Literature and the Making of the World

Cosmopolitan Texts, Vernacular Practices

EDITED BY

Stefan Helgesson, Helena Bodin
& Annika Mörte Alling

BLOOMSBURY

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Cosmopolitan–Vernacular Dynamics in World Literatures

The four books in this limited series are an outcome of a major Swedish research project called 'Cosmopolitan–Vernacular Dynamics in World Literatures', the aim of which has been to intervene – not least methodologically – in the current disciplinary development of world literature studies. The series is united by a common introductory chapter and approaches the vernacular in world literature across a range of fields, such as comparative literature, postcolonial literature and literary anthropology.

More information on the research project can be found at Worldlit.se.

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Acknowledgements

Series introduction

The cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic: Conjunctions of world literature

Stefan Helgesson, Christina Kullberg, Paul Tenngart and Helena Wulff

'World literature is not an object, it's a *problem*.' This was Franco Moretti (2000: 55), famously, in 2000. But what is the problem of world literature today, two decades later? In broad strokes, the disciplinary challenge would seem to be the same: to devise methods and reading practices that offer alternatives to entrenched national and civilizational frameworks. Scholarship within world literature shares a fundamentally *comparative* urge, whereby different instantiations of literature are considered in conjunction. But 'conjunction' is in fact the nub of the problem, as this is supposedly not just an older version of comparative literature under a new name. Instead, conjunction can be conceptualized through a wide number of temporalities, scales, geographies, generic constellations, languages and ideological perspectives – all of them susceptible to historical change.

Moretti proposed a world-systemic model, inspired by Immanuel Wallerstein, which has since developed into a strong but by no means exclusive or uncontested methodological premise of world literature. Deep-time approaches focusing on imperial formations, translation-based approaches, Alexander Beecroft's (2015) ecologies of literature – all offer distinct ways of investigating conjunction and connection. What they do not always offer is mutual compatibility. Instead, the most productive way to delineate world literature today might be to consider it as a set of procedures and methods rather than a coherent body of theory. As a scholarly field, it provides in the first instance a space of conversation and intellectual exchange *across* specializations that may also enable reconfigured empirical and critical investigations within those specializations.

This give-and-take among different disciplinary locations has shaped the work leading up to the four volumes presented here. Emerging from a long-running project based in Sweden, and involving researchers from comparative literature, anthropology, intellectual history and a range of language departments, the basic

methodological wager of our work differs from much else that has been published in the field of world literature. Avoiding hard-wired systemic, deterministic or 'global' claims, what we call the *cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic* (which can also be read as *vernacular–cosmopolitan*) offers itself not as a distinct theory, but as a methodological starting point – akin to an *Ansatzpunkt* in Erich Auerbach's (1952) sense – from which to explore the resonances and connections between widely diverse literary texts and cultures.

To explain the motivations behind such a methodology, we need to make a detour into the current state of world literature studies. Undergirding this sprawling field is the political and ethical intuition that literary knowledge in our crisis-ridden, globalized and racialized world – even in its (anticipated) post-Covid-19 shape – requires new modes of scholarly attention. To speak from our own contemporary vantage point in Scandinavia, it is clear that the joint impact of the cultural Anglosphere, migration from Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, the cultural policies of the EU and the ubiquitous presence of digital media not only weaken the explanatory value of the nation state and the national language as the privileged loci of the production and reading of literature in Sweden today, but also invite reconsiderations of an earlier literary history in the region. Similar shifts in the production of literature and in the literary imagination can be registered elsewhere across the world, shifts that prompt us to rethink how we read and contextualize literature. The road to such a revised conception of literary studies leads, however, to a garden of forking paths. This is one important lesson to be learned from the twenty-odd years since Moretti's lively provocation in the year 2000.

Common to the turn-of-the-millennium interventions by Moretti and David Damrosch (2003) (less so Pascale Casanova, whose concern was consecration) was an emphasis on circulation – quite literally on how texts move and are received in diverse contexts. This deceptively simple perspective counters what Jerome McGann (1991: 7) once called 'textual idealism', which treats texts as if they were just magically 'there'. Instead, the circulational perspective allows us to engage the material, spatial and historical unconscious of literature as texts in movement. This approach has been developed by Beecroft (2015), Venkat Mani (2017), Sandra Richter (2017) and Yvonne Leffler (2020), among others. Increasingly, as in contributions to Stefan Helgesson and Pieter Vermeulen's (2016) *Institutions of World Literature* or in Ignacio Sánchez Prado's (2018) study of Mexican literature, this tends towards studies of market dynamics and, not least, the sociology of translation (Heilbron 1999, 2020, de Swaan 2001, Sapiro

2008, Buzelin and Baraldi 2016). However, the most rigorous large-scale studies of circulation are to be found within computational literary studies (CLS) which involves an even more fundamental shift towards quantitative methods than the sociology of translation. Not surprisingly, given his coinage of 'distant reading', CLS has become Moretti's (2000: 56–8) main field of activity at the Stanford Literary Lab. Even as the merits and drawbacks of CLS are being debated (Da 2019), the achievements in all these interlinked areas of investigation attest firmly to the *complexity* of studying world-literary circulation. This knowledge is not just readily available, nor does it amount merely to an external study of literature, but it is rather of crucial relevance both to the empirical and theoretical understanding of how literary cultures evolve.

Having said that, a striking alternative development over the last ten years has been the proliferation of interpretive, qualitative methods in world literature studies. Often on the basis of strong theorizations of the world-concept, and sometimes pitched polemically against the circulation approach, researchers have attempted to read 'the world' through specific literary works, rather than through Morettian 'distant reading' (which is ideally suited for digital methods). The epistemic assumption in these interpretive models follows the synechdochal logic of *pars pro toto*, or the part standing in for the whole. Eric Hayot (2012) was early to embark on this path in *On Literary Worlds*, an ambitious but all too brief attempt to bring world literature studies – understood as a global extension of literary studies – to bear on, in principle, *any* given work of literature, regardless of origin or period. Emily Apter's (2013) much publicized *Against World Literature* instead championed linguistic specificity – coded as the 'Untranslatable' – as the normative locus of a worldly reading. A related tendency has been the regionally or linguistically restricted conception of literature X *as* world literature, with the francophone *littérature-monde* as a high-profile example, but also evident in many (not all) titles in Bloomsbury's 'Literatures as World Literature' series. Building on Moretti's world-systemic inclination, the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) has elaborated a significantly different conception of world-literature (with a hyphen) as the aesthetic registration of combined and uneven development in the capitalist world-system – but this, too, has issued in a mode of close interpretive attention to literary texts, rather than distant reading. Other, more or less distinct examples of this interpretive turn in world literature studies can be cited, such as Francesca Orsini's (2015) concept of the multilingual local, pitched in opposition to systemic approaches, Debjani Ganguly's (2016) work on the global novel, Ottmar Ette's (2016) 'transarea' approach (2016), Pheng Cheah's

(2016, 2017) phenomenology of 'worlding literature' and Birgit Neumann and Gabriele Rippl's (2017) notes on world-making. A point of relevance to our work is that while the most rigorous systemic approaches, represented here by WReC, speak of world-literature in the singular, the implication of, for example, Hayot's, Apter's or Orsini's perspectives is to consider *literatures* as an inevitably plural phenomenon – even in contexts of exchange and translation. At stake here, ultimately, is the relative theoretical weighting of determinacy and contingency in interpretive practices. Our work does not collectively pursue one or the other of these angles, but most contributions tend to side with contingency and hence the plural conception of literature.

Having said so, it must be stressed that each volume in this series has a distinct methodological profile of its own. As its title indicates, *Northern Crossings* deals with aspects of circulation to and from Sweden – understood in structural terms as a semi-periphery rather than a reified national space. It is in that sense the most systemically oriented volume in this series. *Claiming Space*, by contrast, approaches the narrative inscription of places around the world mainly through interpretive methods. *Literature and the Making of the World* configures its object of inquiry as 'literary practice' (both intra- and extratextual) and combines for that reason text-focused readings with book-historical and anthropological methods of inquiry. *Vernaculars in an Age of World Literatures*, finally, with its focus on the concept of the vernacular, combines interpretive readings with large-scale historical analyses.

As mentioned, it is the working hypothesis of the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic that brings these studies together. In the simplest and most general terms, this assumes that literature in different times is shaped through a combination of cosmopolitan and vernacular orientations. Indeed, the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic, we claim, *is precisely what is at stake in the world literature field*: not just the outward success or failure of certain texts, genres or literary languages, nor just the 'refraction' of *national* literatures (Damrosch 2003: 281), but rather the always situated negotiation of cosmopolitan and vernacular orientations in the temporal unfolding of literary practice. The further implication – which extends beyond our contributions – is that such a methodology might allow for the articulation of 'universality' after the collapse of 'universalism' (Messling 2019).

Just as importantly, however, the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic should be understood as a falsifiable postulation: in the hypothetical case of Beecroft's (2015: 33) 'epichoric', or strictly local, literary ecology it would hardly be

meaningful to talk of a cosmopolitan orientation. The opposite point, that there might be texts, genres and modes of writing without any vernacular connection at all, is harder to make – but it is the case, for example, that standard Arabic or *fusha* can function as a cosmopolitan written standard that runs parallel to local (spoken) Arabic dialects (Tageldin 2018). We are not claiming, in other words, that the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic *must* apply in all literary contexts. Even more importantly, it does not operate in just one mode, nor is it necessarily always successful. To speak of the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic is an open proposition, in the sense that it does not prescribe in advance any particular weighting of cosmopolitan or vernacular tendencies. Although the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic is fundamentally a question of how literary values are shaped, just *how* these values should be understood and assessed can only be discovered by examining the particular case.

In adopting the cosmopolitan–vernacular perspective, we acknowledge our debt to Sheldon Pollock (2006), whose magisterial macro-historical analysis of pre-modern literary cultures in South Asia and Europe in *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* offered a path-breaking comparison not just of the cosmopolitan literatures of Sanskrit and Latin, but more importantly of the historical constructedness of vernacular literatures. *Contra* the Romanticist assumption of vernacular authenticity and immediacy, Pollock (and Beecroft after him) argued that a historical approach to vernacular literatures will show how they tend to be elite projects shaped in reaction against a dominant cosmopolitan Other (such as the literate cultures of Latin and Sanskrit). To *literize* (standardize through writing) and *literarize* languages coded as vernaculars are to be understood as deliberate, politically motivated actions (Pollock 2006: 4–5).

Illuminating though such an explanatory model is, it should not be taken at face value as a transhistorical constant, nor need it be restricted to macro-historical analyses, but can be applied equally to closer textual study. Contrary to Pollock's pre-modern focus, our four volumes engage with literature from the last 200 years (about half of the primary sources are contemporary), an epoch which marks a radical new departure in literary history. This is when *Weltliteratur* was conceptualized in the wake of the accelerating commodification of print literature, the emergence of comparative philology and the entrenchment of (and resistance to) European nationalism and imperialism. It is, hence, an era when cosmopolitan and vernacular orientations in literature have been reconfigured drastically in relation not least, if not only, to the cultural authority of 'the West'. An important aspect of this process has been the accelerating *vernacularization*

of languages and literatures in all parts of the world. This needs to be understood in two ways. First, vernacularization entails the positioning of named languages, registers of language or local knowledges as inferior in the field of power, as for instance Aamir Mufti (2016) discusses in the context of India and Pakistan. But, secondly, vernacularization also involves the deliberate elevation of vernaculars, including what we more broadly call the 'domain of vernacularity', as a resource for the construction of national or socially distinct literatures. Given the constitutively relational nature of vernacularization, this process needs to be thought of as unstable: it can change over time (an obvious example being how European vernaculars such as English and French became cosmopolitan, imperial languages), as well as shift momentarily across space (Spanish being transformed into an immigrant vernacular in the United States). Or, as has often been the case in Africa, a *literary* vernacularity has had to be crafted through adopted, formerly imperial languages.

