation and the degree of sympathy toward alternative sexualities that he discerned in his conversational partner. Lucey's reading, attentive to the social pragmatics of these interactions, helps illuminate the self-fashioning going on when one chooses to say "invert," "uranist," "homosexual," or "pederast"—whether in reference to another, or when speaking of oneself.

The subsequent chapter extends this theoretical inquiry to the question of position-taking through linguistic register. Here Lucey juxtaposes Gide's *L'immoraliste* and Colette's *Claudine en ménage* with Catulle Mendès's "trashy novel" *Méphistophélia* (68) and Liane de Pougy's *Idylle saphique*. This mixture of highbrow and lowbrow fiction—much of which frames sexuality within questions of social class—lends itself well to a discussion of the pragmatic and metapragmatic aspects of linguistic register. Some clever wordplay here—Lucey hears "tantes" [fairies] in Balzac's adjective "compromettantes" [compromising] (60)—illustrates the sensitivity to language which undergirds his discussions of lexicon and register.

A third chapter, in many ways the centerpiece of the work, reads Colette's *Les Vrilles de la vigne* against the author's music hall performances, notably her scandal-provoking 1907 appearance at the Moulin Rouge, where she performed alongside her aristocratic lover Mathilde de Morny in *Rêve d'Égypte*. One could criticize the disproportionate length of this account were it not for the fact that the story of Colette's performances—and the critical and public reaction to them—makes for compulsively entertaining reading. The gossip-rag sequence gives way to a rigorous analysis of the ways in which sexuality, class, and race intersect. This is no trite trinity: Lucey refreshes the "race, class, gender" approach by considering "race" not only in terms of ethnicity (he does do so, adding considerable strength to the discussion by contextualizing *Rêve d'Égypte* in relation to the Napoleonic conquest of Egypt) but also in the way the French understood it at the time, as denoting social caste. Here, as elsewhere, Lucey rightly cautions against facile assumptions about various sexual practices in early-twentieth-century France. He artfully teases out the ways in which same-sex contact might arouse less shock and chagrin than class transgression—or indeed, for a woman, the potentially transgressive act of becoming a writer. When he does turn to Colette's writing, Lucey offers wonderful, linguistically sensitive readings of the ways in which Colette arranges and frames the various texts collected in *Les Vrilles de la Vigne* and, most notably, of how she manipulates masculine and feminine past participles to conceal or reveal the sex of those involved in dancing or making love (160, 153).

Finally, the Colette chapter offers what is undoubtedly the clearest illustration of Lucey's understanding of the first person as figure. Positing Colette's "experimentation with context and with figures of self" as the link between her literary, public, and performing life (137), Lucey concludes that Colette, like Gide, "constantly [points] to the fact that literary first persons are figural, and thereby reveal[s], of course, that all first persons are figural" (162, 164).

The extensive examination of Colette is followed by a briefer study of Gide and posterity. Here again, Lucey considers the author's human interactions, analyzing Gide's conversations with fellow novelist Roger Martin du Gard (who seemed to advocate an almost prurient sincerity at times, while counseling reticence at others) as he weighed whether, when, and for whom to publish his autobiographical *Si le grain ne meurt* and *Corydon*, his treatise on homosexuality.

The two final chapters examine the tricky question of the first person in Proust—who, of course, teases and confounds readers with darting hints at near-identity between the narrator-protagonist and the author of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Lucey's approach is both genetic and intertextual: his fascinating account traces a reference to Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré—and the attribution of that allusion—from Balzac himself through Wilde to Proust's correspondence, then to *Jean Santeuil* and finally the *Recherche*. Looking at the frequent transgression of narrative barriers separating fictional characters from their authors (and, indeed, the lives of their readers), Lucey highlights the humor of Proust's play with what seems to be "a queer cognitive disorder—the confusion of orders of reality and representation" (206). The more serious lesson Lucey derives concerns boundary-breaking among Proustian characters themselves, whose impersonations, embeddings, and "creation of speech contexts in which different first-person figurations are assumed and [. . .] tested" create what he calls a "sharing out of queer speech"—a division Lucey interprets as an "aesthetic preemptive act of defense" against repressions of homosexual speech and action (210-11).

Again looking at the genesis and composition of the novel, the book's final chapter explores how Proust incorporated the previously written "La Race des Tantes"—a 1909 text theorizing male homosexuals—into the narrative of a sexual encounter between Charlus and Jupien, as observed by the protagonist-cum-voyeur. Discussion of the narrator's shifts between paradoxically "limited knowledge" and equally paradoxical omniscience (223) and of the limited information and sensory impressions he grants the reader—the Charles-Jupien sex scene, though witnessed both visually and aurally, is narrated with the sound off (226); characters learn the protagonist's name, but readers do not (246)—hints at queries about what the narrating "I" can know and say. This, ultimately, leads to the gist of Lucey's inquiry: who can speak of sexuality, to whom, in what context, and what social and aesthetic consequences flow from this first-person speech?

Taking up the important question of the first person, *Never Say I* is an intelligent, original, and highly readable study of broad interest to scholars and students of literature. Appreciative readers will look forward with anticipation to the book's promised sequel, *Someone: The Pragmatics of Misfit Sexualities*.

Once mainstream gay and lesbian identities are established and broadly disseminated by writers like Gide, Proust, and Colette, it becomes clear that other same-sex sexualities exist, and that many twentieth-century French writers are drawn to these "misfit" forms. This second volume will investigate how authors like Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Genet, Violette Leduc, and Robert Pinget explore the difficulty of conceptualizing and representing these sexualities. Building on the insights of *Never Say I*'s examination of the first person's discursive complexities, *Someone* will probe the complex work which literary language has to do to refer to these "misfit" sexualities.

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**Evi Voyiatzaki. *The Body in the Text: James Joyce's* Ulysses *and the Modern Greek Novel*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2002. xv + 251 pp.**

*There is no other way than the body.*
Giorgos Cheimonas, *The Brother*

Evi Voyiatzaki's study, which is a revised version of her 1999 University of Warwick doctoral thesis, examines aspects of the influence of James Joyce's *Ulysses* on the interwar and postwar modern Greek novel through the prism of the body.

It is, more precisely, a systematic study of the Joycean origins of ways of inscribing the body in the work of three modern Greek authors, Stelios Xefloudas, Nikos Gavriil Pentzikis, and Giorgos Cheimonas, important figures of the interwar and the postwar period.[1] Divided into five chapters which develop the individual themes, the analysis mainly employs a psychoanalytic, philosophical, and structural theoretical framework: Freudian theory on primary bodily processes, Arthur Koestler's psycho-physiological model of artistic creation, Julia Kristeva's psycholinguistic approach to poetic discourse, and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. Elements of narratology and aspects of Bakhtin's poetics and Derrida's deconstruction also support the methodology of the approach.[2]

Chapter One ("The Historical Context: Greek Literature in the Nineteen Thirties and the Demand for Innovation") attempts a historical contextualization of the corpus in question. Based on well known historical studies,[3] this introductory section focuses on the historical and theoretical context of the intertextual relationship she explores (i.e., translations of Joyce's works into Greek, cultivation of the interior monologue, association of the interior monologue with surrealism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis). In addition, she discusses certain specific issues: the subjects of interiority and self-referentiality and their emergence in interwar Greek prose explored in combination with the Joycean paradigm, are presented as the cardinal themes of the whole treatment.

The last section of Chapter One ("The Body in the Text") attempts the first systematic presentation of the study's main axis: the inscription of the body in the literary text—the body defined as the place of textual production and seen through its primary manifestations (eroticism, pathology, androgyny)—a theme that will

occupy the core of the analysis to follow.

Chapter Two ("The Joycean Paradigm") focuses on the Joycean poetics of the body as fashioned in *Ulysses* (1922). The conception of the literary work as an organic holon resembling the human body (a view of Joyce's analyzed through the prism of Koestler's psycho-physiological problematization), the bodily texture of the comic element (through specific philosophical and psycho-physiological approaches[4]), as well as sections of *Ulysses* which show the close association between the body and the text ("Proteus," "Nausicaa," "Oxen of the Sun") form the main axes of the treatment. Of particular interest in this chapter is the analysis of certain paradigms, such as the psychosomatic substratum of artistic creation, and the return to primary biopsychic and linguistic processes, thematic poles in *Ulysses* which recur later in the book during the discussion of the three modern Greek authors.

Chapter Three focuses on the work of Stelios Xefloudas (1902-1985). Interiority and self-referentiality constitute the basic axes of the argument, which is also concerned with the meaning of the Odyssean journey, the aesthetics of the androgynous artist, and eroticism as particular frames of reference. All the aforementioned are examined in Xefloudas' works *Ta Tetradia tou Pavlou Foteinou* [Pavlos Foteinos' Notebooks, 1930], *Esoteriki Symfonia* [Inner Symphony, 1932], *Kyklos* [Cycle, 1943], *Odysseas Choris Ithaki* [Odysseus without Ithaka, 1957], with a special focus on *Odysseas* (1974). The existential crisis of the central hero in this last novel and his search for identity, aesthetics, and sensuality are considered through the prism of the poetics of the body and examined within the work's intertextual frame (Joyce, Dante, Shakespeare, Eliot, Homer, Cavafy, Kazantzakis, Seferis) and genre identity (the lyric essay).

Chapter Four deals with the work of Nikos Gavriil Pentzikis (1908-1993). After a brief discussion of the self-referential substrata of the novels *Andreas Dimakoudis* (1935) and *O Pethamenos kai i Anastasi* [The Dead Man and the Resurrection, 1944], works in which the main paradigms of subjectivity in the Pentzikian corpus are first given, the chapter focuses exclusively on the novel *To Mythistorima tis Kyrias Ersis* [The Novel of Madame Ersi, 1966], a reference point in the dialectic of body and text.[5] In this analysis, Voyiatzaki focuses on specific incidents in the novel which, by thematizing functions of the body that are axial in the economy of the narrative, demonstrate the bodily basis of narrative fiction.

The discussion develops primarily around five poles, which are analyzed through the prism of the Joycean legacy. These are: a) the persistently recurring issue of metamorphosis and its primary subtotals (plant and animal forms, reification), a theme which can plausibly be associated both with the paradigm of the poetics of the body and with that of the heterogeneous subject; b) the trinomial Kyria Ersi / Pavlos Rodanos / artist narrator, which is interpreted as a nodal Oedipal formation for the poetics of the work, in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis; c) the androgynous nature of these three central figures, originally and meticulously outlined on the basis of the interpretive inferences of the novel; d) certain episodes-metaphors of the sexual act, such as that of the "nose touching" and the piercing of Madame Ersi's finger by the narrator, in his various identity displacements; and,

e) the focus on the heroine's body as an aspect of the novel's sensual genital quest.

The analysis is continued and concluded in Chapter Five, the book's longest, with an examination of the work of Giorgos Cheimonas (1938-2000). The question of the body in the text, the text conceived as a place of discovery of the prelogical and the instinctual, along with several similar issues, such as pathology (of the word and body), the exploration of primordial (subconscious, female, vocal) substrata of the literary text, and the subversion of the conceptual integrity of the narrative are the axes upon which the works *Peisistratos* (1960), *I Ekdromi* [The Excursion, 1964] and *O Giatros Ineotis* [Doctor Ineotis, 1971] are approached. A reference at this point to the story *O Adelfos* [The Brother, 1975], with its related questions, would have been particularly useful. In addition to the locating of the broader intertextual frame of these works (Joyce, Goethe, Nietzsche, Woolf, Beckett, Sollers, Homer, *Digenis Akritas*), of special interest is the incorporation of elements of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology—a systematic theorization of the inscription of the person as body in the world—as well as Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, which makes broad use of neologisms relating to the body (tympan, hymen, dissemination etc.). This chapter tends to pile up theory, to the point that reading becomes difficult in places.

In addition to a series of original interpretive findings which contribute substantially to our knowledge of the poetics and intertextual relationship between the four authors, Evi Voyiatzaki's study stimulates our problematization around the tools and prospects of contemporary comparative literary criticism. As noted in the comprehensive foreword by professor Dimitris Angelatos, what characterises the proposed approach is the systematic combination of a wide-ranging set of theoretical models, a use based on a solid knowledge of the works in question which culminates in a many-sided critical synthesis.[6]

Positioned in opposition to reductionist practices, such as the mechanical application of analytical models, the restatement of other scholars' arguments, or the lack of interpretive range in terminology and bibliography, this study is the product of serious meta-theoretical problematization. It takes the reader to a new cycle of thinking on a timely question: with what terms could contemporary comparative literary studies, at the crucial moment of the dialogue with literary theory, turn towards the prospect of producing original critical thought?

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Translated from the Greek by Despina Christodoulou

**ENDNOTES**

1 For a general discussion of these three authors, see Roderick Beaton, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994).

2 See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Harmondsworth UK: Penguin, 1991-93); Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979); Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (Arcana, 1989); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984); Jacques

Derrida, *Dissemination* (London: Athlone 1989) and *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1993). The author provides a carefully compiled bibliography, but it would have been useful to have categorized the entries according to the different theoretical approaches.

3 M. Vitti, *The Generation of the 1930s. Ideology and Form* (Athens: Hermes, 1989) [in Greek]; P. Moullas, "Introduction," in *Postwar Prose*, Vol. I (Athens: Sokolis, 1993) [in Greek]; D. Tziovas, *Greek Modernism and Beyond* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997). This chapter is the only section of the study based wholly on the existing bibliography, with no original interpretative proposition being made.

4 H. Bergson, *Laughter* (London: Macmillan, 1911); A. Koestler, *Janus: a Summing Up* (London: Hutchinson, 1978); H. Spencer, *The Physiology of Laughter* (1860); G. Bataille, *Eroticism* (London: Marion Boyars, 1982); M. Bakhtin, *op. cit.*

5 A fuller discussion would include *Omilemata* [Discourses, 1972], *Vorofryni* (1982) and *Poleos kai nomou Dramas paramythia* [Fables of the City and the Country of Drama, 1983], which thoroughly thematize the pathology of the body. For an approach to the issue, see Th. M. Niftanidou, "Psychosomatic pathology in the novel of Nikos Gavriil Pentzikis" [in Greek], *Revue des Études Néo-helléniques* 7 (Win 2002-03): 79-87.

6 "For a New Approach to the Postwar Modern Greek Literature," pp. xi-xv.

# COMPTES RENDUS BREFS / BOOK NOTES

**Mario Vargas Llosa. *Wellsprings*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008. 202 pp. 978-0674028364.**

Ce petit volume de présentation élégante, agréable, offre un ensemble de sept conférences, articles ou essais du romancier Vargas Llosa qui s'échelonnent de 1981 à 2006. A en croire le titre retenu (par l'éditeur, mais sans nul doute avec l'assentiment de l'auteur), il s'agirait pour l'illustre écrivain péruvien d'aller jusqu'aux "sources" mêmes de son œuvre. Des sources, précisons-le d'entrée de jeu, plus politiques, idéologiques que poétiques et littéraires. De fait, si l'on excepte les deux premiers textes qui portent sur le *Don Quichotte* et sur Borges, et en partie le cinquième, intitulé "Fiction et réalité en Amérique latine" où quelques pages évoquent l'universitaire péruvien Raul Porras Barrenechea, l'autre moitié est consacrée à des figures de philosophes (Ortega y Gasset, Popper), au penseur d'origine russe Isaiah Berlin et à la question toujours d'actualité des limites du nationalisme, qu'il soit politique ou culturel.

La contribution sur le *Quichotte*, "Four centuries of *Don Quixote*," présentée comme une leçon donnée à l'université d'Atlanta en 2006, reprend en réalité un texte donné en français et en espagnol à l'occasion du IVème centenaire de la Première partie du *Quichotte* à l'Institut Cervantes de Paris (*Don Quijote, literatura de hoy/littérature d'aujourd'hui*, 2005: 254-83), lequel était une reprise amplifiée du discours prononcé à Alcala de Henares en 1995, à l'occasion de la remise du Prix Cervantes. Vargas Llosa développe en particulier l'idée du roman comme fiction sur la fiction (d'autres diront métafiction . . .). La "leçon" sur Borges est l'occasion de faire un parallèle intéressant entre l'écrivain argentin et le chantre du *Modernismo*, Ruben Dario, de mettre également l'accent sur son cosmopolitisme, perspective riche et juste, mais qui n'annule en rien un certain régionalisme, ou mieux une mythification de Buenos Aires. Le philosophe espagnol Ortega y Gasset est vu surtout comme une "figure littéraire" dont le style clair et sobre est à juste titre célébré. Mais le parallèle avec Sartre surprend (69). Les impressions de lecture alternent avec la confession (Sartre précisément comme une lecture de jeunesse de Vargas Llosa, vite abandonné [26], ou encore son "goût" pour les utopies politiques, renié depuis, 138). Les "sources" se changent en autant de traits, de touches pour un portrait de l'artiste par lui-même. Un artiste qui est, ici, un amateur d'idées.

On relèvera quelques références, répétées: Renan, l'auteur d'une conférence célèbre sur le nationalisme (vu comme un "plébiscite permanent," 55, 94); le philosophe libéral autrichien Hayek (47, 70, 72), les philosophes espagnols Savater et Trias, l'essayiste espagnol Jon Juaristi, à propos du problème basque,

longuement analysé (72-94). Et bien sûr on retiendra l'hommage à trois penseurs, trois essais très maîtrisés dans lesquels l'éloge mesuré alterne avec une remarquable capacité de synthèse: Ortega y Gasset, Berlin et Popper. Tous trois sont présentés comme des "libéraux." On pourra toujours se souvenir que le "jeune" Ortega y Gasset, dans *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923), renvoie avec éclat dos à dos "libéraux" et "réactionnaires." Ce que lui reprocherait Vargas Llosa, c'est de ne pas être "libéral" en matière économique (53). Tous trois sont des esprits critiques modérés, des réformistes (66-67, 137, 185). Berlin pratique une analyse politique qui est comparable à la méthode du romancier (138), tandis que la conception que Popper se fait de l'écriture de l'histoire s'approche de l'idée que Vargas Llosa se fait du roman (178-79).

Au long des textes s'affirme avec force et détermination une conviction: la nécessité de la liberté dans tous les domaines de la culture, sous diverses formes: liberté morale et l'éloge que Don Quichotte fait de la liberté (on a voulu voir un cri du cœur de la part du romancier longtemps captif des barbaresques) n'est évidemment pas oublié. Mais on signalera aussi la liberté comme base d'une réflexion humaniste chez Berlin (144), présenté comme "un héros de notre temps" (un clin d'œil à Lermontov?). La liberté se change en pluralisme politique, en libéralisme économique jugé de façon très positive (104-106, 139, 147, 164-65). La "société ouverte" de Popper devient un modèle à la fois social et moral.

A l'évidence, Vargas Llosa continue de régler des comptes avec le marxisme, en premier lieu; avec les indigénismes, les nationalismes, des formes et des systèmes qui ont accompagné l'apprentissage du romancier. Nous avons ici quelques "sources" pour comprendre un combat idéologique qui ne désarme pas. On peut légitimement en attendre (en retrouver?) d'autres: non plus celles d'une pensée, d'une idéologie, mais celles qui ont formé et alimenté un imaginaire.

Daniel-Henri Pageaux, *Sorbonne Nouvelle/Paris III* (France).

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**Martin Puchner. *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2006. xiv + 315 pp. 978-0691122601.**

With its eye-catching title Martin Puchner's book cites a desideratum expressed by Marx insisting that the social revolution of the 19th century derive its "poetry" from the future, not the past. As the author sets out to demonstrate, a certain autopoesis is at work already in the *Communist Manifesto*, as it creates a history of the manifesto genre. The monograph offers a wide-ranging, intellectually engaging overview of the political manifesto and the later development of an avant-garde variant that becomes dominant in 20th-century art scenes. A wealth of compelling material is presented, from Marx's performative coup to Marinetti's futurism to a British "rear guard," from Dada to surrealism, to name pivotal foci of this study that establish its brilliant and authoritative discourse.

Before investigating the tenuous alliances between the tradition of the socialist manifesto and an upcoming transnational avant-garde, the book challenges the reader to follow the author's scrutinizing account of the global repercussions of the *Communist Manifesto*. In an inspired interpretation he treats the *Manifesto* as world literature in the definition of David Damrosch, namely as writing that "gains" in translation. The *Manifesto* is seen as participating in *Weltliteratur* in order to undermine it, to outdo it, so as to fashion the first example of a different form of international literature.

Puchner's research intensity is omnipresent as he moves from the political manifesto to the avant-garde adaptation of the genre, tending to affinities and rivalries. Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurism* of 1909 is hailed for having created a poetics that aspired to an exemplary condition of the manifesto as a visual-textual statement. (Here the author credits Marjorie Perloff's work.) Direct address, expressive nouns, and typographical novelty actually surpassed the style of the political manifestos, which leads Puchner to one of his spirited formulations: "The form of the manifesto becomes the very content of futurism." Nevertheless, the orientation to form remains calibrated to socialism, which in Marinetti's case led to Fascism and a glorification of war, an ironic twist of avant-garde impulses.

However controversial Marinetti's work appears in Puchner's highly differentiated argumentation, the author leaves no doubt about what he considers the authentic achievement of futurism: the merger of manifesto and art, the creation of "manifesto art" that will be carried on by subsequent movements, be it dadaism, surrealism, or the *situationists* in the sixties. This Puchner calls the "futurism effect." He also discerns it in Russian futurism and even in the conservative climate of British modernism.

Puchner's engrossing textuality drives a reviewer forward toward the avant-garde movements of Dada and surrealism. Someone who writes in the aftermath of what is often referred to as the "Death of the Avant-Garde" uses the concept skeptically, yet also pragmatically. This use-value enables the critic to differentiate two avant-gardes in the arts, one being a radical form-oriented modernism (e.g. abstract art) and its other, the anti-bourgeois, anti-art tactics of Dada.

It is the internationalism of Dada, its spread from Zurich to Paris to New York, that provides a lens upon the overwhelming multitude of artists working out of a crisis of disillusionment induced by World War I. Innumerable manifestos were produced, the first by Hugo Ball, *Dada Manifesto* (1916). Ball was one of the founders of the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich where manifestos were staged during Dada soirées, exhibiting, according to Puchner, a new performativity and theatricality. Tristan Tzara's *Manifeste Dada 1918* is a grand example of dadaism, but only a few lines from its "meta-textual" beginning are cited, by necessity from an English translation. Seeing/reading a complete reproduction of the textual object is infinitely more dadaesque with its shibboleth phrases such as "Dada ne signifie rien" and "La spontanéité dadaiste."