With its connections to comparative philology and the German romantic aesthetics of Herder, Goethe, Schlegel and Schleiermacher, among others (for more on this see Noyes 2015, Bhattacharya 2016, Mufti 2016, Ahmed 2018), post-eighteenth-century vernacularization is a deeply ambivalent affair: its value-coding can be programmatically positive yet grounded in untenable essentializations of race and ethnicity. A particularly effective challenge to this legacy has been the interrogation of language boundaries and 'artefactualized' languages (Blommaert 2010: 4), along with the critique of the 'monolingual paradigm' (Yildiz 2012; see also Bauman and Briggs 2003, Heller-Roazen 2005, Sakai 2009, Minaard and Dembeck 2014, Stockhammer 2015, Gramling 2016, Tidigs and Huss 2017, Helgesson and Kullberg 2018). These debates are relevant to our work, not least since discourses of the vernacular have often been a tool for establishing a monolingual paradigm that effaces translingual conceptions of language (Adejunmobi 2004). Our heuristic employment of the term allows, however, for an alternative take on mono- and multilingualism. If the vernacular indicates a *relation*, it may entail a heteroglossic or translingual register 'within' a named language (vernacular varieties of English, say), as much as an identity as a separate language vis-à-vis a dominant other (which, for example, was the position of Wolof in relation to imperial French). The social dimension of the vernacular also draws our attention to the relativity of communities of comprehension – the intimacy of a vernacular to one group will be perceived as opacity by others. Such fluidity in the definition and nature of the vernacular chimes well with the critique of linguistic 'bordering' (Sakai 2009),

but – and this is important – it also factors the wholly contextual dimension of social hierarchies into the analysis. This has two consequences. One is that it acknowledges the de facto importance of artefactualized language, particularly within literature, despite its *theoretical* untenability. In the world of publishing, the authority of standard varieties of English, French or Arabic – including their publishing infrastructures – cannot be wished away. Hence, when terms such as 'centre' and 'periphery' are used in *Northern Crossings* in the context of translational exchanges, this is not a normative judgement, but rather an attempt at descriptively conceptualizing a given state of affairs.

The other consequence is that a social conception of language opens up towards a wider frame of analysis. As argued in *Vernaculars in an Age of World Literatures* and elsewhere in our volumes, the vernacular is not 'just' a linguistic matter, but implies rather an entire domain of vernacularity. This can be understood in metonymic terms as that which relates to proximate, intimate, domestic or local experiences and sensibilities, particularly in their linguistic registration. It has tremendous aesthetic as well as persuasive potential, but is also ideologically ambiguous. As Moradewun Adejunmobi's important work on West Africa shows, it is naive to assume that promotions of the vernacular are always 'intrinsic and unproblematic exemplars of minority politics' (2005: 179). On the contrary, what she calls 'discourses of the vernacular' have, intermittently, justified asymmetries of power under colonialism, as well as supported the political aspirations of subordinated groups, notably by those 'at the forefront of interaction with the dominant foreign culture' (ibid.: 191). The dynamics of the vernacular will, in brief, always be strictly context-sensitive. From this it follows that an assessment of its political tenor can only be issued a posteriori.

If, when we embarked on this project, we found that the vernacular was an ignored or undertheorized term in world literature studies, this has changed to some extent in recent years. An important line of questioning in this regard concerns the extent to which the very term 'vernacular' is possible to use outside of its particular European-latinate genealogy. Tageldin (2018: 115), for one, has observantly noted the instability of the term's field of reference – it is 'terminological quicksand' – but her account of Arabic supports rather than refutes the heuristic value of using the term 'vernacular' comparatively: it is often the case, we find, that when the vernacular transforms into a deliberate literary project, 'middle registers' of writing which fixate the flux of spoken language abound. In literary practice, that is to say, the vernacular oscillates between being a medium and being a citation within the medium. Interestingly,

this need not work very differently in oral or performative modes of verbal art, which also exhibit the qualities of craftedness and quotability (see Barber 2007). Against this backdrop, the value of a 'comparativist assessment of vernacular styles and political practices across the globe', as Sieglinde Lemke (2009: 9) puts it, should be evident.

We should note here that much of the critique *against* world literature as a field of study has argued that the vernacular is what world literature leaves behind. If the basic motivation for world literature as a disciplinary commitment could be described in terms of a cosmopolitan ethics, this has, in turn, often been accused of being an elitist, Eurocentric or politically aloof concern. There is by now an entire subfield of debates in this vein whose most common articulation has been that of postcolonialism 'versus' world literature (Rosendahl Thomsen 2008, Hitchcock 2010, Huggan 2011, Shankar 2012, Spivak 2012, Young 2011, Boehmer 2014, Helgesson 2014, Slaughter 2014, Mufti 2016, Tiwari and Damrosch 2019 and 2020, Sturm-Trigonakis 2020). The more recent contributions to this discussion tend, however, also to identify points of convergence between these positions. Our take on this is that if postcolonialism is ideologically primed to speak on behalf of the vernacular (whose proximity to concepts such as the subaltern or indigeneity should not pass unnoticed), an actual attention to vernacular orientations also shows their relevance far beyond strictly postcolonial concerns. We are, in other words, claiming that the cosmopolitan–vernacular optic engages the postcolonial perspective, without effacing or supplanting it.

At this point, however, it is of some urgency also to address the cosmopolitan dimension of our methodology. As mentioned, world literature and cosmopolitanism were revived as concerns in academia more or less in tandem in the post-1989 phase: if world literature is underwritten by a fundamentally cosmopolitan ethos of openness towards the other, it also offers the more philosophical concerns of cosmopolitanism an empirical field of study. Even more importantly, the gradual turn from such philosophically normative approaches to a descriptive conception of cosmopolitanism as 'a characteristic and possession of substantial social collectivities, often nonelite collectivities that had cosmopolitanism thrust upon them' (Robbins and Horta 2017: 3) offers yet further scope for its coupling with world literature. Not unlike Pollock (2000: 593), who considers cosmopolitanism as something people 'do rather than something they declare, as practice rather than proposition', our own work in these volumes is informed not by any a priori definition of what a

cosmopolitan space or stance is, but, again, by a relational premise: terms such as 'cosmopolitan', 'cosmopolitanism' and 'cosmopolitanization' have meaning only insofar as they set themselves off against other modes of belonging, or, better, other orientations. But to complicate things further, cosmopolitan orientations, insofar as they are verbalized, must have a *specific* linguistic signature; this signature, in turn, might more often than not be positioned as vernacular. Conversely, vernacular orientations may, under the right conditions (such as an attachment to a global language) have a cosmopolitan appeal. An example of the latter could be the Antillean French of Patrick Chamoiseau's Goncourt-winning novel *Texaco* (1992). An example of the former is Rabindranath Tagore's ([1907] 2015) famous lecture on world literature, held in the late colonial period when Tagore's Bengali – a formidable language of literature and erudition – was still regarded by the British as a vernacular. It is, in other words, crucial to think of the cosmopolitan and the vernacular orientations as *different* but not as mutually exclusive *opposites*, in a schematic sense. Homi Bhabha (1996), not least, has inspired such a view by speaking of vernacular cosmopolitanism (Werbner 2006). To grasp how these orientations might interact, it is therefore imperative to emphasize that the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic is also, and fundamentally, a matter of translation – which could be illustrated by how Tagore's lecture is only accessible to us who are writing this introduction in its English version. As with the vernacular, however, the cosmopolitan tendencies are also ambiguous when translation enters the picture. If cosmopolitan orientations are at work whenever transnational structures or agents – be it anglophone, French, Chinese or any other cross-cultural exportation of literature – exercise their power over less well-endowed literary spaces, it may equally be the case that the cosmopolitan orientation of translational practice creates intercultural channels and mindsets that challenge isolationist tendencies. As Robbins and Horta (2017) explain, cosmopolitanism has always both a positive and a negative definition. In positive terms, it embraces a wider humanity; in negative terms, it fosters detachment. This duality also applies to literary modes of cosmopolitanism, which indicates how *location* must always be factored into the cosmopolitan–vernacular analysis, even if it is a negatively conceived locality (as a consequence of detachment). There is, strictly speaking, no 'world space', no vaguely conceived orbit 'out there' where world literature exists in its separate realm. Instead, any postulation or imaginary of a wider world necessarily implies a particular 'here'. This premise is made explicit in *Claiming Space*, whose readings are organized by way of the two terms 'location' and 'orientation', and in *Literature and the*

Making of the World, where the focus on literary practice links the textual and fictive aspects of literature to the emplaced and linguistically inflected work of writers, editors or, in one case, a maker of scrapbooks. The word 'world' emerges here as double-coded, as both the life-world once theorized by Hannah Arendt ([1958] 1998) and others, and as an imagined world with a wider scope – and this imagined world, it turns out, is typically nurtured by modes of writing, much as Don Quixote once mistook his romances for the world.

The world, then, can be made and sustained through literary practice, a perspective which also offers a particularly strong motivation for our incorporation of anthropological approaches to literature in our volumes. Not only is the immediate relevance of anthropology evident when engaging terms such as 'vernacular', 'cosmopolitan' and 'world', but we also claim that the defamiliarizing gaze of anthropology on the literary domain helps literary scholarship to move beyond excessive textualism. The work of Karin Barber (2007) serves as a rich source of inspiration, but there is also a long-running debate on the relation of literature to ethnography (Coundouriotis 1999, Desai 2001, Debaene 2010, Kullberg 2013, Izzo 2019) as well as a subfield of literary anthropology which has grown rapidly in recent years (Rapport 1994, Cohen 2013, Wulff 2017, Hemer 2020, Uimonen 2020). In the latter instance in particular, there has been a consistent development of methods for cultural, temporal and biographical contextualization of literary texts relating to vernacular–cosmopolitan dynamics. A central idea here is that the anthropologist and the author are fellow intellectuals and thus the author's commentary is key to understanding issues such as choice of topic, the writing process, the literary career, the publishing industry and the literary market, as well as the circulation of books. This, juxtaposed with the anthropologist's ethnographic observations, can reveal analytical aspects of world literature that are not obvious from the texts alone. It is for this reason that our volumes integrate contributions that build on anthropological methods, such as ethnographic observations during literary festivals, readings and book launches, combined with extensive in-depth interviews of authors.

Our four volumes will appear in staggered fashion in 2021 and 2022, so depending on when exactly you as reader are encountering this general introduction, not all of them may yet be available. Regardless, we will end by briefly describing their profiles.

As already indicated, *Claiming Space*'s contribution to our larger project is its specification of the cosmopolitan and vernacular vectors in terms of

'location' and 'orientation'. This enables a refined analysis of spatial imaginaries in literature. This volume pays attention to language, forms of aesthetic worlding and processes of translation and distribution, while its edge is turned towards the spatial and territorial politics involved in literary practices and works in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Locations, we argue, are inhabited or claimed by means of vernacular or cosmopolitan strategies, choices that are also visible in the orientations bound up with these sites. In dialogue with the critical geopolitics of culture, with sociology and anthropology, our attention to literary locations and orientations brings spatial particularity into the reckoning of vernacular and cosmopolitan relationality. Explicitly expressed or implied, manifesting itself sometimes as *dis*location and *dis*orientation, the claiming of space by any symbolic means necessarily is revealed as a constant effect of literary practice.