Surrealism, as a literary vanguard, undergoes a deconstructive operation with

regard to accepted characteristics such as automatic writing, the dominant role of the dream, and "far-fetched associations." What is needed in the journal *Surrealist Revolution* (1924 to 1929), Puchner writes, is a focus on the necessary "balancing between avant-garde theatrics and socialist strategy." The surrealist manifesto reflects the continuous struggle of the writers, including André Breton, with the Moscow-controlled Third International (Comintern) and its Fifth Congress 1924. Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* of 1924 deflects the conflict into a vicious attack on Dada's anti-art styles (their influence on Breton notwithstanding). Ultimately, Puchner delivers a superb close-textual analysis of Breton's *écriture automatique.*

Both Dada and surrealism were branded as failed historical avant-gardes by the prominent neo-Marxist critic Peter Bürger for their failure to bring about a unity of art and life as socialist practice (*Theorie der Avantgarde,* 1974, transl. 1984). As a scholar of a new generation, Puchner refuses to consider the avant-garde status of these movements as merely an episode of the past or as an unsuccessful mission. Indeed for him the 1960's saw the resurgence of political and artistic vanguards that fostered protest movements and provocative agendas such as Valerie Solana's SCUM Manifesto of 1967 (Society for Cutting Up Men) as well as the highly effective, manifesto-driven revolt of the Black Panthers which is credited with having changed the American discourse on race. Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* is examined as a foundational text for the happenings of May '68 in Paris. The *situationists* did not produce a manifesto in the strict sense, except by way of numerous rewritings of the genre, which for Puchner truly convey the spirit of "a new poetry of the revolution."

Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Indiana University* (United States).

**Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos. *Early Feminists and the Education Debates. England, France, Germany 1760-1810*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2007. 319 pp. 978-0838640876.**

This work focuses on a fifty-year period in which Enlightenment discourses of universality regarding access to education were contradicted by arguments construing formal education for women as unsuitable to female modesty. Sotiropoulos concentrates on feminist non-fiction texts by Sophie von La Roche, Theodor von Hippel, Amalia Holst, and Betty Gleim (Germany), Catharine Macauley and Mary Wollstonecraft (England), and a group of female petitioners (France) in order to show how feminists in those nations inscribed education as an enhancement to female virtue, rather than as a threat to existing notions of "femininity" and motherhood. Using narratology and reader-response theory, Sotiropoulos effectively unpacks the rhetorical strategies deployed in these feminist non-fiction works, strategies which allowed them both to carve out and to occupy "spaces" in which reforms concerning the education of girls and women could be proposed.

The introduction to *Early Feminists and the Education Debates* revisits increasingly negative views regarding female learnedness, from Descartes' (posi-

tive) assertion that all humans possess the capacity to reason, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1762), which privileges the male child. Indeed, Rousseau wrote that a woman's primary concern should be for her virtue and modesty (18), and Sotiropoulos shows how Rousseau served as a focal point in the writings of Catherine Macauley, Theodor von Hippel, and Mary Wollstonecraft, for they had to reconcile their admiration of Rousseau's "experiential educational program for Emile with their repudiation of his theory concerning women's limited intellectual capacity" (25). Sotiropoulos further demonstrates the ways in which Rousseau's mutually exclusive models of the learned woman and the good mother permeate later debates surrounding the education of women in England, France, and Germany, showing that feminist educationists worked to reverse this view by conflating the two. She also examines the ways in which the paternalistic Charles-Maurice Talleyrand and the progressive Marie-Jean Condorcet crystallized opposing views regarding the education of women, even as they both deployed revolutionary rhetoric. "Their rationales are inflected by the Revolution's transformative impact on the school as an institution in the public sphere, as the newly imagined arena in which the shaping of future citizens would take place" (35), Sotiropoulos writes.

The book proceeds chronologically. Summary chapters entitled "Window on Women's Education" provide helpful background information on political, social, and cultural developments in Germany to 1780, France, England, and again in Germany 1780-1810. These "windows" each precede lengthier chapters. The first, devoted to Sophie von La Roche, uses narratology to analyze the conciliatory discourse of the only female editor of a women's periodical devoted to the education of women and girls in the Germany of her time. The chapter on Talleyrand and Condorcet, who helped shape educational policy in France and beyond during and after the French revolution, provides a useful context for an analysis of the writings of forgotten women petitioners in France as well as the better-known Olympe de Gouges, author of the *Déclaration des droits de la femme* (1791) who was guillotined in 1793. Sotiropoulos convincingly argues that petitions by women educationists are a hybrid genre that deploy strategic rhetorical maneuvers in order to address and convince all-male audiences resistant to granting women political and civil rights.

Narratology also informs the analyses of Catharine Macauley and Mary Wollstonecraft. In choosing the letter form, Sotiropoulos argues, Macauley's *Letters on Education* could argue for gender equity in learnedness through imaginative participation with an invoked respondent (the letters are addressed to a fictitious friend) and could thereby negotiate cultural tensions without alienating potential resistant readers. Similarly, Wollstonecraft framed her treatise, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as a letter to Talleyrand. Sotiropoulos argues that in so doing, she was able to espouse radical ideas while placing British readers at a disarming cultural remove.

The final section of the book is devoted to debates surrounding women's

education in Germany between 1780 and 1810. The chapter devoted to Theodor von Hippel introduces readers to a radical egalitarian feminist thinker, who wrote his *On Improving the Status of Women* in 1792, during the same year that Wollstonecraft was writing her *Vindication*. In explaining the lack of response to this work during von Hippel's time, Sotiropoulos posits that the work was at once the victim of its ironical style, its failure to assuage male fears of "masculine women," and its silence on the role of mothers as educators. By contrast, Amalia Holst's treatise, *On the Purpose of Woman's Advanced Intellectual Development* (1802) penned during the decade following the French Revolution and under Napoleonic occupation, fixed on the notion that mothers had to be formally educated so as to educate their own children properly. Although this idea may sound innocuous today, as Sotiropoulos writes, "in the years following the Terror, the fears of social upheaval that extended across Europe narrowed the space in which feminist educational reformists could propose changes and at the same time avoid being judged as scandalous . . . in Germany, between 1794 . . . and 1802 . . . not a single voice dared publicly argue for the improvement of women's education" (189). Eight years later in 1810, Betty Gleim published a two-volume rationale and model curriculum for girls' schools entitled *Education and Instruction of the Female Sex*. Here, Gleim applied the ideology of motherhood to include single women in what Sotiropoulos calls an "empowering model" (208) that professionalized caregiving, or what contemporary feminists call "an ethic of care."

Sotiropoulos concludes this thoroughly researched and informative book by stating that the eighteenth-century women writers of her corpus had to negotiate the tension between "self-abnegation (virtue) and agency, a tension that could not easily tolerate a female authorial voice" (222). However, as Sotiropoulos has convincingly shown, readers of these female-authored texts are invited to read beyond the conventional plot of motherhood to imagine women as being able to "serve the potentially unvirtuous aim of female self-fulfillment" (225) variously masked as perfectability in Holst and Gleim, as the discipline of reason in Wollstonecraft, as the freeing of the mind from error in Macauley, and as educated service to one's spouse and children in La Roche.

Jeanne Garane, *University of South Carolina* (United States).

**Micéala Symington. *Écrire le tableau: L'approche poétique de la critique d'art à l'époque symboliste*. Nouvelle Poétique Comparatiste, 18. Bruxelles: Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes-Peter Lang, 2006. 398 pp. 978-9052010779.**

Starting from the thesis that (especially German) Romanticism set the stage for Symbolism's interest in the activity of criticizing pictorial art, Symington examines in meticulous detail the general Symbolist view of art criticism as a kind of "translation" involving "resymbolization." Her major contribution—bound to stir productive debate—is the assertion that art criticism not only gained the status of being genuine literature in Symbolism, but also emerged as the most prestigious

"genre." Part one deals with mediators between French Symbolism and British and Anglo-Irish culture and makes a very strong case for the exceptional importance of Oscar Wilde in pushing the issues. The story of such mediation is a quite interesting topic in its own right and, though it has been treated in particular instances and more broadly over the decades, Symington shows why the still unfolding repercussions up to the present justify a fresh look. Part two scrutinizes various gradations in arrival at the idea that writers can "resymbolize" pictorial works and in so doing create a new kind of literary work. Part three focuses on the Symbolist goal of achieving a "supreme genre" (clearly inherited from Romanticism) and argues that Symbolist art criticism emerged as the chief means. The notion of "criticism" is widened to include outright literary compositions (for example, lyrics) which address pictorial art and incorporate in themselves critical principles.

Symington traces two main lines (and some mixed cases, of course) in the evolution of views on art criticism. The relatively less daring line runs from Arnold to Eliot. More innovatory is the line from Baudelaire over Mallarmé, Pater, and Wilde. There are innumerable smaller comparisons out of which Symington gradually builds her argument—for example, a contrast of Wilde's and James's review of the very same art exhibit, Whistler's objections to Wilde's approach, the difference between Mallarmé's and Gauguin's conception of the status of the various arts, and so forth. There are also longer expositions of key Symbolist documents—for example, on the *Coup de dés* as simultaneously visual suggestion and critical statement, a self-illustrative and self-commentating poem, an autotelic work by which the modern critical mind searches for the "ideal" behind the contingent materiality of the "picture" (which the poet's own words form). It should be expected that some devotees of Symbolism (and/or Modernism) will object to Symington's privileging of art criticism as the supreme or predominant kind of literary production of the period. This proposition is clearly a qualitative judgment on her part, and she argues for it with skill, while avoiding a repetitious consideration of already extant counter-arguments favoring notably the lyric or drama.

Whether or not the (basically Wildean) thesis can hold up, that criticism was really the most distinguished literary mode of the age, Symington invites us to appreciate some natural facts. Readers who had long been and remained interested in the sensibility of authors, were eager to discover how these literary guides reacted to other interesting figures, namely the painters. As had happened from the Renaissance onward, the public in the modern urban world, too, found it rewarding to view artists in terms of their spiritual biographies. Symington holds that the variety of forms into which Symbolist art criticism is inserted does not diminish the fact this criticism is marked by generic features. Common characteristics are the desire to surpass one's own art, the ideal of a synthesis of the arts, emphasis on the poetic spirit of great painters or groups of painters, and a tendency to approximate poetic expression rather than expository prose. Especially fine and careful is Symington's exposition of the way the Schopenhauerian vogue of the fin-de-siècle could provide a general background against which many Symbolists could

exhibit their own spirituality, even though key Symbolist masters actually often violated the Schopenhauerian hierarchy of values by their zeal to ally the artist's subjectivism and individualism with the "symbol." Her presentation of the way the musical metaphor (deriving from the Romantics, and notably Schopenhauer) was applied to painting by Symbolist authors helps greatly to clarify the prestige accorded to pictorial art.

When Symington concludes that the longer-term tendency in Symbolism, through its attempt to unify image, idea, and symbol, is to assert the supremacy of literature, she turns the spotlight on a major issue still very much alive and with us. How does Symbolism manage to stay on the tremulous borderline and rescue literariness? How do the various great Symbolist writers stop themselves from permitting a devolution whereby discursivity triumphs over literariness? Symington's book makes a distinct and instructive contribution to understanding this moment of "art for art's sake." Unspoken is the inference many readers may draw that Symbolist art criticism can be thought to anticipate in its own, still lyrical fashion the hypertropic stage when postmodern theorists will claim that criticism and critics have superseded the "creative" arts, especially literature and the artist-creator.

Gerald Gillespie, *Stanford University* (United States).

**Christopher Knowles. *Our Gods Wear Spandex. The Secret History of Comic Book Heroes*. San Francisco: Weisser Books, 2007. xv + 233 pp. 978-1578634064.**

Although the old saying goes, "Don't judge a book by its cover," the cover of Christopher Knowles' *Our Gods Wear Spandex* provides you with the core thesis of the text: today's superheroes are what the gods and other mythical beings used to be in ancient times.

Invoking da Vinci's *The Last Supper* it depicts the likenesses of various modern superheroes with Superman taking the place of Jesus and other iconic heroes like Spider-Man and Batman in the roles of the apostles. As such it offers a feast of information for both comic book fans and lovers of esoterica. The cover and the ironic black and white illustrations are drawn by renowned comic book creator Joseph Michael Linsner.

The author, himself a longtime artist and writer in the comic book industry, provides an interesting cultural study of ancient myths and religions, and how they found new life in modern day comic book superheroes: "This book will explain how superheroes have come to fill the role in our modern society that the gods and demigods provided to the ancients" (xv).

Part I gives a short overview of the rise and fall of comic books linked to uncertain times like World War II and 9/11 when heroes were needed. It then focuses on the very influential miniseries, *Kingdom Come* (1996), in which a quasi-religious message entered the comic book main stream and popular culture, inspiring fans of the medium to dress up as their idols and enact their adventures.

Part II explains the different influences ancient myths had on modern Western society and on today's comic books. Ancient gods and heroes like Gilgamesh, Heracles, or Horus all led to various occult movements. Victorian English writer Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton and his fictional super race of the Vril were, according to Knowles, predecessors of the X-Men and other super- or transhumans. "Occult superstars" like Friedrich Nietzsche and his vision of the Übermensch (super human) influenced Superman creator Jerry Siegel.

Part III recounts the history of Pulp Fiction which eventually led to comic books. Amongst its early proponents were Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Bram Stoker who were interested in occultism and whose works pioneered gothic fiction, science fiction, and crime fiction. These were followed by the pulp magazines like the crime fiction *Black Mask* magazine, the science fiction *Amazing Stories* magazine, and the gothic/horror fiction *Weird Tales* magazine which introduced Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian, H.P. Lovecraft's occult horror, and Edgar Rice Burroughs's occult themed heroes Tarzan and John Carter. Often inspired by occultism their creations either had a major influence on comic books or became comic book characters themselves.

Part IV provides a history of comic books from the 19th century to modern day founding fathers with World War II in particular providing the need for superheroes and thus reintroducing ancient gods. Knowles tries to identify three, sometimes overlapping, archetypical categories of superheroes which he correlates with the main phases of comic book history:

1. The Magicians: including the ancient Egyptian wizard Thoth, Merlin, and the Superman prototype of Dr. Occult.
2. The Messiahs from the Golden Age of comics: Superman and Captain Marvel, Norse god/superhero Thor, and Captain America, introducing the science hero, who became popular in the so called Silver Age. However, new heroes like Flash and Spider-Man have occult elements too.
3. The Golem: transformed men seeking revenge bringing danger for those they are supposed to protect. For example, Batman is depicted as a dark god of vengeance in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*.

Part V introduces some of the major comic book creators and their main texts that were influenced by occultism:

1. Jack Kirby: *The Demon*, *The Eternal.*
2. Alan Moore: *From Hell*, *Promethea.*
3. Neil Gaiman: *The Sandman, The Books of Magic.*
4. Mike Mignola: *Hellboy*, and others.

After stressing once more the importance of comics in pop culture and the influence of pop culture itself on our daily life, Knowles concludes by arguing that superheroes provide escape from present and future dangers. "The new mythology of the comics gives us a model to follow, a moral compass to guide us through incredible new possibilities by allowing us to play out the potentials of super- or transhuman power in a fictional setting" (219-21). Occultism is seen as a way

to understand human life which is made accessible via the cultural phenomena called comic books.

Knowles has written a well researched, easy-to-read study of the hybridity and intertextuality of superheroes, occultism, mythology, history and popular culture. His book contains much interesting information and trivia, and although it has attracted interest from the occult community it is more of a book for comic book fans with its encyclopedic information on comic book writers and characters. Needless to say there are a lot of speculative ideas about the connections between occultism and comic books, the analysis is at times not overly scholarly, and the study sometimes loses a bit of focus, but it certainly is entertaining and worth putting on your shelf next to Joseph Campell's classic study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

Stefan Buchenberger, *Nara Women's University* (Japan).

**Wilfred Floeck. *Estudios críticos sobre el teatro español, mexicano y portugués contemporáneo*. Publicados por Herbert Fritz, Ana García Martínez y Sabine Fritz. Hildesheim: George Olms Verlag, 2008. 257 pp. 978-3487135793.**

Floeck is one of the most important scholars of Hispanic theater in Germany and in the German language. He is a professor at the Universität Justus Liebig in Gießen and is past president of the Asociación Alemana de Hispanistas. Like many of the theater scholars of his generation that have written on the Peninsula and Latin America, he was not originally trained in the field. Indeed, his original training was in French literature. However, as theater increased in importance in Spain and Latin America and as it became evident that few theater departments were going to include Spanish- and Portuguese-language texts in their teaching, even in English translations, literary scholars have had to train themselves to deal with the theater. This has meant not only dealing with dramatic texts, whether viewed as literary or paraliterary, but it has also meant training in theater history and, of particular importance for contemporary studies, in the formal production aspects of theater and the theoretical field of performance studies. Although some theater departments include productions of Lorca and to varying degrees U.S. Latino theater (almost exclusively in English), there is almost total ignorance of the rest of Hispanic production.

Scholars wishing to address Luso-Hispanic theater thus find themselves casting about for proper models and often find themselves dealing with a broad range of texts from different countries, for the simple reason that there is so much material to be covered. To be sure, there is no dearth of general criticism in newspapers, trade publications, and even academic journals devoted to the theater, although the sort of sustained analytical commentary characteristic of literary works is what is lacking and what the literary scholar turned theater scholar is most likely to provide. Not only is the result more in-depth discussions of works and specific phenomena, but the relationship of the theater to larger questions of sociohistorical cultural production than an exclusively theater-centered discipline

is likely to provide. As Hispanic studies programs move toward a comprehensive and, indeed, integrated understanding of cultural production, theater is a necessary component, not in any way that would deny theater its own institutional history, but rather one that would place it also in larger cultural contexts.

It is for this reason that Floeck's scholarship ranges over so much material, both Peninsular and Latin American, both Spanish-language and Portuguese-language, although it is worth noting that the immense realm of Brazilian theater appears not to have yet attracted this scholar's attention.

Several of the essays are what one might identify as mostly descriptive in character: writing for mostly a German-language audience (the bulk of these essays have been translated from German into English for this edition), Floeck is understandably compelled to provide much that one might call basic institutional information. An excellent example of such a contribution is "El sistema teatral en Portugal." More than a survey of important dramatic texts, Floeck's essay discusses theater movements, including groups and performance venues, since the 1940s. As one might suspect, theater is not a vibrant cultural genre in Portugal, in great measure because of the Salazar dictatorship and the difficulty of sustaining such a public art. However, the rather disappointing state of affairs has changed with the return to democracy in the 1970s, and Floeck goes on in the following essay to focus on the meritorious work of Luisa Costa Gomes and its contributions in the 1990s to the renovation of the Portuguese stage. Although theater in Portugal continues to be a rather modest affair, Gomes's work is indicative of the attempt to re-create a serious theatrical tradition for the country.

Other essays by Floeck stress important thematic components of the theater, such as the influence of Pirandello in early Spanish drama, the image of Penelope, the conjunction of madness-transgression-witchcraft in late twentieth-century Spanish theater, the theme of the Conquest in Mexican theater, and historical issues in Spanish dramatic works by women. These essays, while also descriptive to a certain extent, do nevertheless display the writer's interest in bringing theoretical dimensions to bear on his commentary, such as the use of Tzvetan Todorov in the essay on the theme of the conquest in Mexican theater or key works on the history of writing by women in Spain. These essays, in turn, are complemented by several texts that focus on the trajectory of certain authors (e.g., the Spaniard Yolanda Pallín) or specific theatrical works (*Polifonía* by the Spaniard Diana Paco Serrano).

As a specific body of criticism, this collection of Floeck's scholarship is indicative of German Hispanism in the sense of placing greater emphasis on Spanish and Portuguese theater, while at the same time recognizing some of the important work coming out of Mexico. Notably absent are references to the high-profile theatrical activity in Argentina and Brazil, the two leading venues for theater in Latin America. Perhaps Floeck, as he continues his scholarship on Hispanic theater, will come to concern himself with these two particularly outstanding traditions.

David William Foster, *Arizona State University/ Florida International University* (United States).

**Donald R. Wehrs. *Pre-Colonial Africa in Colonial African Narratives: From* Ethiopia Unbound *to* Things Fall Apart*, 1911-1958.* Hampshire, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008. 193 pp. 978-0754660880.**

Donald Wehrs's book explores notions of pre-colonial ethical selfhood—identity which remains cognizant of others' needs as well as the welfare of the larger community in African societies—in colonial African texts by writers such as J. E. Casely Hayford, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Paul Hazoumé, D. O. Fagunwa, Amos Tutuola, and Chinua Achebe. Wehrs analyzes narratives written during a period of almost fifty years and in both colonial and African languages. He confirms that the thrust of his "study concerns colonial-era representations of pre-colonial history and culture by authors who were writing mostly from within the societies portrayed, and whose recreations of the past reflect access to indigenous accounts and communal memories . . ." (ix). The range of texts, from both temporal and linguistic perspectives, coupled with such "insiders' points of view" makes this a rich and complex volume of literary scholarship. Indeed, Wehrs masters respective variances of narration, cultural practice, and social morés in the texts under study to arrive at a deft examination of pre-colonial African social and political subjectivity.

The analysis of each colonial African narrative is framed within the theories of phenomenology of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, a very useful contextualization. Wehrs asserts that "the indigenous ethical reflection upon which each of these writers draws to depict and interrogate pre-colonial experience intersects with insights that Western philosophical discourse over the last twenty years has come to associate, respectively, with neo-Aristotelian and Levinasian accounts of ethical subjectivity" (x). However, Wehrs is careful not only to invoke African philosophers such as Hountondji, Wiredu, and Appiah in his work, but also to heed their cautionary appeals to avoid monolithic conceptions of African cultures. He foregrounds aspects of oral narration and discussion of ritual and morality of the texts to neutralize oppressive hegemonic power. Wehrs notes that "writers from Balewa to Achebe reoccupy the position of oral storytellers, and so partake in the storytellers' task of making narrative a vehicle for acculturating its audience to resist both the cognitive imperialism that issues from one's own egoistic propensities, and that which is naturalized in hegemonic power relations and ideologies, whether indigenous or colonial" (8-9). All in this process is not calm and composed, however, as Wehrs repeatedly reminds readers. African storytelling is most effective at revealing ethical responsibility when elements of construction, disruption, and dialogism intermingle. After Wehrs meticulously lays out his method and theoretical underpinnings, he then thoroughly considers the writers' works. Briefly focusing on two of these analyses yields general insights into the accomplishments of the larger study.