Vernaculars in an Age of World Literatures attempts to theorize the vernacular. As indicated in the discussion above, our point of departure is that the vernacular is always plural: not limited to language alone but comprising various types of expressions, material objects, people and environments. Moreover, its significance and value change with time and context. From a European point of view, it has been identified with the consolidation of national literatures, but in other contexts it has been associated with diaspora and movements of the marginalized or else, like in early twentieth-century China, it needs to be adapted to a specific literary and linguistic tradition to be useful as a concept. Sometimes, but not always, it works as an expression of resistance to the hegemony of cultural centres. Yet this seemingly inherent heterogeneity and variability is precisely what makes the vernacular a productive concept for rethinking world literature today. In nine case studies approaching a select number of narratives from the long twentieth century, from more or less marginal contexts, the volume explores how the concept may be put into practice and demonstrates how vernaculars operate within different literary, critical, cultural and political circumstances.

In the collectively authored *Northern Crossings* we analyse cosmopolitanizing and vernacularizing translational processes from the point of view of the literary semi-periphery. Literary traffic to and from Swedish displays a nuanced palette of diverse intercultural relations. The world literary system has hitherto been predominantly described from a binary centre–periphery perspective. A focus on the semi-periphery makes visible other important phenomena in the formation of interlingual literary flows. Our studies show that the logic of integration into new literary cultures does not follow one set of principles or

a single pattern. The strategies employed by publishers, translators and other intermediaries in adapting the foreign text to a new literary culture always put the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic into play, but exactly what processes are implemented depends on a wide range of variables, such as genre, narrative technique, literary style, textual and authorial position in source and target cultures, publishing agendas, translator profiles and overall relations between specific literary cultures.

Literature and the Making of the World, finally, engages the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic by focusing on a range of literary practices and materialities. In its first section, 'Worlds in texts', the world-making potential of place, genre and language is explored in readings of, among other things, French nineteenth-century novels, Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' and Siberian exile writing. The second section, 'Texts in worlds', looks at literary journals, the profession of travel writers, the social world of a scrapbook keeper in Harlem and the trajectory of a contemporary novel in the Indian language Kannada with a view to fleshing out, in an anthropological spirit, the 'world' of world literature as an experiential and embodied category. In contrast to macro-scale varieties of world literature studies, the empirically fine-grained contributions to this volume bring close reading, book history, ethnography and historical contextualization to bear on its selected instances of literary practice.

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Introduction

Literature and the making of the world

Stefan Helgesson

Texts have a paradoxical capacity to constitute their own publics. These can be purely notional, restricted to just a handful of readers, or can accumulate and grow across time. The public-forming force of a text is proper to its own instance of performativity (including the performance of reading), but this force is at the same time entirely reliant on the world that precedes it: its media, its languages, its rhetorical repertoires, its social groupings. Consider, for example, the scrapbooks of Alexander Gumby in Harlem. Emerging out of the social world of the Harlem Renaissance in the early twentieth century, his compilation of texts about black achievements and the African cultural heritage 'convened' – to use Karin Barber's (2007: 144) phrase – an audience both in and beyond Harlem and, even more importantly, in an undefined future. As an idiosyncratic, vernacular archive that repurposed already existing texts by placing them in new constellations, its key public would arguably be posterity – meaning, among other things, us today – for whom the scrapbooks would evoke both the specific world of Gumby's Harlem and the wider world as it was conceived and intimated by Gumby.

Or consider the Chinese writer Lu Xun, who found that the very language of Chinese culture (this was also in the early twentieth century) could no longer address the ills of a society in decline. Having studied in Japan and read contemporary European literature, Lu Xun attempted to reform the literary language in China and, in doing so, to create an alternative public that was attuned to the social problems besetting the country. This new language rejected the classical Chinese heritage and claimed a vernacular authenticity, yet was profoundly cosmopolitan – and in that respect also alien – in its constitution. Lu Xun's vernacularity, manifested in his double-coded 'A Madman's Diary', was

in this respect not just local, but assumed *necessarily* a multiglossic world much wider and diverse than China.

Or, to take a third example, we can see how contemporary Indian literature constitutes a sometimes bewildering multiplicity of publics. If, as Francesca Orsini (2004) was early to demonstrate, there is a division of labour between internationally circulating, Booker Prize-winning Anglo-Indian literature and the numerous national or regional literatures in other Indian languages, the contemporary case of Vivek Shanbhag's novel *Ghachar Ghochar* (2016, discussed in Chapter 8), first published in the South Indian language Kannada, challenges that straightforward hierarchy of literary languages. A 'vernacular' with a long literary tradition of its own, Kannada has not been an obstacle to the international success of *Ghachar Ghochar*, which has appeared in numerous languages and convened new publics with every incarnation.

These three examples – Gumby's scrapbook, Lu Xun's cosmopolitan vernacularity and Shanbhag's circulating Kannada novel – are merely indicative of the range of investigations in this book, but they showcase some of our central concerns. Here, as when the present volume deals with the Western travel-writing genre, little magazines in southern Africa and literary constructions of Paris, Venice, Constantinople and Siberia, our interest lies in how literary practice in the modern era is both constitutively worldly and constitutes worlds of its own. Literary practice (linked to Warner's and Barber's notion of publics), does not, in other words, merely reflect the world but shapes it as well; it both assumes and makes a world. As Michael Warner (2002: 81) explains it, texts 'must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate, projecting for that world a concrete and livable shape, and attempting to realize that world through address', a formulation of direct relevance to our concerns. At the same time, it is the complications of achieving a world-making address that come to the fore in these chapters' combined focus on translingual, transcultural and transnational aspects of literature. This attempt at jointly engaging textual, cultural and social levels of literature is one thing that distinguishes our contributions from more rigorously external and quantitative approaches to literature in book history and sociology. Just as importantly, our approach differs from certain brands of world literature studies that privilege internationally canonized literature and tend to treat the 'world' as a self-explanatory backdrop. To unpack the implications of this alternative take on world literature, it is therefore necessary to begin with some basic theoretical considerations concerning language, literature, practice and the semantics of 'world'.

If we assume that language, or what we rather should think of as the endless proliferation of language games, is constitutively *of* the world, then we have a place from which to begin. Contra the structuralist doctrine of a fundamental split between word and world, whereby language – *langue* – is essentialized as a ghostly presence, oddly complete in itself yet 'parallel to reality' (Jameson 1972: 33), a Wittgensteinian insistence on language as untotalizable practice *begins* rather with its worldliness. In Stanley Cavell's (2002: 19) formulation, 'we learn language and learn the world *together*', which is a point of departure for Toril Moi's (2017) important critique of post-Saussurean literary theory. To this we could add Jaakko Hintikka's distinction between language as 'universal medium', a view which dominated Western philosophy in the twentieth century and turned the signifier into an epistemological cage, and language as 'calculus', which sees language rather as a practice of meaning-making possible to analyse at a distance (Hintikka 1989: 53–4). If language is considered as calculus, 'you can discuss the semantics of your language and even vary systematically its interpretation' (ibid.: 54). Admittedly, Hintikka's views rehearse a rationalist conception of language which in itself is not unproblematic (see Bauman and Briggs 2003), but taken together these alternatives to the post-Saussurean model enable a flexible combination of non-prescriptive investigations into how language intervenes in the world.

Literature counts as one such linguistic intervention. As with the word 'game' itself, famously discussed by Wittgenstein ([1953] 2009 §66–71) in *Philosophical Investigations*, literature is not a unified concept but covers a cluster of phenomena across diverse contexts. A novel in French, a praise poem in Zulu, an ancient Greek tragedy, a Japanese *monogatari* may all conceivably fall under the heading 'literature', but are hardly instances of the same thing. What counts as literature will also differ in different periods, even as the concept's meaning sediments and accumulates with the passing of time. It is one of those strange categories where the identification of the members of the set and the making of the set tend to coincide. These semantic peculiarities and instabilities notwithstanding, the crafted use of *language* is clearly a minimal requirement for anything to be called literature – which is not the case, for example, with sculpture, or toads. (Certain avant-garde poetry, such as dada or concretism, attempts of course to disrupt linguistic signification – but this is precisely a dismantling *of* language, or its negative image, not an escape from it.) In this way, literature's worldliness, insofar as language is worldly, is a given.

Our concern in this book, however, is not really with theory but with practice – literary practice – as it might be understood historically from the vantage

point of our globalized (and possibly de-globalizing) present. Further, it places a premium not just on language but on how *languages*, in the plural, shape world-conceptions and world-belongingness. Linguistic plurality today has many names – translingualism, heterolingualism or multiglossia are just a few – but, under whatever label, the valencies of a shifting range of linguistic signification in contexts as diverse as China, Constantinople and southern Africa are thematized in our chapters. Described thus, it should be clear that our separate studies can have no encompassing *frame* that contains them all but, as discussed in the general introduction to this volume, they do have a methodological starting point: the cosmopolitan–vernacular (or vernacular–cosmopolitan) dynamic. This heuristic postulation of two complementary orientations in literary cultures generates our investigations and enables inquiries that move across the conventional period-, language-, theory- or nation-based boxes in literary studies.

This brings us back, then, to the valencies of world, language and literature in the studies presented here. Having already used the word 'world' several times, I must stress its polysemic character. It can refer to the phenomenological life-world or, more emphatically, to a precondition of being. It may indicate self-regulating systems (such as the capitalist world-system), secular temporality, the totality of the planet or the abstraction of the globe (Jordheim and Sandmo 2019). This semantic fluidity is, on the one hand, a problem with the term. One could even follow the philosopher Markus Gabriel's (2015: 1) cue, and drastically conclude that 'everything exists except one thing: the world'. More modestly, one may concede that a non-specified use of 'world' invites unnecessary misunderstandings. On the other hand, the strong appeal and semantic density of the word 'world' tells a story all of its own about multiple attempts to articulate existential, social and cosmological emplacement. As I explain below, it is to some extent this semantic density, specifically the tension between the assumed immediacy of the life-world and a more or less vaguely sensed globality, that we wish to activate through our cosmopolitan–vernacular approach. To explain this, we can first reflect on how our approach *differs* from the branch of literary theory dealing with 'possible worlds'.

Before becoming a narratological mode of reading, possible-worlds theory first emerged out of specific concerns in analytic philosophy concerning the truth value of hypothetical statements. As a way to counteract the rigidity of a structuralist framework, this philosophical paradigm posits a 'many-worlds ontology' (Bell and Ryan 2019: 3) in which the actual world is not the only one we can access and interpret. There are important points to be derived from this

field – not least concerning the semantic openness of language discussed in relation to Wittgenstein and Hintikka above. But although Debjani Ganguly (2016: 80–5) has quite decisively brought possible-worlds theory to bear on world literature, it should be noted that its influential formulations are not in the least concerned with the historical, social or translational aspects of the word 'world' itself. It invokes 'world', rather, in a Leibnizian, conceptually frugal sense as a totality in which a particular state of affairs obtains, neither more nor less. This is significantly different from our approach in this book, which is concerned rather with historical, temporal and cultural dimensions of worldliness. 'World' as we use it in this book could therefore be considered 'loose' from the vantage point of possible-world theorists; we would rather describe it as 'dense'. Even more importantly, the specific qualities of the world, as presented in these chapters, are always an outcome of a cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic. Although cosmopolitanism conventionally is assumed to have a monopoly on 'viewing oneself as part of a world, a circle of belonging that transcends the limited ties of kinship and country to embrace the whole of humanity' (Cheah 2008: 26), our understanding is that worldliness is equally produced through vernacular registers of language and social belonging. It becomes, in effect, an unhelpful abstraction to conceptualize the literary making of the world in the absence of vernacularity. This is why the double meaning of 'world' as both small and big, both part and whole, is not a drawback but the very point of its use in this book.