Chapter Four—"History, Fable, and Syncretism in Fagunwa's *Forest of a Thousand Daemons"*—invites readers to consider issues of ethical sociability through Yoruba perspectives. Wehrs links Fagunwa's *Forest*, originally written in

Yoruban in 1938 and translated into English by Soyinka in 1968, to Hazoumé's Francophone novel *Doguicimi* (discussed in Chapter Three) through their similar approach to tracing "a potential escape from political and psychic impasses" in pre-colonial society (75). Yet Wehrs also points out how Fagunwa's text harmonizes along religious lines with Tutuola's works. Wehrs asserts that the Yoruba sensibility and Christian aspects converge in *Forest* to "yield a reflective, non-colonized syncretism" and to "confront history with an unsparing moral realism [which creates] potential paths to individual and national redemption" (75). Wehrs then traces the elements of Akara-ogun's tales to demonstrate the progress he makes toward "civic-minded sociability" (ix). Before turning to Tutuola in Chapter Five, Wehrs concludes with a frank assessment of the power and capacity of this Yoruba text. Namely, it is imperative to pay attention to the ethical lessons that history can teach us. "Only by participating in the dance of wisdom such inquiries encourage," claims Wehrs, "might we hope to perceive what Fagunwa takes to be divinely opened paths out of bondage" (100).

The examination of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in Chapter Six rounds out the critical commentary of Wehrs's study. According to Wehrs, Achebe's novel reveals a more complete perspective of how individuals coexist than the preceding narratives. Achebe's conception of social fulfillment comes not from escape as from a prison but from "a presence" (134). Achebe argues that this is "a powerful demanding presence limiting the space in which the self can roam uninhibited; it is an aspiration by the self to achieve spiritual congruence with the other" (134). From this Wehrs contends that Achebe evokes a pre-colonial past that catalyzes a recovery and triggers "possibilities for 'modernization-from-indigenous-roots'" (134). Wehrs carefully scrutinizes Okonkwo's interactions with others, including those with his own children, while drawing from past scholarship regarding masculinity issues in the novel to offer his reading. He affirms: "Achebe brilliantly elicits and orders emotions through patterns of images so as to induce the reader to 'feel' how ethical sensibility is entwined, universally, with human embodiment" (138). Likewise, the study delineates how readers attach themselves emotionally to the plight of Ikemefuna in order to show Achebe's mastery of narrative technique which draws in audience participation and points them to "ethical obligation"—"'Seeing' Ikemefuna at this point in the narrative is inseparable from being concerned about him, wanting him to live" (147).

All in all, Wehrs's study builds throughout toward its culmination and conclusion to finish with the Achebe analysis. The clearly defined objectives—to reveal how an ethical sociability located in pre-colonial African history creates "progressive politics" not found to exist in the ideologies of the colonial project—and delivery of the synthesized research make this scholarly endeavor a success. Scholars in African literature and theory, postcolonial literature, philosophy and anthropology would find in this book invaluable new insights and astute interpretation of the works of these six early twentieth-century African writers.

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**Danielle Constantin. *Masques et mirages: Genèse du roman chez Cortázar, Perec et Villemaire*. Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literatures 162. New York: Peter Lang, 2008. x + 192 pp. 978-1433101298.**

With this work Danielle Constantin, member of the Parisian research group ITEM (Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes), makes an important contribution to the study of *critique génétique*, a critical approach which focuses on the genesis of literary texts. The book has a classic structure: an introductory chapter outlining the history and theory of this analytical strategy; chapters on the *avant-textes* of three postmodern novels (Julio Cortázar's *Rayeula* [1963], George Perec's *La Vie mode d'emploi* [1978], Yolande Villemaire's *La Vie en prose* [1980]); and a conclusion which offers possible paths of future inquiry and briefly discusses how the genesis of literary texts has changed with new instruments of textual production.

The opening chapter (*Contexte et approche*) provides a clear introduction to the theory of *critique génétique* and to its methodology. Constantin situates this approach between two others: on the one hand, the philological criticism of the first half of the twentieth century, and, on the other, structural and poststructural theory. *Critique génétique* rediscovers the literary manuscript, and trains on it the analytical tools developed by late twentieth-century theory. It considers an author's pre-textual work—plans, lists, notes, drafts, drawings, schemas—not as auxiliary material serving to establish a definitive text or to aid in interpreting this text, but as the object itself of research. In short, *critique génétique* studies not the *texte* but the *avant-texte*. Genetic studies assemble a *dossier génétique* (organized typologically and chronologically) which traces the formation of the text from the vague origins of the writing process to the correction of proofs before the final edition. This approach, Constantin affirms, resuscitates the notion of the author, and explores the relations between the author's subjectivity and the text (s)he produces.

For her genetic analyses Constantin has chosen three postmodern novels well-suited to this approach. The *avant-texte* of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (*Hopscotch*) is particularly rich; it consists of interviews and letters, but, most importantly, a *carnet de bord* (logbook) and a typed working manuscript. In the logbook the author has inscribed a variety of texts: scenarios, organizational notes, lists, documentaries, drawings, brief essays. This notebook moves to and fro between memory and anticipation, between what is determined and what is possible. By contrast, the typed manuscript represents a space almost exclusively devoted to editing, where one finds the four basic operations of textual modification: additions, suppressions, displacements, substitutions. The novel's "hopscotch reading" is already present in the typed manuscript, but will be refined in the pre-editorial process. Constantin concludes that Cortázar belongs to those writers whose work does not follow pre-formed plans but takes shape during the "*aventure de la scription*."

Constantin's work on the *avant-texte* of *La Vie mode d'emploi* reveals an altogether different mode of production. Perec was an active member of Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle), a group which aimed to reintroduce the notion of ludic, gratuitous constraint into the process of textual creation; before begin-

ning the composition of this novel, he spent several years constructing a complex armature of rules and obstacles to generate the fiction. The *dossier génétique* established by Constantin contains diagrams, various sketches and notes, formulae and drafts in a variety of single sheets, notebooks, and notepads. At the moment Perec began the writing of the novel he had already generated for each of the projected ninety-nine chapters a list of forty-two constituent elements. The work went quickly thereafter: in eighteen months the book was completed. While much of the text was pre-programmed, Constantin finds signs in the typescript of several important modifications emerging during the process of composition: namely, the disappearance of the first-person narrator through a series of textual ruses which effectively camouflage the writer's subjectivity.

Yolande Villemaire's *La Vie en prose* poses a challenge to the methods of *critique génétique*. Constantin acknowledges that identifying its web of autobiographical material may be a futile task. The novel's *dossier génétique* consists of twenty notebooks of different types and formats. All contain a variety of texts: letters, diary entries, glosses, fragments of stories, scenarios, drawings, pieces of literary criticism, as well as sketches of other projects. This material contains evidence of the various linguistic operations, notably anagrams and onamastic games, that Villemaire has deployed to generate her text. The mixing of voices results in a kind of static which renders impossible any attempt to distinguish one narrator from another. Constantin concludes that one does not consult the manuscripts of *La Vie en Prose* to unravel the meanderings of its discourse or its story, but instead to show how this novelistic material has been assembled during the genesis of the text.

Danielle Constantin's book accomplishes two goals. It provides an excellent introduction to a critical method, and very intelligently discusses three rich works of postmodern fiction.

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**David G. Nicholls, ed. *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures.* Third edition. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2007. ix + 370 pp. 978-0873525985.**

Though not meant solely for comparatists, the third edition of *Introduction to Scholarship* indicates how widely an interest in comparative approaches has spread among literature and language scholars. Sponsored by the Modern Language Association and written mainly for North American graduate students and faculty, the book surveys recent scholarship in fifteen emerging or reinvigorated fields under the headings of "Understanding Language," "Forming Texts," and "Reading Literature and Culture." Given that only six of the MLA's eighty-six research divisions deal explicitly with comparative study, it is striking how much prominence comparative issues and concerns actually receive.

For the first time, this edition of the book features a chapter on our field. Michael Holquist, professor emeritus of Slavic and comparative literature at Yale

and a recent president of the MLA, begins with the familiar story of European origins. He then recalls the primacy of comparatists during the "age of theory," crediting East Europeans like Jakobson and Ingarden alongside the better-known French influences. Among recent developments, he singles out world literature (Damrosch and Moretti), globalism and postcoloniality (Said, Spivak, and Emily Apter), and cultural studies (especially psychoanalytic elaborations and literary/legal studies), along with the East Asian scholarship of Stephen Owen, Pauline Yu, Haun Saussy, and Lydia Liu. Meanwhile, Jean Franco's coverage of cultural studies as a field in its own right has a comparatist slant, not only because she distinguishes between its British origins and its evolution in the United States, but because she draws a further distinction between these English-language versions and Latin American cultural studies. In this regard Franco's perspective complements the volume's opening chapter on bilingualism, which, with Doris Sommer's focus on interaction between two of the Western hemisphere's major languages, celebrates a linguistic phenomenon at the heart of comparatist practice.

The lack of a chapter on literary theory, obligatory in this book's shorter editions of 1981 and 1992, could signal the topic's relative decline, except that theory figures in a more differentiated way in many chapters, especially the ones on "Rhetoric" and "Historical Scholarship." The cross-cultural range of these chapters varies, but even if none achieves the global scope envisioned by Holquist, they do address such theory-related topics as the fruitfulness of continental European philosophies and the continued impact of Foucault and new historicism. Of more immediate interest for comparatists, however, are Lawrence Venuti's chapter on "Translation Studies" and Bruce Robbins's on "The Scholar in Society," with their attention to issues of linguistic difference, intercultural communication and transfer, and the many sociocultural dimensions of literary study.

Robbins's comments on the decline of literary nationalism are addressed in greater empirical depth by Susan Stanford Friedman. Her chapter on "Migrations, Diasporas, and Borders," the most detailed in this volume, surveys a rich array of recent work on these topics, which are, of course, of special interest to many comparatists. Françoise Lionnet, the incoming vice president of the American Comparative Literature Association, assisted Anne Donadey with a chapter on "Feminisms, Genders, Sexualities," whose critique of culture-bound conceptions of these subjects in favor of transnationality, postcoloniality, globalization, and "inner" third worlds represents a particularly forceful expression of comparativism. A companion chapter on "Race and Ethnicity," by Kenneth Warren, addresses the current status of this fraught biocultural border while commenting on work in a "globalist" vein by Appiah, Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and others.

Despite its notable broadening of horizons, *Introduction to Scholarship* unavoidably reflects its North American origins. Nonetheless, its informative accounts of lively research and debate, along with bibliographies that helpfully document that work, should provide a valuable resource for comparatists.

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# COMPTES RENDUS DES REVUES, DES PROJETS, ET DES CONGRÈS /

# REVIEWS OF JOURNALS, PROJECTS, AND CONFERENCES

## The Many Faces of Diaspora

***Comparative Literature Studies* 45.1 ( 2008). "East-West: Diasporic Writings of Asia." Reiko Tachibana and Kimio Takahashi, eds. 0010-4132.**

Given the relatively few good venues for research output in East-West studies, *Comparative Literature Studies* is to be commended for regularly (every two years) running a special East-West issue in collaboration with scholars at Nihon University in Japan. The first number of 2008 is the most recent East-West issue, and the thematic idea that connects its diverse essays, as the editors, Reiko Tachibana and Kimio Takahashi, put it, "is the authors' emphasis on the concept of diaspora as a historic, complex, and continuing phenomenon" (1). The concept of diaspora is now widely used in a broad sense, quite different from the more restricted sense of a forced scattering of a community in foreign lands. In literary studies, diaspora often refers to works by authors who may choose to live in a social and cultural environment different from the places of their origin, rather than exiles or political émigrés involuntarily dwelling in an alien country. In fact, some of the authors writing or discussed in this special issue are not immigrants, but descendants of immigrants, whose consciousness of living in-between cultures becomes increasingly acute in a social and political milieu in which their cultural or "transnational identity" (5) is highlighted.