In *On Literary Worlds*, a bold attempt to combine an expansive understanding of 'world' with a rigorous focus on the particulars of literary works, Eric Hayot (2012: 39) keeps these two meanings of world as 'a generic totality' and 'as the most total totality of all' in play. This manoeuvre is necessary if we intend to remain in dialogue with world literature. (By contrast, a strict possible-worlds focus could bypass world literature completely.) When positing, furthermore, that 'aesthetic worlds' are always 'social and conceptual constructs, as well as formal and affective ones' (ibid.: 45), Hayot's conception of worldedness resonates strongly with our approach in this book. What needs to be added is that our focus on *practice* invites a broader range of objects of study by covering textuality, materiality and paratextual practices, such as editing and marketing.

By insisting on the dual formal and thematic aspect of world, Hayot attempts to establish a methodological connection not just between internal and external approaches to literature, but also across diverse cultural contexts. Stating axiomatically (but also with some troubling circularity) that 'no work of art

recognizable as such could avoid constituting itself in relation to a theory of wholeness that would, minimally, allow it to be recognized as a work of art at all', he opens the door to different 'comparative histories of this universal as it has been experienced and expressed, as it has been managed, ignored, or otherwise engaged' (ibid.: 87). The hermeneutic caveat, of course, is that such an act of comparison itself can only be undertaken from within a historically and culturally specific positioning. This is a point of crucial importance to the present volume, which engages with diverse instantiations of worldedness in what might be called the long era of the globe – a world-horizon or world-unconscious produced originally through the effects of Western imperialism from the fifteenth century onwards (for more on the early modern history, see Ramachandran 2015).

Our adoption of Nelson Goodman's (1978) view that the world is something *made* is largely motivated by this insight that worldedness and notions of 'wholeness' will shift depending on context. Arguing in a Kantian philosophical lineage that there can be no 'perception without conception', Goodman (2012: 6) places a heavy emphasis on how language and symbolic systems enable perception and, in that sense, 'make' worlds. This does not mean that we collectively promote Goodman's strong constructivism, however. In his view, 'content vanishes without form', which means that '[w]e can have words without a world, but no worlds without words or other symbols' (ibid.), in response to which Doležel (Bell and Ryan 2019: 51) asks where we possibly could find words without a world. Here, one might say, epistemology clashes with ontology in a way that retraces elements of object-oriented ontology (Harman 2012) as well as recent debates in anthropology around the 'ontological turn'. If previous anthropological disagreements in the late twentieth century questioned the epistemological validity of knowledge about the 'other', the radical ontologists tend to see worlds 'not as relative to each other' but existing 'unto themselves, as immanent rather than contingent' (Vigh and Sausdal 2014: 54). The debate risks drawing us into deeper philosophical waters than the present book intends to navigate, but it can be safely claimed that our contributions tend towards a world-conception that stresses relationality – and hence translatability – rather than radical incommensurability. The very terms 'cosmopolitan' and 'vernacular' (as discussed in the general introduction) only make sense as relational markers, and in our investigations literature functions as a mediator (sometimes a problematic one) across differences rather than an instantiation of the incommensurable. The studies presented here also have a humanist

rather than a posthumanist slant, which otherwise is common among the new ontologists.

In keeping with our emphasis on *practice*, therefore, a helpful formulation on these matters is Hannah Arendt's, for whom it is through labour and work that the world becomes human and a human world is made. As Arendt (1998: 134) writes, '[i]f nature and the earth generally constitute the condition of human *life*, then the world and the things of the world constitute the condition under which this specifically human life can be at home on earth'. In its extreme fragility and finitude, as the Covid-19 crisis has starkly illustrated, human life calls for endless vigilance and exertion to be sustained, and it is of course also in this respect that we can speak of the making of the world. Conversely, this explains how histories of slavery, genocide, wars, colonialism, exploitation and ecological devastation can be thought of as *world-destroying*, even as new worlds may or may not emerge in their wake. Jean-Luc Nancy (2007: 34) even insists that globalization, understood as an endpoint to the process whereby the West 'has come to encompass the world', amounts to an ongoing destruction of the world, a fact 'from which any thinking of the world follows' (ibid.: 35). This rather obscure statement can be illustrated by Anette Nyqvist's interviews in Chapter 9 of this volume with North American travel writers, who struggle, in the age of Google and YouTube influencers, to produce the sense of difference and distance upon which the marketability of their genre of writing depends. Here we witness if not the end of the world, then certainly the possible end of one practice whereby the world has been represented and made cognitively accessible.

Once we directly engage with the world literature debates as they took shape around 2000, we see that 'world' was severely undertheorized at the time. In their engagement with the lineage of *Weltliteratur* from Goethe onwards, they either conceived of 'world' as sheer extension, a geographical backdrop for intercultural exchange, or, in Moretti's (2000) and Casanova's (1999) cases, as a distinctly literary world-system. But after thorough interrogation of these positions in recent years, it is fair to speak of a conceptual turn in the field in the 2010s from an unexamined notion of world to a richly theorized one. It would lead too far to provide a full summary here, but two lines of critique can be discerned. One is that the 'world' in the work of, notably, Damrosch (2003), Casanova (1999) and Moretti (2000) is an ideological construct that serves to disguise and perpetuate power relations between the West and the Rest, and occludes literature that does not travel or 'gain in translation', to rehearse Damrosch's (2003) oft-cited

criterion of world literature. This primarily postcolonial mode of criticism has, with variations, been articulated by Hitchcock (2010), Huggan (2011), Young (2011), Spivak (2012), Apter (2013), Mufti (2016), Boehmer (2014, 2018) and others. By claiming that world literature 'assumes a general interchangeability across cultural divides', and promoting against this a reading practice that solicits 'the reader's attention in specific ways' (Boehmer 2018: 14), the tendency here has been to disaggregate world-conceptions and emphasize fracture. The other line of argument often builds on a similar critique, but rather than dismissing world literature altogether (as has been common), it inscribes itself in the field by providing refined and alternative world-conceptions. A high-profile example is Pheng Cheah's attempt to redefine world literature according to a temporal understanding of 'world' that does not privilege spatial distribution as its main feature. Instead of 'world' as 'extension on a global scale, where world literature is conceived through an analogy with a world market's global reach', Cheah (2014: 306–7, 319) considers world as 'a form of relating, belonging, or being-with'. In this sense he can then argue for the resistant, normative potential of literature in view of globalization's world-destroying effects. Ganguly's (2016: 83) even sharper account of world-theories is, in turn, yet more attuned to a non-reductive reading practice that 'straddles the empirical and phenomenological in a relationship of excess to the global', and Neumann and Rippl (2017: 14–15) make a similar point about the excessive or disruptive potential of literature vis-à-vis the global. Choosing a different tack (more in line with Moretti's approach), the Warwick Research Collective's (WReC 2015) coinage of 'world-literature' (with a hyphen) offers instead an exclusively systemic and historically specific understanding of world as the state of global interconnectedness through capitalism's boundary-defying logic of combined and uneven development. World-literature, on that understanding, designates the aesthetic 'registration' of systemic logic in literary works. Compared to Cheah and Ganguly, WReC remains committed to a stricter conception of world tied to the economic logic of globalization. But although these developments have different and sometimes incompatible methodological implications – if WReC reads literature as a world-effect, Cheah reads it as a world-cause – the enduring point is that the semantics of 'world literature' has acquired significant depth and diversity in recent years.

Given that this book is a collective endeavour, and in keeping with an openness towards the multiplicity of literary practice, we neither promote a single conceptualization of world nor offer an exclusive definition of world literature. It is instead, at the risk of sounding repetitive, precisely the *dynamic* of

cosmopolitan and vernacular orientations that we explore empirically through works, topoi, media and social networks. Throughout, however, these inquiries are undertaken in awareness of world literary debates of the last two decades and with a distinct methodological principle that is best expressed negatively: in contradistinction to most approaches to world literature in the wake of Moretti's and Damrosch's early interventions, circulation is not a *primary* criterion for our selection of cases in this book. Circulation, taken as a synonym for publication and distribution, always enters the picture at some level, but the methodological point of the cosmopolitan–vernacular optic is that it allows for very localized and text-focused investigations to be combined with transnational and non-national vistas of world literature.

To recapitulate: works of literature and literary practices have the capacity to constitute worlds on behalf of their publics, yet these worlds necessarily stand in some (often complicated) relation to the world beyond literature. 'To world is to enclose, but also to exclude', Hayot (2012: 40) writes; therefore, '[w]hat falls in the ambit of those enclosures and exclusions will determine the political meaning of any given act of world-making'. The histories and archives of meaning that are sedimented in language(s) are a key indicator of such enclosure and exclusion. To take an instance that makes maximal claims on behalf of poetry: 'The Brain – is wider than the Sky.' This line from Emily Dickinson (1960: 312) asserts transcendence, yet is itself inescapably historical and material. It is encoded in a standardized language – currently the most powerful cosmopolitan language the world has ever seen – and the line itself is made accessible across time through complex, overlapping and contingent institutions of literary publication, editing and reception that instantiate, valorize and disseminate Dickinson's poetry. It is in all these entangled respects that literary practice will confront us with both a specific and a strong mode of world-making. If we consider language as a boundary marker, Dickinson's poem retraces an enclosure, worlding a world that is reliant on linguistic alterity, on being different from all that is not comprehensible as 'English'. Such a view resonates with the multilingual or translingual approach to world-making developed in several of our chapters. Contrary to the monolingual norm that emerged with the shaping of national literatures in the nineteenth century, particular types of texts (such as the literary magazines in Stefan Helgesson's Chapter 7), or the poetics elaborated by individual writers (such as Joseph Brodsky in Anna Ljunggren's Chapter 5) or in textual clusters published across different countries (as in the subgenre of Siberian narratives in Mattias Viktorin's Chapter 3) all engage multiple

languages or registers of language in their world-making endeavours. And as they transgress one set of boundaries, these translingual events, as Helgesson and Kullberg (2018) have termed them, will themselves inevitably institute other enclosures and exclusions.

These remarks also indicate that the concerns of this volume resonate with Laachir, Marzagora and Orsini's (2018: 294) view that 'the world' is not a given but 'is produced by different, embodied, and located actors', not least those which Orsini (2015) has designated as 'multilingual locals'. As an alternative to normative Western conceptions of 'world', Laachir, Marzagora and Orsini offer a methodology of 'significant geographies' which engages the geographical imaginaries, real-life trajectories and affective attachments to place that are traceable in literature. Such an approach, they suggest, allows one 'to avoid the binary of local vs global but also the Russian dolls view of local-regional-national-global, the traditional comparative literature view that takes the nation (and national language) as foundational, and any idea of area as culturally autonomous' (Laachir, Marzagora and Orsini 2018: 297). It enables thereby the tracing of 'trajectories, loops, and *imaginaries* within both cosmopolitan and vernacular languages without thinking that the world belongs primarily to the former' (ibid.), a view that has affinities with ours, yet without explicitly addressing the *co-constitutive* nature of the cosmopolitan and vernacular dimensions of literature.

To conclude, then, the division of this book into two parts – 'Worlds in Texts' and 'Texts in Worlds' – outlines a methodological trajectory based on the points discussed above and comprising text-focused, hermeneutic, sociological and anthropological approaches. Place is of importance throughout: the nine chapters take us to widely different locations in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. They also showcase the importance of urban centres (with Siberia as a contrasting exception) to the literary imagination as well as literary production. Indeed, it would seem that cities are, almost by default, the key playing field for cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamics, often in a transcultural mode – a point that would merit further investigation. But if the literary practice investigated in the first half engages the imaginaries of urban cosmopolitanism in Europe and China – or its evacuation and inversion in Siberia – the second half deals with entanglements of text and society in North America, southern Africa and India. This is where political and material conditions of literary practice are foregrounded, yet with a continued methodological attentiveness to language, genre and modes of writing. It is precisely through such a dual optic that the world-making capacity of literature becomes apparent.

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Part One

Worlds in texts: Languages and narratives

Narrating the crisis of Constantinople 1908–1922: A lost world in Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Russian

Helena Bodin

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Constantinople (today's Istanbul) was still the capital of the Ottoman Empire: a multiethnic, multilingual and multireligious cosmopolis, claimed not only by several rival empires but also by emergent nations. Among its inhabitants were Turks, Greeks and Armenians, as well as resident and visiting Westerners and, after the Russian Revolution, Russian refugees.

Consequently, the linguascape of the city was multifaceted: although literacy was low, partial oral fluency in several languages was common, and phrases and expressions in Ottoman Turkish were widespread in all the city's languages. Polyglot interpreters and brokers – dragomans, governesses, middlemen, guides – were of salient importance to make daily life and interlingual communication possible. This complex linguistic situation has often been described as cosmopolitan, but when it comes to literary works created in its response, it would be more precise to regard these works as guided by a multilingual and vernacular poetics. In travelogues, novels, short stories, poems and reportages from and about Constantinople around 1900, there is no single cosmopolitan language that is sufficient on its own. Instead, the city's many vernacular languages, together with its heterolingual and multiscriptal (heterographic) features, contribute to the crafting of an immanent literary or aesthetic world in which features of linguistic difference and asymmetry precondition communication and mediation (Bodin 2020: 786).

On the whole, however, the early twentieth century was a period of falling empires. For Constantinople, this meant a protracted political crisis – a situation that cannot be sustained, but has to be resolved in one or another direction. A

well-known metaphor casts the Ottoman Empire in the role of the sick man of Europe. It was picked up by the American journalist Solita Solano, who developed it further in her reportage from Constantinople in 1922: 'Byzantium is dead. New Rome is dead. Constantinople is ill. Soon this one-time Queen City of the East will be replaced by a modern European center of business and commerce' (Solano 1922: 647). This was after more than a decade of political turbulence, beginning with the Young Turk revolution in 1908, after which the Ottoman Empire, and Constantinople as its capital, were involved in a number of wars: the two Balkan wars (1912–1914), the First World War (1914–1918) – which at that time was still called the Great War – and the continuing Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922).

Thereafter, not only did the Ottoman Empire fall in 1922 but the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian Empires had already fallen, while the British Empire occupied Constantinople from 1918 until 1923.[1] As to their interests in Constantinople, each empire had aspired to supremacy over the city and its straits, and supported in different ways the Turkish, Greek and Armenian nationalistic groups' conflicting claims of territory and independence from the Ottoman Empire. More than once, potential new or extended nation states were trialled. The Turkish Republic was eventually proclaimed in 1923 – that is, after the Armenian genocide of 1915–1917, the flight of the majority of Asia Minor Greeks in 1922 and the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923. In the same year the former cosmopolis, Constantinople, changed its official name to Istanbul, and Angora (today's Ankara) was proclaimed the capital of Turkey. In addition, in 1928 the Turkish state launched a radical reform of its language and script, which meant that the Arabo-Persian script of Ottoman Turkish was abandoned and the Roman alphabet instituted (Lewis [1999] 2010, Göknar 2008: 473–4). Due to these rapid and thoroughgoing changes and the new monolingual language politics in favour of Modern Turkish, the multilingual features of Constantinople were substantially altered in the 1920s.

Against this background, the present chapter sets out to explore the narration of the crisis of Constantinople as an instance of literary world-making in a multiplicity of languages. This is done by positing the city's particular narrated

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[1]   For these 'falling empires' as part of a larger narrative, often with melancholic or nostalgic overtones, see Chovanec and Heilo (eds) 2021, with further references.

site as a Bakhtinian *chronotope*, or, more precisely, as what Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 248) names 'the chronotope of threshold', instantiated as 'the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life'. But in contrast to Bakhtin's examples, which principally concern the narration of individual lives, the Constantinopolitan chronotope involves a number of ethnic groups which are affected in different ways by the city's ongoing crisis.[2] For this reason, I look at four novels in Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Russian, which are all set in Constantinople in the years leading up to 1922 and describe the city – its cityscape, linguascape and soundscape – from the various inside perspectives of their protagonists and in their different languages. The order I have chosen for the analyses of the novels is chronological with respect to the novels' stories, and takes us from approximately 1909 to 1922.

– The novel in Greek, *Leonis: A Novel* (1985; *Leōnēs: Mythistorēma*, 1940), is a retrospective, partly autobiographical and partly fictive novel about a boy's childhood and early youth in Constantinople, including his first time in exile in Athens. Its author is the Greek writer Yiorgos Theotokas, who was born in Constantinople in 1906 and died in Athens in 1966.

– The novel in Armenian, *My Soul in Exile* (2014; *Hogis ak'soreal*, 1922), tells of a female artist who returns to Constantinople to launch an exhibition. It is by the Armenian feminist writer and literary scholar Zabel Yessayan, known for her many works in the format of short novels (like this one), essays and articles in daily Armenian newspapers. She was born in Constantinople in 1878, but the circumstances of her death in exile in the Soviet Union are unclear and disputed; she may have died in Siberia in 1943.

– The novel in Turkish, *The Shirt of Flame* (1924; *Ateşten Gömlek* 1922), is a popular and much distributed lost-love-in-war novel from the time of the Greco-Turkish War by the Turkish feminist writer, later literary scholar and politician Halide Edib Adıvar. She was born in Constantinople in 1884 and died there (in Istanbul) in 1964, after having spent long periods in France and the United Kingdom and travelling frequently to the United States and India.

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[2] As to this particular Constantinopolitan chronotope of crisis, Sibel Erol's study of Orhan Pamuk's memoir *Istanbul* is as important as it is inspiring. She focuses on Pamuk's construction of the 'association between Istanbul, melancholy [*hüzün*], and loss of empire by creating a literary genealogy of his claim', which she dubs 'the chronotope of Istanbul' and 'the chronotope of *hüzün*' (Erol 2011: 655, 669, 673). Given the scope of her study, Erol does not, however, engage in other literary texts than those Pamuk himself refers to, that is, travelogues by French writers from the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Nerval, Gautier, Flaubert and Gide) and novels by Turkish modernist writers (Beyatlı and Tanpınar).

– The novel in Russian, *Philosophy* (*Filosofiia*, 2008), is a posthumously published work that was begun in Marseille in 1930 by the avant-garde writer Il'ia Zdanevich. He was born in Tbilisi in 1894 and died in Paris in 1975; in 1920–1921 he stayed in Constantinople on his way to Paris.

Although all these writers – Theotokas, Yessayan, Edib Adıvar and Zdanevich – lived in Constantinople for long periods, at least a few years, none of them was resident there for their whole life. Only Edib Adıvar was born and died there. The stories of their lives are to a great extent stories of exile, migration and various kinds of transit. As regards their literary oeuvres and scholarly professions, particularly Edib Adıvar and Yessayan can be described as bilingual in Turkish and English, and Armenian and French (see Göknar 2014: 323), but yet more relevant would be to emphasize that they were all representatives of the multilingual and heterolingual milieu of Constantinople. In addition, Theotokas was particularly attentive to linguistic issues concerning the emergent official national language of Greece, and Zdanevich to experimental poetry.

Originally, each of these novels was composed in a different language and alphabet – in Greek, Armenian, Ottoman Turkish (using Arabo-Persian script, later intralingually translated into Modern Turkish and transcribed into its Roman script), and Russian (using Cyrillic script). With the exception of Zdanevich's novel, all have been translated into various languages besides English: the Greek and Armenian novels into French, and more recently also into Turkish; and the Turkish novel into German and French (under the title *La fille de Smyrna*, emanating from the English adaptation *The Daughter of Smyrna*, which found its way to India). Moreover, the novels in Greek and Turkish were quickly translated into Swedish (Theotokas 1945, Adıvar 1928), my mother tongue. Perhaps for that reason, they were the first to spark my interest. There are also single examples of translations into yet other languages, such as Croatian, Serbian and Russian. With the exception of the Russian novel, I have read them in English translations – the Turkish novel in its author's self-translation – and, when possible, in Swedish translations (and for the Greek and Turkish novels, with an eye on their source texts).

Before turning to the analyses of the novels, I begin by presenting Constantinople as a threshold, which is a recurring spatial metaphor when the city is described in literature. In the period under discussion (1908–1922), the threshold is furthermore closely associated with crisis. I also introduce two concepts, both of which are relational: chronotope and world.

Constantinople as threshold and chronotope

Long before the crisis of the early twentieth century, cosmopolitan Constantinople had already challenged the limits of description and narration in the languages of its Western visitors. To mention only a few examples, Constantinople was 'the more than I could dream, / Far less describe' of Lord Byron's ([1819–1824] 1986) *Don Juan* (Canto V: 3), composed a century earlier, and the widely translated Italian traveller Edmondo De Amicis, visiting the city in 1874, had to look for comparisons in outer space to describe the chaotic world he encountered in Constantinople (De Amicis 1877: 31). Moreover, ever since Byzantine times Constantinople had been eulogized as the 'city of cities'. It was called by endonymic as well as exonymic names in numerous languages, such as *Konstantinoupolis* (Greek for Constantine's city), *Kostantiniyye* (Turkish, an adaptation of the Greek name), *Bolis* (Armenian, an adaptation of Greek *polis*), *Rûm* (Persian and Ottoman Turkish, relating to Byzantine perceptions of the city as the new Rome) and *Tsar'grad* (Russian, the emperor's city). There were also affectionate and honorific metonymic names in Arabic, for example *Der-i Saadet* (Abode of Felicity) and *Der-i Devlet* (Abode of the State) (see further Criss 1999: 20–1, İnalcık 2012).