Born in America and grown up speaking English as her native language, and yet yearning for deeper understanding of her cultural "roots," Karen Tei Yamashita, a Japanese American writer living in California and writing about Brazil, effectively articulated the dilemma of such "diasporic" authors when she says: "We struggle with our own sense of pride, power and authority over language, but realize that there is an absence of history and culture when language is not translated. . . . We may have good English, but work with poor memory, with filtered memory, with the dubious nature of memory and history told by succeeding generations" (9). The questioning of the superficial glibness of language without culture and

history implies an anxiety of authenticity, a desire for rootedness in one's ethnic identity with a real sense of culture and tradition. It is in language and translation, as Yamashita suggests, that the unproblematic identity of a Japanese American writer opens up for a more self-reflective consideration or scrutiny.

Another writer, Yoko Tawada, however, offers a different way of questioning language. "To me language is a contradiction," she says. In silence, the poet and the world seem to be united as one body, but in language, says Tawada, "I am a speaking subject and the tree seems to me like an object that is being described but that can't utter any words on its own. At first, a poem seems to be a spoken voice but in reality it shifts between silence and talking" (19). Questions of language, silence, the separation of the *cogito* and the object are of course central to much of contemporary theorizing in the West, so not surprisingly, her interlocutor, Bettina Brandt, relates Tawada's work to theoretical concepts proposed by Derrida, Blanchot, and the poetry of Mallarmé. That seems reasonable, but one may wonder in what sense *A Poem for a Book*, a collaborative work produced by Yoko Tawada with Stephen Köhler and Clemens-Tobias Lange, can be considered "diasporic"? Is it simply because Tawada is Japanese by birth? But if so, is that a sufficient reason to categorize an author as "diasporic"? What does "diaspora" mean in such international and interracial collaborations?

In his essay on an internationally successful Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami, Matthew Richard Chozick begins by quoting Masao Miyoshi who claims that Murakami is writing not about Japan, but "what the foreign [book] buyers like to see in it." He also quotes the Japanese Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe as saying that "Murakami writes in Japanese, but his writing isn't really Japanese. . . . It can be read very naturally in New York" (62). In contrast to such disparaging Japanese views, says Chozick, "American reviewers often treat the author's fiction as inseparable from his cultural heritage" (62). In other words, Murakami looks "Japanese" to his American reviewers, but "foreign" in the eyes of his Japanese readers. It is true that nowadays some writers and movie directors in Japan, China, India, and other Asian countries are trying to make their works internationally successful by maneuvering motifs, images, genres, and perspectives, making use of localized Asian features, but always with an eye to a global or international—which often means Western—audience and their taste. The Chinese film director Zhang Yimou readily comes to mind as an example. Chozick makes a plea, however, for "de-exoticizing" Murakami's reception and argues that to consider him as not Japanese enough "is to conceptualize identity based on a nationalistic paradigm that may no longer hold much value" (72-73). To transcend nationalistic paradigms in this age of globalization might look like a critic's ideal, but exoticism may well be a deliberate effort, a strategy for international success on the part of the writer, rather than a stigma to be shunned in the work's reception.

Moreover, "diaspora" as a concept is predicated precisely on a nationalistic paradigm; therefore, it makes little sense to consider writers like Murakami under that rubric. Indeed, in discussing another successful writer, Vikram Chandra, Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru makes it clear at the outset that Chandra is "a

member of that already famous category called NRI (non-resident Indian) writers, who write about India while living outside it most of the time" (23). As a NRI, Chandra writes about India, but "his India is defined by a permanent contact with his country of origin, but also by his positioning at a distance, through the fact that he is now based in the United States" (23). It is in this context that Alexandru proceeds to analyze Chandra's novel with such Western theoretical concepts as performance and performativity, speech act theory, and nomadism, all purporting to explore "ways of imagining the self outside geographical and political restrictions created by binary center-margin oppositions" (38).

If Murakami and Chandra are contemporary writers whose works are discussed under a stretched notion of "diaspora," Saburo Sato extends the current usage of "diaspora" to works in the past, arguing that "[i]n this global age, when postmodern and transnational tendencies are expected to increase in literature, many past and present masters merit review using the latest criteria." The "diasporic perspective" is certainly one of the latest critical tools applicable, says Sato, not only to "many major writers who physically crossed national and cultural borders in real life," but also to "their protagonists whose diasporic lives reveal a broader range of worldviews and human relations hitherto undetected by traditional approaches" (90). Using such a perspective, Sato reinterprets Shimazaki Tôson's (1872-1943) novel, *Hakai* or *The Broken Commandment*, as "giving birth to a Japanese version of literature of the diaspora" (91). In this case, not the author, but the novel's protagonist, a young school teacher by the name of Ushimatsu, moved to Texas and thereby crossed national and cultural borders. According to Sato, *The Broken Commandment* has traditionally been understood as "a Japanese trailblazer in naturalism" (91); thus his reinterpretation of this novel as "a harbinger of literature of the diaspora in the global age to come" (103) must appear stimulatingly new. An overly broad extension of the "diasporic perspective," however, may be problematic when we apply the concept to any work in which the protagonist travels to foreign countries. Is *Gulliver's Travels* or *Robinson Crusoe* a diasporic novel? Is *Mandeville's Travels* diasporic? Or even the James Bond movies? Does it make sense to dilate and, of necessity, also dilute the notion of "diaspora" to the *n*-th degree? Where do we draw the line? How do we confine the notion to make it meaningful?

What I find most peculiar in this special issue is Valerie Henitiuk's highly speculative essay with a provocative title: "Going to Bed with Waley." It is not, however, about Arthur Waley, the renowned poet and translator of Chinese and Japanese literature, but about an imaginary, non-existent translation of the great Japanese novel, the *Tale of Genji*, by Virginia Woolf! Now *The Tale of Genji* is generally attributed to Murasaki Shikibu, a noblewoman living in early 11th-century Japan, and Arthur Waley's multi-volume translation has often been hailed as a great achievement. Despite his linguistic expertise and good intention "to place the tale firmly among the classics of world literature," Arthur Waley, according to Henitiuk, nevertheless turned the ancient world of the Japanese classic "into that of British public school boys" (42). Since Waley's version (1921-33), there have

been several attempts at translation by Edward Seidensticker, Richard Bowring (not mentioned by Henitiuk), Royall Tyler, and others, but apparently none of these is judged satisfactory by Henitiuk. The reason: none of the male translators could have empathetically assumed Murasaki Shikibu's and Virginia Woolf's status of "wom[e]n of sensibility," which, Henitiuk reminds the reader by quoting Catherine Nelson-McDermott, "allowed Woolf to 'bridge . . . the cultural and epochal lacunae' separating her from Murasaki Shikibu" (43). So forget about linguistic expertise: it would take a great feminist writer like Virginia Woolf to fully understand and translate into English the *Tale of Genji*, which is understood as the work of a proto-feminist. "Had she known Japanese and been tempted to translate this tale," Henitiuk speculates, "Woolf would have been uniquely positioned to reveal many proto-feminist aspects of the *Genji*, and thereby able to craft a world literature text belonging solidly within a feminocentric discourse tradition" (44).

The sad fact is of course that Woolf did not know Japanese and had not attempted to translate the *Tale of Genji*, so "it must be ranked as an irreparable loss to women's writing and a global female tradition," Henitiuk laments, "that Woolf was never able, metaphorically speaking, to go to bed with Murasaki Shikibu herself" (59). Despite the homoerotic innuendos, the "irreparable loss" is more imagined than real, however, as Virginia Woolf cannot possibly be the only female translator of *Genji*. Presumably other "women of sensibility" might have given the world a translation just as ideal as Woolf's in imagination, particularly when knowledge of Japanese is not required. Giving imagination full play, Judith Shakespeare could have done it, Mary Wollstonecraft could have done it, and so could Adrienne Rich. The speculative possibilities are endless for imaginative essays like Henitiuk's to grace the pages of *CLS*'s future issues. After all, we cannot rule out the possibility of a truly excellent translator in the future equipped with both the sensibility of a Murasaki Shikibu and the adequate knowledge of the Japanese language, literature, and culture.

In contradistinction to Henitiuk's essay on Woolf and Shikibu as pure speculation, the essay by Kader Konuk on Erich Auerbach in Turkey is solidly grounded in compelling historical circumstances of the 1930s when Turkey's modernization reform coincided with the rise of National Socialism in Germany and the dismissal of Jewish academics from German universities. Here is a real case of a diasporic author and great comparatist displaced from Marburg in 1935 to Istanbul, where he wrote his major work, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, before moving to the United States in 1947. Different from Edward Said's portrayal of Auerbach as "an isolated, dislocated, and estranged European intellectual in an Oriental world," Konuk shows quite effectively that Istanbul for Auerbach "was also a place with a familiar history. . . . linked to the classical heritage of Western Europe" (75). Turkish reformers made drastic measures to sever all ties with the nation's Ottoman past and to Europeanize the education system. The Turkish Minister for Education at the time, Resit Galip, took advantage of the political situation in Germany and recruited humanist scholars like Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach. "While humanist scholarship was being destroyed

by the National Socialist apparatus and many of its most respected scholars were fleeing Europe," says Konuk, "Galip welcomed the possibility for the rebirth of European culture in Turkey. . . . By hiring these European scholars, Galip hoped that Europe's heritage could be returned to its birthplace" (79).

At the same time, the modernization reform in Turkey was also a nationalist movement predicated on a construction of the Turkish identity as European. For Auerbach as a humanist with high ideas of cosmopolitanism and aesthetic historicism, this was dubious at best, and he was critical of Turkey's effort to cut itself off from its Ottoman legacy and thus to lose its historical and cultural roots. Auerbach's ambivalence, as Konuk observes, "stemmed from the fact that the Turkish vision of modernity was not only inherently linked to nationalism but also informed by racial beliefs and by anti-Semitism" (85). Konuk's essay makes it possible for the reader to imagine the diasporic situation Auerbach found himself in, when he was forced to leave the place of his origin and dwelled in a country that offered him a temporary home and the opportunity to make significant contributions to the establishment of a humanistic education system. In this essay, we come to understand diaspora in its different dimensions, with both the possibility of a new life and the anxiety of displacement, the precarious situation of an uprooted existence.

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## Ekphrasis: A Common Ground for Intermediality

**Susana González Aktories and Irene Artigas Albarelli, eds. *Entre artes/entre actos: ecfrasis e intermedialidad* [Between the Arts/Between the Acts: Ekphrasis and Intermediality]. México: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM, 2009. Forthcoming.**

Questions regarding intermediality keep on arising whenever one attempts to analyze a literary text that clearly manifests its will to maintain a steady dialogue with other arts. The exchanges between scholars and postgraduate students, held both at public presentations, such as colloquia, as well as at different courses in the Graduate Program of Literature at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), regarding ekphrasis are no exception. They have shaped and reshaped this ongoing theoretical dialogue and became the main drive for preparing the volume *Entre artes/entre actos: ecfrasis e intermedialidad*.

The forthcoming anthology combines various theoretical and practical approaches to ekphrasis in different genres (poetry, narrative, and drama) and with regard to different media (painting, sculpture, film, and the performing arts, particularly music), in an attempt to confirm the pertinence and applicability of these approaches. Its main intention, which we also believe to be a fundamental contribution, is to multiply, sharpen, and attempt to answer certain issues emerging from intermedial relations. The compilation is therefore an addition to those comparative studies that hold that critical thought works according to the notion of likeness

as expressed through the formation of metaphors, analogies, and models, as well as to those studies that hold that theory should be able to explain practical facts.

Our aim with this anthology is not only to show the interest in ekphrasis within comparative literature but also to deepen the study of the subject. Readers of the book will see that there remain new challenges to the study of this rich and at the same time complex and controversial notion. Joined by a common desire to develop a systematic approach to interartistic discourses, the articles that comprise this book have been distributed in different sections according to their topics, which should however not be considered restrictive and exclusive, since there are multiple links among the different essays, even beyond the borders that apparently separate each section. The anthology begins with a chapter called "In Theory," which includes the Spanish translation of two fundamental texts: Valerie Robillard's "In Pursuit of Ekphrasis (An Intertextual Approach)" (1998) and an extract from Siglind Bruhn's book *Musical Ekphrasis* (2000). They are both landmarks for the essays that follow, revealing that most of the book's theoretical background has sprung from ideas discussed in these two texts.

The section "From Poetry to the Plastic Arts: Two-Way Roads" includes a glimpse at the similarity between ekphrastic intentions and the iconotextuality of visual poetry; a reflection on ekphrastic hope and memory; and the symphonic orchestration of female stereotypes in some interartistic transpositions from the nineteenth century. María Andrea Giovine speculates about re-presentation and our awareness of the material essence of the plastic object used as source of inspiration. In a concrete example, "Brancusi" (1960) by Jiri Kólar, she shows one of the margins of ekphrasis: visual poetry as the literalization of the desire to make us see, the simulation of poetry melting with/into sculpture.

Irene Artigas Albarelli approaches the role of ekphrasis in *A la pintura* by Rafael Alberti (1968), and analyzes its references to painting as topical evocations, allusions, acts of naming, descriptions, and structural analogies. She finds that they are all forms of memory, amulets against a world that is coming apart. Alberti's use of the paradoxes connected with still life, together with the power of invocation attributed to words, are seen as fundamental features of ekphrastic hope, and of the flow of nostalgia implicit in exile. Hilda Domínguez, for her part, weaves a text that flows from painting to poetry to music, from Gautier to Whistler to Swinburne. Analyzing tonalities, reflexes, and reflections, she shows the role of intermedial analogies in shaping the particular representation of the *femme fatale* at a very precise moment.

The collection continues with a section, "From Canvas to Body to Screen," that focuses on a different literary genre, namely narrative. The first essay, by Coral Velázquez, is closely connected with the previous section: it provides another approach to "Symphonie in Blanc Majeur" by Gautier, but the comparison is now with "Blanco y rojo" (1897) [White and Red], a short story by the Mexican writer Bernardo Couto Castillo. Guided by the notion of ekphrasis, the author underlines the symphonic structure of both creations and how it is used to present different aesthetics. The value of this musical concept becomes crucial for Velázquez, allowing her to move across different literary contexts, genres, and media. Present-

ing this approach right after Domínguez's essay provides an invitation to reflect on female re-presentation in such different historical and cultural moments. Continuing with the topic of the observation and representation of the human body, this time however from an entirely different viewpoint, Manuel Stephens shows how this topic may be pushed to a critical limit. In Enrique Serna's short story "Hombre con minotauro en el pecho" (1991) [Man with Minotaur on the Chest], the body becomes an ideological matter, a synesthesia that blends the subject's identity and the artistic fetish. A plot that at first seemed to be simple, even naïf, becomes a nightmarish sentence of/for the narrator, who experiences in flesh and blood how society values art (the aesthetic object) above humanity (the subject).

The following essay, by Ariadna Molinari, exemplifies a different type of ekphrasis with regard to representation of the human, this time focusing on the individual as a literary re-presentation and the construction of a character in a narrative discourse. Molinari argues that it is through references to pictorial models that Lezama Lima is able to create the characters in *Paradiso* (1966). What Molinari considers to be Lezama's ekphrastic approaches are based upon the visible and invisible dimension of poetic and plastic images, features that are central to his understanding of art. His characters, far from being realistic or mimetic, are allegories or archetypes full of symbolism, metaphors for wholeness. Arturo Vallejo's study, for its part, focuses on cinematographic ekphrasis by Carlos Noriega Hope (1923) and Juan Bustillo Oro (1925), and is built around the notion of cinema as dream, its relation to realism, and how ekphrastic fragments transcend the mere description of what is viewed on screen, representing cinema as a whole social practice, within a broader narrative that is articulated through specific topics and structures. Moreover, the essay points out the importance of ekphrasis with regard to a form of artistic expression which, for obvious reasons, was not originally seen as literary in nature: cinema, as both the technological development and the seventh art, a form of expression that has since proved to play a major role in our living and interpersonal experiences.

"Stages of the Ekphrastic: from Theatre to Performance to Song" is the section devoted to questioning the utility of considering drama, performances, and songs as intermedial discourses that can also present certain ekphrastic strategies. It starts off with Magdalena Okhuysen's essay on Euripides' *Medea*, which focuses on the messenger's episode in the fifth act to show how the dramatic flow and the nature of the stage are transformed. She claims that this transformation happens because at this point the messenger adopts the role of a narrator who has to announce, to the actors on stage as well as to the audience, a shocking and dramatic scene that develops off stage, which becomes decisive not only in terms of the impressions and reactions it provokes, but also with regard to the whole outcome of the play. The boundaries of reality are erased and the horrified glance of those who are watching (and hearing) is prepared to attest to the entrance of the realm of the fantastic. Okhuysen's use of the notion of ekphrasis explains features of the play that have puzzled critics for years. With a shift in tone from the strictly dramatic to the more humorous, Patricia Vega's subsequent essay explores the parodies of the Mexican female singer and performer Astrid Hadad, where

well-known Mexican popular songs are staged along with an array of gestures that include theatrical, musical, and visual elements. Vega emphasizes the need to use intermediality as a guide to the richness of these performances that are literally "making us see." It is striking that, again, the shift to ekphrasis can produce new ways of reading/seeing/hearing. This section closes with a text by Gabriela Hernández Merino, who analyzes a song, "The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke" by the rock group Queen (1974), which alludes to a picture by Richard Dadd. Hernández Merino coins the term ekphrastic song, which represents something broader than merely combining traditional and musical ekphrasis. Her analysis of the intersection of music, word, and pictorial image shows that we need to develop new methodological tools and clearly presents itself as one of them.

The following section, "Musical Evocations in Literary Texts," features essays where the musical references establish a variety of relationships and condense a broad array of social values and symbolic functions. Meztli Ávila deals with the way a poem, "A un pájaro de nombre Charlie" (2001) [To a Bird Named Charlie] by Jorge Eielson, synthesizes, in a very few lines and through pitch and style, the emblematic figure of Charlie Parker and through it a whole style of jazz and even a socio-cultural context. The result is both a fragmentary and integral portrait of the musician and his works. The naming of musicians, specific works, sounds, and moods becomes the main tool for creating different types of aural images throughout the poem. Moving from poetry back to narrative, the article by Emma Paola Aguirre studies how the representation of music in *Chattanooga Choo Choo* (1973), by José Donoso, alludes to an age when the female role was changing and where the shift of female stereotypes seemed to be both valid and anachronistic. Through the transference of cultural values and the use of music to evoke and condense those social and historic values, the image of the woman as machine collapses. In a parallel to Meztli Ávila's discussion of the similarly named poem, Marcela Reyna analyzes Luis Rafael Sánchez' fictionalization of the popular bolero singer Daniel Santos in his novel *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* (1989) [The Importance of Being Called Daniel Santos]. Through biographical references and the use of the *bolero* genre as a symbol of erotic closeness, sensual cadences, and courtly modern and idealized love, Sánchez' novel exposes the sentimental-musical-cultural education of "some geographies." María Ángeles Zapata's study closes this section by comparing two novels that present and re-present a leading pianist from the second half of the 20th century, Canadian musician Glenn Gould and his emblematic interpretation of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. These novels are *The Loser* (1983), by Thomas Bernhard, and *El rastro* (2002) [The Wake], by Margo Glantz. Through a taxonomical recounting of the musical elements present in both novels, Zapata shows how the effects of description vary substantially, resulting either in a "choral novel," where this music is perceived as a setting to another story, or in a text where it becomes the essence and the reason for a dramatic outcome.

The anthology ends with "Literary Echoes and Sound Images," a fascinating section that focuses on literature as a pre-text to music as well as on the extended concept of musical ekphrasis in strictly instrumental pieces. Jorge Cuevas starts

by analyzing the implications of the representation of Edgar Rice Burroughs as an icon in an electronic musical piece by the duet Matmos from San Francisco, California, USA (2006). According to him, literary language is transformed through a "machinic" structuring of "iconic sounds" alluding to Burroughs' autobiography and figure. The result is a musical ekphrasis that underlines the economy of musical language and its capacity to produce meaning: although sound does not form a clear and detailed narrative, it can effectively portray and synthesize the life of this emblematic American writer. Susana González Aktories and Roberto Kolb's essay pinpoints the processes and levels of ekphrastic representation in "Sensemayá," Silvestre Revueltas's re-creation (1937/1938) of Nicolás Guillén's work with the same title (1932). By approaching the paratextual and intertextual (both structural and cultural) strategies which link the oeuvre of the Cuban poet and the Mexican composer, they are able to show the extent to which the cultural context is actually responsible for ekphrastic signification. They thereby make us aware of the social processes that are enacted in these types of interartistic transformations.

From the above, it is easy to see some of the qualities of *Entre artes/entre actos*. It is a book that makes available, for the first time in Spanish, two texts by the leading researchers of ekphrasis in recent years. In addition, by drawing most of its literary and artistic examples from the Hispanic tradition, it connects this tradition with that trend in comparative literature that is concerned with interartistic issues. Such connections are still very rare. Furthermore, the book gives a voice to young researchers who are showing how much remains to add to the discussion of ekphrasis. As we attempt to demonstrate with the variety of our examples, ekphrasis is an approach to literature and the other arts that reveals with great clarity the impossibility of understanding the visual, verbal, and audible realms apart from each other. Finally, we should say that we pursued this project in the strong belief that its contents can help us realize that, despite the conventionality of the values we give to each of our signs, it is through the emergence of always new, fascinating, and complex processes, in this case from continuous interartistic dialogue, that these conventions may be re-transformed into essences.