As another of Constantinople's names with Persian origin – *Asitane* (Threshold) – suggests, the city's function as a threshold is of special importance, geopolitically as well as metaphorically in literature. In the early eighteenth century the Ottoman Turkish poet Nedîm perceived Constantinople as a 'jewel beyond compare / Seated astride upon two seas' (Orga 2007: 40), and perhaps Swiss-Swedish Stéphanie Beyel, who lived in Constantinople in the 1910s, alluded to Nedîm's famous words when she, writing in Swedish, described the city as 'the pearl on the threshold of the Orient' (quoted in Bodin 2018b: 55). In literature and other aesthetic representations the threshold often functions as an 'in-between and transitional space of waiting' (Schimanski and Wolfe 2017: 164), and in Western European narratives from around 1900 Constantinople is seen to represent qualities that are transitional, such as vicissitude, unpredictability and changeability.[3] As these examples show, the threshold is an established, recurring

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[3] Virginia Woolf's modernist novels are in many ways a late example of that trend. In *Orlando* (1928: 138), the male protagonist woke up in Constantinople to find out that 'he was a woman'. Another well-known example is E. M. Forster's novel *A Room with a View* where 'a comfortable pension at Constantinople' would mean 'a pension with magic windows opening on the foam of perilous seas in fairylands forlorn' (1908: 272).

spatial metaphor when Constantinople is named or described in literature, and more generally the threshold combines temporal and topographical borders (ibid.). Of particular importance for my exploration of Constantinople in the crisis of the early twentieth century is, therefore, the Bakhtinian chronotope of threshold, which (as mentioned above) Bakhtin (1981: 248) has also described as 'the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life'.[4]

As to the concept of world, it is operationalized as an analytic tool in this and other explorations of literary world-making and literary or aesthetic worlds. Naturally, *world* is much older than Bakhtin's coinage of chronotope from the 1920s, and its polysemic character is evident (see further Stefan Helgesson's Introduction to this volume). While we generally understand *world* as a spatial phenomenon, it must be noted that the English word *world* is etymologically based on the notions of man and time, which together make up the space named 'world' (Apter 2013: 180–1, Hayot 2012: 53, Spira 2019: 27). *World* is thus a relational spatial notion which implies a certain position in time and a certain perspective, in a similar way as the chronotope does. Moreover, and most importantly, *world* (as well as chronotope) can designate both the whole and parts of it, simultaneously. Consequently, as to the situation of Constantinople, there has never been any single Constantinopolitan world, only several different ethnic, linguistic and religious worlds. By means of various multilingual strategies, these worlds have been represented in literary texts published in different languages (Bodin 2020).

In this case the chronotope therefore provides the concept I need to explore the crisis of Constantinople, since it comes to its head not only in literature but also in historical time as *if it were* literature (Bakhtin 1981: 253–4; see also Kuusisto 2018: 211). Eric Hayot has observed how in Bakhtin's writings *chronotope* may occasionally coincide with or substitute for *world*. He finds that 'world' for Bakhtin 'names a chronotope-containing discourse, one that applies equally well to the representational sphere as the actual one' (Hayot 2012: 14).[5] Bakhtin even regards the mutual exchange between the literary work and the world it represents as 'chronotopic', as he writes: 'The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its

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[4] For a discussion of the more general interrelations between literature and crises, see Kovach, Nünning and Polland 2017, with a thorough bibliography.

[5] Hayot affirms how close Bakhtin comes to describing what he himself means by an aesthetic world. Yet Hayot argues for the advantages of using world, instead of chronotope, because of its 'special relationship to problems of totality, of self-enclosure, and of spatiotemporal relations' (2012: 15).

world as part of the process of its creation' (Bakhtin 1981: 254). In this way both these concepts, world and chronotope, allow for studies of the interrelation of worlds and texts – that is, of 'worlds in texts', as is the purpose of this chapter and this part of the present volume.

In the chronotope, indicators of time and space are fused with those of language and agency (ibid.: 84, 251 *passim*; Kuusisto 2018: 193, 219–20), with priority given to certain typical actions that stand out as possible, preferred and prioritized (Steinby 2013: 116–22). One such action of particular interest for the exploration of Constantinople in crisis, and its narrated site as a chronotope of crisis or threshold, is writing. As Subha Mukherji (2012: xvii–xviii) has emphasized, the threshold is 'so urgently the place of writing', and especially processes of writing and reading are 'activities that negotiate thresholds'. The chronotope of crisis is, furthermore, particularly instrumental in highlighting the significance of a crucial time at a certain place: 'In this chronotope [of threshold, of crisis]', Bakhtin (1981: 248) writes, 'time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time' (see also Steinby 2013: 115–16, 120, on '*kairos*' as the right point in time and of action).

Thus what matters for the chronotope of crisis (or threshold) is not a continuum of chronological time, but an experienced time which has instantaneous qualities. Yet if time is instantaneous, it may still have duration in a narration. This problem has been addressed by Susan S. Lanser and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in a narratological study of occupation narratives in various languages from Israel and Palestine – a situation and body of material which have striking similarities with the novels from Constantinople selected for analysis in this chapter. Lanser and Rimmon-Kenan (2019: 252) introduce a new term, *displaced narration*, by which they gain a more specified understanding of Bakhtin's chronotope, as they 'analyse the formal interaction between space and time by charting duration in tandem with location'. Displaced narration refers, thus, 'to events that *did* take place but could not be narrated within the story, and yet are reported later to a different, usually external narratee' (ibid.: 255).

By positing the narrated site of Constantinople as a chronotope of crisis, my intention in the subsequent analyses is to explore the interaction of time and space in the novels, and how the fusion of time and space with language and agency prompts certain actions. I particularly look for cases of displaced narration, guided by Lanser's and Rimmon-Kenan's study of occupation narratives, and for acts of writing, in accordance with Mukherji's suggestion that they are typical of thresholds. As is demonstrated, the particular features of this
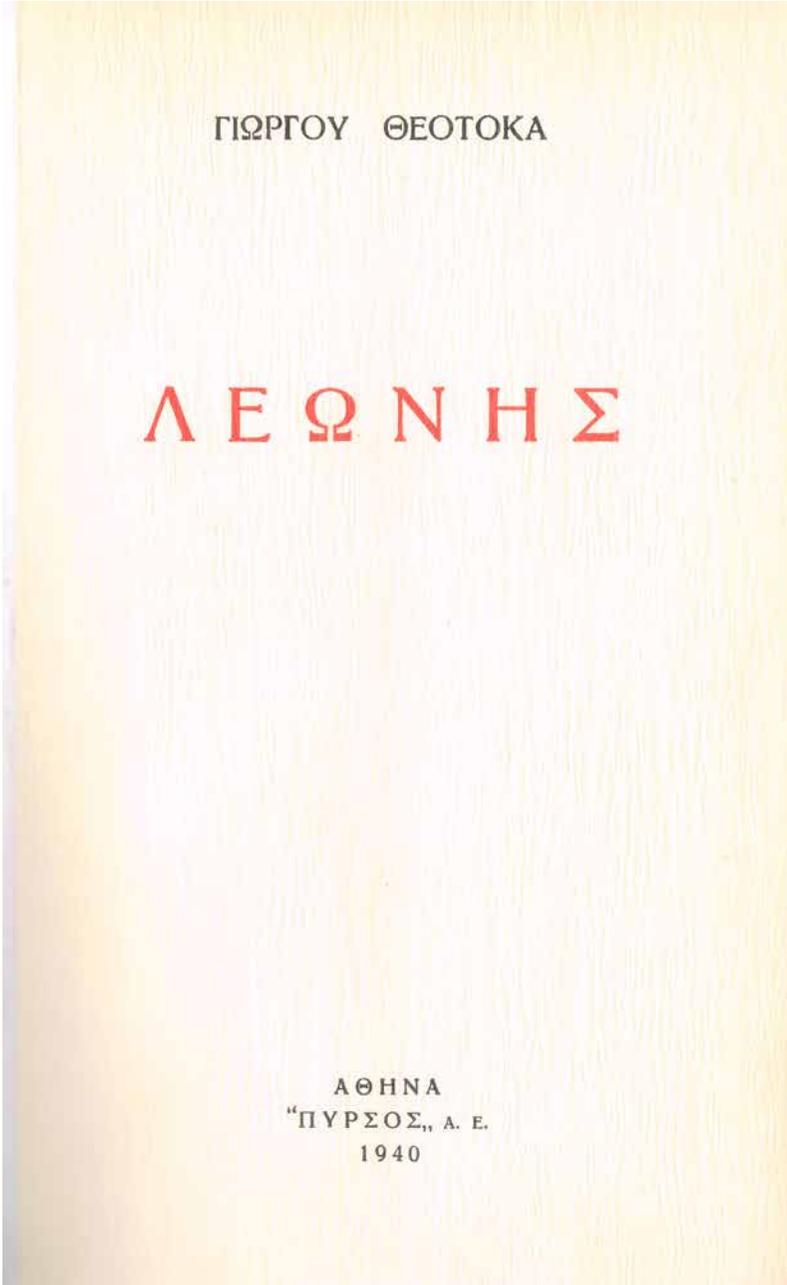
ΓΙΩΡΓΟΥ   ΘΕΟΤΟΚΑ

ΛΕΩΝΗΣ

ΑΘΗΝΑ
"ΠΥΡΣΟΣ,, Α. Ε.
1940

Figure 1.1 Title page of Theotokas's novel *Leonis* in Greek, published in Athens in 1940. Photograph by Helena Bodin.

Constantinopolitan chronotope characterize the literary world-making of the four selected novels in their different languages – Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Russian.

Leonis's lost Byzantine world

Yiorgos Theotokas's novel *Leonis* narrates, in a 'more or less standard demotic [Greek] throughout' (Mackridge 1986: 79), the childhood and teens of Leonis, a Greek boy who is born and raised in Constantinople in a bourgeois family who are 'genuine Phanariots' (Theotokas 1985: 27), which implies that they have close bonds to the Orthodox Christian Ecumenical Patriarchate and the city's Byzantine past. Leonis's undertakings are mostly described from his perspective by an extradiegetic narrator, but stylistically the novel follows the development of the eponymous little boy from a simple and naive to a more mature and complex perception. An effect of the perspective of the growing child is that no exact year is ever mentioned in the novel.[6] Instead, the historically informed reader comes to know about the outbreak of the First World War by way of Leonis overhearing and misunderstanding the cook's gossip (ibid.: 5–6). A little later, Leonis experiences how his friends' games change from one day to the next: 'instead of playing "thieves" or "slavery" or any of the usual games, they would play "the Great War"' (ibid.: 19). Other episodes concern Leonis's schooling in French, Greek and Turkish; his training in art at the Zographeio school; his engagement in a Boy Scout troop; his earliest feelings of love – at an early age for his Boy Scout leader Paul Proios, and later for a somewhat older girl, Eleni Phoka.

Theotokas worked on the novel in 1940, at an early phase of the Second World War (ibid.: xii, xiv, Doulis 1975: 80). Through the eyes of Leonis, he tells in retrospect about an earlier period of war in a still-cosmopolitan Constantinople with its many ethnicities and languages, including the armies of different nationalities passing by due to the war and the occupation of the city. In Chapter 5 there are German and Austrian soldiers in the streets, and in Chapter 10 the soldiers are French and British. The novel's focus is in Pera

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6   Chapter 1 includes some of Leonis's earliest memories, and when the First World War starts in Chapter 2, it is clear that his first narrated recollections are set earlier, perhaps as early as 1908 or 1909 (which seems to be likely, according to the author's birth in 1906).

(today's Beyoğlu), where Leonis's grandfather lives near Galata Serai, and there are several passages with long enumerations of the many peoples and languages in these quarters, for example the Russian refugees (Theotokas 1985: 66), the many nationalities of the pupils at school (ibid.: 79) and the cosmopolitan market place in the Skalakia (ibid.: 115).

In spite of its retrospective and internal perspective, Theotokas's novel is narrated with a sense of timelessness and a simultaneously temporal and spatial nostalgia (Mackridge 1986: 75–81). This nostalgia 'for a lost world and great historic moments' (Theotokas 1985: xii) was emphasized by the author in his note to the novel. These features – the loss of a world, in combination with a breaking point – are also characteristic of the Constantinopolitan chronotope of crisis. Furthermore, as we will see, the world of Leonis is often associated with his writing, which is thematized and sometimes even represented directly in the novel.