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***Knowledge and transformation: Social and Human Sciences in Africa.*** **Draft papers from the Symposium held at the Spier Centre, Stellenbosch, South Africa, Nov. 27-28, 2008, in connection with the 27th General Assembly of the International Social Science Council and the 29th General Assembly of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies.**

One should probably apologize for drawing attention to what is not a book in the formal sense and perhaps never will be. Sets of conference proceedings take a very long time to edit and publish; increasingly, they tend to contain selected materials rather than complete accounts.[1] But by not drawing attention to such events as this recent conference in South Africa, we might be depriving the readers of *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research* of the kind of dynamic, compelling,

innovative discussion of interest to the Comparative Literature community that it has been, from the start, the aim of this publication to supply to its readers.[2] The successive editors have tried over time to endow the ICLA with a journal of its own, and to begin by focusing it on reviews because the response would be more lively and diverse, and more rapid, than if it became a conventional journal with thematic issues; and because reviews would be a direct way for scholars to make their new work known, and be informed of the work of others, internationally.

Reviewing a set of draft papers is perhaps an even more radical step in that direction. Our excuse is that the conference in question was co-organized by the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (in French, Conseil international de la philosophie et des sciences humaines, most often designated by the acronym CIPSH), which under UNESCO links together a large number of federations of international learned societies in the Humanities field, including the International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures (best known by its French acronym FILLM), of which, in turn, the ICLA (and the MLA) are members. The conference brought together CIPSH and its sister organization, the International Social Science Council; both were hosted by the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa.

The title of the symposium expressed its hope to help clarify the role of the "human sciences," i. e., what we call the Humanities together with what we call the Social Sciences, as suppliers and guardians of knowledge in the transformation process which Africa is undergoing. It is significant that no foreword or preface opens the proceedings: no authoritative voice takes it upon itself to dictate the itinerary. Instead we are offered two bundles of work in progress unified only by the fact that the field of inquiry is Africa. That, however, turns out to be a very powerful unifying factor. Academic discourse everywhere has a tendency to generate confidence in the universal applicability of its own findings and theories; and that, by the same token, may affect its epistemological standing when it explores radically new phenomena; all the more since, in the case at hand, postcolonial realities have been changing from one African generation to the next. For example, earlier Nigerian poetry "emphasized a rootedness in cultural tradition and deployed the idioms of myth, ritual and archetype as structuring and unifying devices" whereas the more recent poets "reside within the conflicted terrain of the unresolved, acknowledging incoherences, contradictions, and multiplicities without seeking the resolution and coherence that a grand narrative provides."[3] These "third generation" poets seem to negate the earlier image of "African citizenship anchored in a nation-space with useable pasts and identitarian national narratives." They are more likely to be "migritude writers," members of an "antination" moving between Europe and America. This exemplifies the difficulty of theorizing upon postcolonial poetry on the basis of superficially global concepts of postcolonial literature.

A paper entitled "Against Alterity—the Pursuit of Endogeneity: Breaking Bread with Archie Mafeje" by Jimi O. Adésinà goes, perhaps, further than most of the others towards severing contemporary African thought from the kind of

"othering" that would (even unconsciously, and with the best intentions) freeze African concepts and institutions into a biassed non-Europeanity; because, as the author puts it, "alterity . . . is foundational to labelling one community of people a 'tribe'; another a nation." Following in the footsteps of Mafeje, whose work he analyzes, Adésinà calls for "an uncompromising refutation of the epistemology of alterity which has shaped modes of gazing and writing about Africa and Africans." Anthropology is particularly at risk of continuing to "other" its objects of study, inasmuch as its descriptions tend to follow the "alterity" route, taking its clues from a post-Enlightenment image of non-European peoples. In other words, it is not the validity of epistemology in general which is at stake, but one-sided adherence to a fixed viewpoint, which if anything is a betrayal of the critical goals of epistemology itself. For a start, "postmodernism's pretension to being against grand narrative ended up erecting a grand narrative of its own." To this we might of course reply that an absolute stand against grand narratives ever might result in an even grander narrative, etc. . . . But Adésinà is aware of that danger as well; all he claims for African scholarship is the freedom to pursue endogeneity, that is, scholarship from within; and such an approach, on a global scale, would lead to a welcome polycentrism rather than to homogenization.

It is therefore not surprising that another paper, "Renegotiating Agency in Knowledge Production, Innovation, and Africa's Development in the Context of the Triage Society," by C. A. Odora Hoppers, brings into the debate the very meaning of globalization. Hegemonic globalization draws Africa, and we might say the entire "global South," into a development mode which has technological and economic efficiency as its main criterion, and easily slides into exploitation of the seemingly less successful. In this metaphorical triage science itself can become a means of exploitation, an exploitation which could be averted if the endogeneity rule were applied; if, for example, innovation "from below" is allowed to occur, and this means "full participation of all producers of knowledge including in informal settings of rural areas."

These are mere samples of the way in which every paper in this very broad compendium contributes to characterizing Africanity in a global context, seeking to shed light on complementariness, be it competitive, rather than exclusivity. For example, the now widely used concept of diaspora enables scholars to study and re-historicize African elements on all continents; metaphorically at least, the Caribbean is examined as "the sixth region of Africa," with enriching attention to "indigenous knowledge" in both regions. And, somehow, the Humanities come into their own vis-à-vis the Social Sciences because the criterion of endogeneity makes room for new research into the human aspects of world pressures on societies, such as the plight of linguistic diversity, the redefining of archival practices and knowledge, the tensions between xenophobia and the search for identity, the creation of cooperative methods, and policies for monitoring educational quality . . .

Potentially, *Knowledge and Transformation* contains not just one future book, but many.

Eva Kushner, *University of Toronto* (Canada).

## ENDNOTES

1 In this regard, ICLA proceedings have evolved considerably from triennial congress to triennial congress; until the early 90s editors felt duty-bound to retrace full accounts of deliberations so that the history of Comparative Literature studies would be available for classroom use in this form. Gradually, attention has focussed more on the specific problematics of each volume rather than its institutional linkages.

2 *RL/LR* began very modestly in 1982, in preparation for the ICLA congress in New York, as *Information AILC/ICLA,* under the editorship of Marc Angenot and Eva Kushner at McGill University; it was later split into the *Bulletin* and *RL/LR.* From 1987 the latter was edited in Toronto by E. K. and Roseann Runte. It then moved to the University of Western Ontario (London, Ont.) with Calin Mihailescu as editor, and later to the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (Porto Alegre, Brazil) with Philippe Daros of Université de Paris III (Sorbonne Nouvelle) and Lúcia Sá Rebello of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul as editors. It has now found a home at George Mason University with John Burt Foster as editor.

3 Harry Garuba, in "The Unbearable Lightness of Being: Re-Figuring Trends in Recent Nigerian Poetry" (2005), quoted by Pius Adesanmi in "Power Narratives: Citizenship, Nation and Anti-nation in African Literatures."

# NOTICES BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES SUR LES COLLABORATEURS / BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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## AVIS AUX COLLABORATEURS PROSPECTIFS
### *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research*

En tant que publication de l'Association Internationale de la Littérature Comparée, *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research* a comme but de communiquer aux comparatistes du monde entier les développements récents de notre discipline. Dans ce but la revue publie les comptes rendus des livres notables sur les sujets comparatistes, les nouvelles des congrès professionels et d'autres événements d'une importance significative pour nos membres, et de temps en temps 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.

Les comptes rendus sont typiquement écrits ou en français ou en anglais, les deux langues officielles de l'AILC. Néanmoins, on pourrait faire quelques exceptions étant donné les limites des ressources à la disposition du rédacteur. En général, un compte rendu prendra une des formes suivantes: des annonces brèves de 500 à 800 mots pour les livres courts ou rélativement spécialisés, des comptes rendus proprement dits de 1200 à 1500 mots pour les livres plus longs ou 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 accomplir une étude assez large de certains sujets comparatistes, *RL / LR* acceptera les comptes rendus de recueils d'essais bien organisés, y compris les numéros spéciaux des revues. Nous sommes prêts à publier les comptes rendus un peu plus longs de ces textes quand la situation le demande.

Ceux qui voudraient écrire un compte rendu pour la revue sont priés de considérer les besoins d'un public international de comparatistes. Par conséquent 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 qui sont en train de faire la recherche sur le même sujet. Il faut que les comptes rendus 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 de l'oeuvre en question, qui explique (par exemple) comment un telle oeuvre traite de son sujet, ce qu'elle ajoute à notre connaissance, et s'il reste des questions importantes qui rendraient nécessaire une nouvelle étude.

Avant de commencer à écrire un compte rendu, nos collaborateurs prospectifs sont priés de communiquer leurs projets au rédacteur, à <recherch@gmu.edu>. Veuillez envoyer le compte rendu lui-même comme message en fichier annexe à la même adresse, sans format supplémentaire qui doit être enlevé lors de la préparation du document pour l'imprimerie. Au cas où il serait impossible de communiquer électroniquement, on pourrait m'écrire à l'adresse suivante: J.B. Foster, Editor *RL / LR*, MSN 3E4 (English Dept.), George Mason University, Fairfax VA 22030-4444, USA.

[ For English, please see the next page. ]

## INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS
### *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research*

As a publication of the International Comparative Literature Association, *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research* has the mission of informing 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 occasional 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 two official languages of the ICLA, though exceptions will be considered within the limits allowed by the editor's resources. Reviews generally fall into one of the following three categories: book notes of 500 to 800 words for short or relatively specialized works, reviews of 1200 to 1500 words for longer works of greater scope, and review essays of 2000 to 3000 words for a work of major significance for the field or for joint treatment of several related works. Given the importance of collaborative work in promoting broad-based comparative scholarship, *RL / LR* does review well-conceived edited volumes, including special issues of journals, and will publish somewhat longer reviews of such scholarship when the situation merits.

Contributors need to take the needs of an international audience of comparatists into account. Reviews should therefore be readable, informative, and judicious. They need to be readable so that they will be accessible to a general comparatist readership, not just to specialists who are researching that specific topic. 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 gain a broader sense of their field our readers need a reasoned, thoughtful evaluation of (for example) how the work in question approaches its subject, what it adds to our knowledge, and whether important issues remain that would repay further study.

Before undertaking to write a review, prospective contributors should inform the editor of their plans at <recherch@gmu.edu>. The reviews themselves should be sent as e-mail attachments to the same address, without extra formatting of the kind that must be found and removed during the publication process. Should e-mail contact be impossible, address all correspondence to J.B. Foster, Editor *RL / LR*, MSN 3E4 (English Dept.), George Mason University, Fairfax VA 22030-4444, USA.

[ Veuillez voir la page précédente pour le texte français. ]

# 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 2010 ICLA Congress in Seoul, South Korea for an outstanding first book in comparative literature studies by a single author under 40 years of age. Books published from January 2007 through December 2009 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.

3. Books that are not in English or French, the official languages of the ICLA, should be accompanied by a summary in English or French of at least 2000 words.

4. The author may propose him- or herself for the Prize, preferably with a recommendation by a former dissertation or research supervisor or by a senior comparatist. Any member of the ICLA may also propose candidates for the Prize. However, it is exclusively the responsibility of the author to provide Professor Steven P. Sondrup, Secretary of the ICLA, with three copies of the book—or one copy and two photocopies of it—as well as three copies of the accompanying letter and of the recommendation before January 2, 2010. In principle the books will not be returned; they will be donated to a library or be given another appropriate destination. The author should also provide a permanent mailing address as well as an email address to the ICLA Secretary. Professor Sondrup's mailing address is Box 26118, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602-6118, USA

5. The winner will be invited to attend the ICLA Congress in order to receive the award. Travel costs will be reimbursed by the ICLA Treasurer up to a maximum of US$1000.