Leonis is described as exceptionally sensitive to his place in history and the idea that he has a fate. He can be overwhelmed by being a part of 'what the newspapers called History', as when the war is over and the British and French conquerors parade through the streets of Constantinople, a 'strange enchantment' grips him: 'the feeling that the City, Europe, the world were all just an endless theatrical scene, just as the Garden of the Taxim had once been, a scene in which nations moved, and armies, and commanders astride large parade horses' (ibid.: 61). As this passage suggests, Leonis regards the City – spelled with a capital C (or, in Greek, with a capital P, *Polis*) – as *a* world as well as *the* world, and it houses *his* world (Gr. *kosmos*). From his early years, Leonis's world is equivalent to the Taksim garden, the public park which forms his playground. Later, when the end of the Great War is celebrated in Taksim (ibid.: 59), the younger generation is saluted for 'opening a way towards a new and better world, a world of freedom and joy' (ibid.: 75). However, thoughts about the end of the world are also introduced from early on. They characterize Leonis's life in Constantinople and shape a recurring motif in the novel. Thus one of Leonis's memories from his earliest years, again from overhearing the cook's chat, is how he asked himself: 'Why was the world lost?' (ibid.: 6).

Yet another aspect of Leonis's world is its appearance when it is filled by and equalled to love, as when Leonis is overwhelmed by his love for Eleni Phoka. He writes her name several times in block letters on a new, white sheet of paper. While he reflects on the name, the letters and their sounds, his thoughts are soon directed to the strange process by which the letters make the girl become real to

him: 'How was it possible for such a creation to exist in the world?' (ibid.: 78).
At the same time, he asks himself if he is perhaps experiencing 'a vision, a self-deception, a fiction', but:

> Then something happened on the paper. Nothing changed and yet everything changed. The whiteness of the paper, the strange line of letters, everything became transfigured; their essence, their flavor, their fragrance altered. This name, this warmth, this brilliance, was not only something which existed, but it was the only thing that did exist. Without it the world was without substance and empty, with no meaning left … It was the world; it was life; it was Leonis's great ideal; the world and the reason for his existence was love …
>
> (Ibid.: 78–9)

This episode is rendered almost pictorially, as if an illustration had been pasted in the novel. Both the narration and the main text are interrupted by the girl's name, which is recorded three times and then once again, separately, with a question mark. Thereby this particular part of the page imitates, as in a picture (or, from a semiotic perspective, iconically) the white sheet of paper on which Leonis is printing the girl's name in block letters and listening to the letters' sounds. It goes without saying, but Leonis was obviously not printing Roman letters, as in the English translation, but Greek ones – ΕΛΕΝΗ ΦΩΚΑ – so the picture of her printed name appears differently in transcription and translation.[7] The empty space around Eleni Phoka's name in block letters announces her importance to the novel's readers, but at the same time this episode and layout points to the importance of writing for Leonis. It stands for love, and it both changes and forms the whole world. This is only one example of how the novel draws readers' attention to the ways in which the crucial acts of Leonis, acts that change his world, involve writing.

In a somewhat later episode, Leonis is dreaming about Eleni Phoka, and when he awakes, still in the night, he begins to speak aloud, not to himself but to 'Her': 'speaking in rhythm, as in a song, a rhythm which he had not chosen, a rhythm which had come upon him from elsewhere, alien to his will' (ibid.: 87–8). Then he asks himself what he is doing, and replies: 'I'm making a poem' (ibid.: 88). It is his French teacher's reciting of French prose (for example Chateaubriand) and poetry (particularly Verlaine) which has inspired him. Later, the French teacher encourages Leonis to cultivate his 'inclination toward literature' and recommends

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[7]   For further analyses of heterographics in literary texts, see Bodin 2018a.

that he write in French, because 'this language has about all the characteristics needed for playing the same role in Europe today that in another time Latin or Greek has played' (ibid.: 126). Leonis does not agree and counters, in defence of the language of his country, which literally happens to be Greek, although it is a new kind of Greek: 'I have no difficulty understanding an international ideal. I believe that I am up to a point sufficiently cosmopolitan, but there is one thing that binds me very tightly to my country, and that is precisely its language' (ibid.). He continues by describing his great joy when 'touching upon a fresh, new, unformed language … that this new language is just as much Greek as the language of Homer!' (ibid.: 127). Their conversation addresses, plainly, the problems of the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic within literature, between languages (French and Greek) as well as within one single language over time (Greek, with its Ancient and Modern varieties).[8] At the same time it is typical of the Constantinopolitan chronotope of crisis in which the novel is situated.

Chapter 20 presents Leonis's notes in his diary from 1 March to 1 June. As when his repeated writing of Eleni Phoka in block letters was rendered directly on the book page, the novel appears for almost ten pages in the shape of the actual diary written by Leonis, since there is no intermediary narrating instance.[9] For three months the diary interweaves the personal crisis of Leonis with the political crisis of Constantinople. It reflects his juvenile but genuine attempts to justify his role in the world, 'My God, when will I find the composure I need to create a work of art, to justify at last my existence in the world?' (ibid.: 123), as well as his great feeling of love for Eleni Phoka (ibid.: 128), side by side with reports from the war in Asia Minor (the Greco-Turkish War). The latter entries point to the year 1922.

Other diary entries tell about Leonis's friends Paul and Stasinos, who have volunteered as soldiers in the war in Asia Minor, as Leonis names it. He copies into his diary an excerpt from a letter he has received from Paul, who is in despair in Kiutahya (Kütahya) but is consoled when thinking on his fatherland (Gr. *patrida*): 'Whatever she is, she is my Country, and has sent me here to these wild plains, with the death that lurks all around, because she has need of

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[8] In his chapter on 'the possible openness of World Literature as a mode of literary study', Gregory Jusdanis has examined Theotokas's modernist manifesto, *Elelthero Pnevma* (Free Spirit), with special regard to how it rethinks Greece's relationship to Europe (2020: 137, 142). See also Krikos-Davis for Theotokas's 'life-long commitment to demotic' (1995: 140–1, at 141).

[9] For the similarities between on the one hand Leonis's fictional diary and on the other Theotokas's pocket diary from 1922 and letters from Athens in the early 1920s to his friend Sophoclis Dimitriadis, see Krikos-Davis 1995.

me' (ibid.: 128–9). Through this copying of the letter, Paul's words and love for Greece become repeated and shaped by Leonis's hand in a manner that serves to demonstrate their importance for Leonis. As the diary in this way enfolds the letter, layers of writing are stacked in the novel. Only two weeks later, though, on 1 June, Leonis ends his diary abruptly because of another message concerning his friend Paul: 'Paul Proios was killed. / I stop. I cannot write' (ibid.: 131). For a whole chapter the extradiegetic narrator has stepped aside and the words are Leonis's, represented by his writings in the diary. When Leonis cannot write any more, there is only silence left. The event of his friend Paul's death cannot be narrated at this point of the story, and this impossibility is expressed by Leonis as he stops writing. As will be demonstrated, this passage forms the beginning of the final part of the story, which deploys displaced narration.

When the next chapter, 21, opens, the extradiegetic narrator is back again, and the narration in the third person from the perspective of Leonis is resumed: it is autumn, and the city, described as 'a dull whiteness strewn untidily on the plain' (ibid.: 132), is no longer Constantinople but Athens. The break of the Asia Minor front and the fall of Smyrna in September 1922 are presented as having occurred recently, with the result that 'a whole population had fled to the Kingdom' (Gr. *Basileio*, i.e. Greece) (ibid.: 134), and crowds of refugees and Leonis's exile are mentioned in passing (ibid.: 133). In this way, Leonis's flight to Athens is passed over in silence, just like the circumstances of Paul Proios's death. This silence is without any narrative duration, although it seems to cover at least three or four months of Leonis's life. When the narrative resumes, Leonis is in Athens. It is stated that he is avoiding his art tools, and before the chapter ends Leonis has three times tried to paint again but failed: 'Something had been ruined in the process' (ibid.: 140). The Greek text uses in this case the same word (*chalasei*) for 'ruined' as when it was mentioned that the world 'is lost'. Leonis's world, Constantinople, and his art are both aspects of the same loss, or ruin. He concludes, 'I've lost my art', and realizes that his art was 'a bit of life which was becoming memory' (ibid.). What cannot be narrated verbally – Paul's death and Leonis's flight – is expressed as the loss of another medium (in this case visual art), as the loss of Leonis's painting and his identity as an artist. Also, when the crisis of Constantinople forces Leonis to leave his City and world, it implies that he leaves visual art for verbal art. As he has declared earlier, the language he chooses is Greek, not a modern cosmopolitan language such as French.

When Leonis runs into his friend Stasinos, who is in Athens following his medical discharge from the army, Leonis asks him: 'Why was Paul Proios

killed?' (ibid.: 137). They discuss possible reasons for their friend's death – perhaps Paul died not 'for ideologies' but because of his love for Eleni Phoka or for his country – but Stasinos closes: 'What can I say? Perhaps all this is a creation of my imagination. In the war, you know, the imagination goes haywire' (ibid.: 138). In this episode, Stasinos enters as the narratee – or rather as the interlocutor – who provides an occasion for Leonis to address the previously unnarrated event of Paul's death in the war. When Stasinos instead refers to his confused imagination, Paul's death presents itself as possible to narrate only in a (traumatic) fantasy.

A similar impression, that all their earlier life has been imagined, is presented by Leonis himself when he climbs the hills of Athens and remembers the Byzantine past across the sea, his friends and his early feelings of love in the Taksim garden. Suddenly it appears to him 'that nothing had intervened, that everything happening then was but a vision' (ibid.: 135). Instead, Leonis sees clearly what has actually happened, 'that great rending apart', in which his love had died. When climbing another of Athens's hills, Mount Hymettos, he repeats three times what his father had said on their arrival in Athens: 'we've lost whatever we had' (ibid.: 142–4), but he remembers also the next phrase: 'Now let's see how we come out of this' (ibid.: 142). The narratee, to whom Leonis addresses a speech, almost a prayer – 'Make of me whatever you want, to be a slave to serve you' (ibid.: 143) – is in this case an invented personification, whom he apostrophizes as 'Lady' (Gr. *Kyria*). In this situation, Leonis also concludes on the particular contradictions of his fate and place in history, and what these conflicts have done to him:

> I am two-fold: I am two I's and I don't know which of the two is the more genuine. I am a yes and a no … I am something that is dying and something that is trying to be born. … I am marked by the contradictions of my era. I am a child of the era, an offshoot of History.
>
> (Ibid.: 144)

Leonis is generally described as a typical example of a bourgeois novel, or as a *Bildungsroman* or a *Künstlerroman* based on the author's fictionalized autobiography (see, for example, Doulis 1975: 79–80, Tziovas 2003: 111–19). However, by being attentive to its chronotope of threshold, another story emerges, straddling that very threshold in space and time as it moves from *the* City, Constantinople, to the new (though yet more ancient) city, Athens, from which the final two chapters are narrated. The novel tells, then, not primarily a

linear story about a patriotic homecoming to Greece or about the artist-to-be. Rather, it narrates 'the great rending apart', to refer to Leonis's phrasing; it tells about entangled and conflicting cosmopolitan and nationalistic milieus, about contradictions (both historical and personal) and about resorting to writing when visual art is lost together with the world. In contrast to painting, writing unfolds in time as well as in a language.

Although the story about Leonis is often summarized as including his flight from Constantinople to an exiled life in Athens, we have seen that there is no such episode narrated in the novel. Instead, after Chapter 20, which presents the diary of Leonis in Constantinople, there is a narrative ellipsis before Chapter 21 begins in Athens. When Leonis stops writing his diary because of Paul Proios's death, it is also the end of the narration of his life in Constantinople. Thus the final part of the novel (Chapters 21 and 22), set in Athens, provides a case of displaced narration. Events that did take place but could not be narrated within the story are reported later, to different narratees – as in the conversation between Leonis and Stasinos, or in Leonis's prayer to an invented 'Lady'. Lanser and Rimmon-Kenan (2019: 255) pointed out that displaced narration usually involves three temporalities: 'the occasion when something happens, the occasion when it is not told, and the occasion when it *is* told and, further, is presented as something previously unspoken'. In the case of the novel *Leonis*, situated in the Constantinopolitan chronotope of crisis, it is significant that the displaced narration and its temporalities depend precisely on writing, as when Leonis writes in his diary that Paul Proios is killed (in the first temporality) but cannot tell about it (in the second temporality). On the occasion when the previously unspoken is told (in the third temporality), it is dismissed as a piece of imagination, as when it is stated that the discussed reasons for Paul Proios's death may just be invented, or when Leonis's recollections of his life in Constantinople appear as a vision.

'Constantinople fever' in springtime

Constantinople was one of the Armenians' intellectual and artistic centres, furthering many women writers, and in the early twentieth century Western Armenian dialects spoken there were gaining ground as a modern literary language (Rowe 2003: 17–21). Zabel Yessayan's short novel *My Soul in Exile*, regarded as a central work in her oeuvre (Beledian 2014: 48), was published in

Vienna by the Mekhitarist Press in 1922, the same year as Leonis in Theotokas's novel left Constantinople for Athens. Both of these Greek and Armenian novels, set in Constantinople, have in common that they refer to a shared Christian heritage (as well as to internal conflicts between Christian groups of different denominations) and to Byzantine history and practices. Moreover, artistry and painting play a salient role in the protagonists' selfhood. Theotokas's novel ends in Athens in 1922, when Leonis, after his exile from Constantinople, is no longer able to paint. Yessayan's *My Soul in Exile* opens with the return of an artist to Constantinople, about one decade earlier – perhaps while Leonis was still listening to the cook's gossip and playing thieves with his friends in the Taksim garden. No exact year is mentioned, but the novel is set in springtime, from April to May, after two events that are mentioned in passing – the Young Turk revolution of 1908 (Yessayan 2014: 4) and the Adana massacre of the Armenians in 1909 (ibid.: 13) – but still before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 (Merguerian 2014: ix).

In Yessayan's novel the artist who returns to her home in Constantinople is the protagonist-and-narrator, a young Armenian woman called Emma. She enters her father's almost deserted house in the well-known Armenian district of Bağlarbaşi on the Asian side of Constantinople (in Scutari, today's Üskudar), with the intention of launching an exhibition of her paintings. As this short novel of no more than forty pages evolves, Emma hangs her paintings in the big room of her father's house; she encounters her previous old teacher, Hrant Cherkezian, and remembers the beauty of his reading of 'a passage in Classical Armenian' (Yessayan 2014: 10); she happens to make the acquaintance of a famous Armenian poet, Mrs Siranush Danielian; she goes to a soiree at her friend Sophie Varvarian's house, which the poet also attends; she enjoys watching her aunt making rose jam; and she experiences a short love affair with Vahan Diran Bey, who is the president of the organizing committee of her planned public exhibition at the Alliance Française in Constantinople.

However, this is a story where, effectively, almost nothing happens or is ever accomplished, at least not in the sense of bringing about any change. One could say that there are very few events (in a narratological sense) and the absence of action, or even agency, is striking, akin to what Lanser and Rimmon-Kenan (2019: 248–9) describe as non-action and stasis, for example during long periods of waiting. There is, definitely, 'a lack of any plot' (Beledian 2014: 46). In Yessayan's novel, time is narrated as a continuous flow in which Emma's endless

introspective reflections take place. In front of her paintings, she finds them all to be 'shrouded in mist' (Yessayan 2014: 5). They seem to render her 'yearning and longing for a homeland' (ibid.), and she reflects on their 'helpless sorrow' (ibid.: 27). Mostly, Emma stays for entire days in the big room where she has hung her paintings, and this room forms the backdrop for parts of the continued narrative. Visitors come to see the exhibition, but as they sit down to rest a little, a few more friends come by, and eventually they all seem to forget why they actually came. Neither is the public exhibition of Emma's paintings at Alliance Française ever accomplished.

More than once, Emma is feverish and shivering in the evenings. On these occasions she experiences how boundaries of various kinds are dissolved, for example between herself and the surrounding garden; between the actual sensing of sounds and perfumes, and the memory of them; between the contours of the city's valleys, the islands' hills and the surrounding Marmara Sea; between a room, its flower decorations and her guests' features, faces and smiles – 'as if in a confused dream' (ibid.: 23). Open windows and doors, often facing towards the garden, signal transitional conditions and an in-between state, for example when Emma stands 'at the open window' and finds herself in a state where it is 'neither night nor day' (ibid.: 3), when in her memory 'closed doors are opening and past moments are reawakening' (ibid.: 4). She identifies with the motifs of her paintings, so that she herself encompasses the cypress, the spring, the boat adrift on the sea, as well as 'this woman waiting expectantly at a window' (ibid.: 27). The dispersion of Emma's self is in this particular case mirrored by the dissolved boundaries between the paintings and their artist. Thus it is Emma's fluctuating mood, her volatile emotions, her reflections and recollections that form the core of this narrative, not her actions. This is a story of evasive dreams, floating time and the potential disintegration of Emma's, the narrating I's, self (see Rowe 2003: 227–8).

The surrounding city of Constantinople reflects Emma's emotional state of mind. It is April when she returns there, and every transitional, weakened and confused state she experiences seems in one way or another to be connected with the spring nights, which are characterized by a certain instability, when everything 'becomes a dream, wild emotion, or nightmare' or 'mingles with everything else' (Yessayan 2014: 9). Emma regards the spring as a diffuse illness, which brings fever and unrest: 'In no other city in the world, perhaps, does the unrest of spring invade people's inner being in this supremely subtle, unhealthy

way' (ibid.). She even mentions the spring's affliction by the city's name – what is at stake is 'Constantinople fever, a sort of physical agitation inseparable from the city's spring nights' (ibid.).

The frequent in-between states which the novel describes and narrates situate *My Soul in Exile* within the Constantinopolitan chronotope of threshold. In spite of the narrated timelessness and Emma's and her friends' lack of agency, there are numerous examples of the particular kind of instantaneous time that is associated with the chronotope of crisis. The novel often narrates time by means of adverbials (and adverbial phrases) which express sudden changes, such as 'At this very moment' (ibid.: 6), 'Abruptly' (ibid.: 11, 24), 'I was startled' (ibid.: 11), 'Just when' (ibid.: 13), 'Unexpectedly' (ibid.: 15), 'But just then' (ibid.: 22) 'All at once' (ibid.: 25), 'Today' (ibid.: 30), 'At just that moment' (ibid.: 37) and 'suddenly' (ibid.: 39). Although they signal rapidly changing situations, change never occurs. Instead, phrases expressing iteration, such as 'in those hours' (ibid.: 30), 'Every day and every hour' (ibid.: 40) or the repeated mentions of sundown or sunrise (ibid.: 9, 14, 26, 41), underline that the suddenness is not singular. Rather, it should be regarded as *recurring* instances of the ceaseless flow of time which constitutes Emma's perception and self-narration (cf. Lanser's and Rimmon-Kenan's (2019: 250) proposal of 'the term "recurrent" to account for the multiple narration of multiple occurrences'). Hence the novel's many time adverbials serve the continuous volatility and unreliability of Emma's emotions as well as of the city in springtime, agitated by 'Constantinople fever'.

One episode that is narrated as happening 'unexpectedly' is Emma's encounter on the landing in Scutari with the famous Armenian poet Mrs Siranush Danielian, who is described as 'one of the most influential women in Constantinople' (Yessayan 2014: 15), a person whom Emma admires and whose book she is keen to discuss. Though they have never met before, the poet declares immediately how close they are to each other, since they are both Armenian artists: 'It's as if we were exiles in a remote foreign country. We're exiles in the land of our birth'. She continues: 'But we artists, at least, can become comrades in exile' (ibid.: 17–18). At first, Emma would prefer to become 'comrades in struggle', but soon she changes her mind and feels instead 'not just similar to her [the poet], but the same' (ibid.: 18). It is if they were 'two soul sisters: companions in exile' (ibid.). Again, Emma's person and self seem to commune with her surroundings – in this particular case, she equates herself with the poet as a woman and artist in exile. The poet's appearance in the novel points to the importance of artistic endeavours for the Armenians, as well as of the work of

women – as comrades and soul sisters. This motif is emphasized even more the next time the two female artists meet, at a soiree at the Varvarians'. When Mrs Danielian speaks about poetry at the soiree she appears to Emma as 'a self-assured, poised intellectual', and Emma reflects to herself on the dispersion of her people's potential aesthetic life: 'What richness, what magnificence has here remained infertile!' (ibid.: 25). The writing of poetry is thematized as not only an aesthetic but also an intellectual endeavour with a political goal.

Mrs Danielian has undertaken the formation of the organizing committee for Emma's exhibition at the Alliance Française, and although Emma becomes overwhelmed by emotions 'verging on fright' (ibid.: 23), she foresees a rapid change: 'I may become a leading personality in the renascent, resurgent Armenian community from one day to the next … ' (ibid.) She finds herself to be the centre of the guests' attention: 'At present, my artist's pride overrides everything else. … Art embellishes me and sets a halo over my head. It seems that from now on, every step I take will be a step on the road to glory' (ibid.). Emma envisages at this moment how she and her contribution become 'one of the cries of liberation' for the Armenians, and 'a new revelation' (ibid.). Yet before the soiree ends, Emma 'all at once' feels tired and drained, 'on the verge of tears' (ibid.: 25). In this way, Emma's strong but momentary and often volatile emotions frame the whole evening at the Varvarians'. Still, nothing really happens at the soiree, except Emma's intense emotions.

Not even Emma's love story with Diran Bey is narrated. When Emma has announced it as 'one of the stormiest, most beautiful, and most painful chapters of my life' (ibid.: 40), there is a narrative ellipsis after which their love for each other is mentioned as having ended many years ago. Emma's reflections in this last section of the novel (after the ellipsis) witness her extensive dependence on her memories: 'Every day and every hour, I relive those bygone moments' (ibid.); 'Memories invade my soul' (ibid.: 41); 'I feel that I am returning to my inner prison, which now is decorated with nothing but memories and desires' (ibid.). Thus it has been proposed that the story, as a whole, 'is recounted as her remembering her return to Constantinople' (Rowe 2003: 231). I would rather read the main part of the novel as a relatively straightforward narrative, after Emma's initial return to Constantinople, and its last section as an instance of displaced narration, in which Emma remembers and hints at what has not previously been narrated within the story – that is, the love between Diran Bey and herself. It is still springtime, and her friends – Hrant Cherkezian and the poet, Mrs Danielian – are waiting for her, and they remain 'companions in
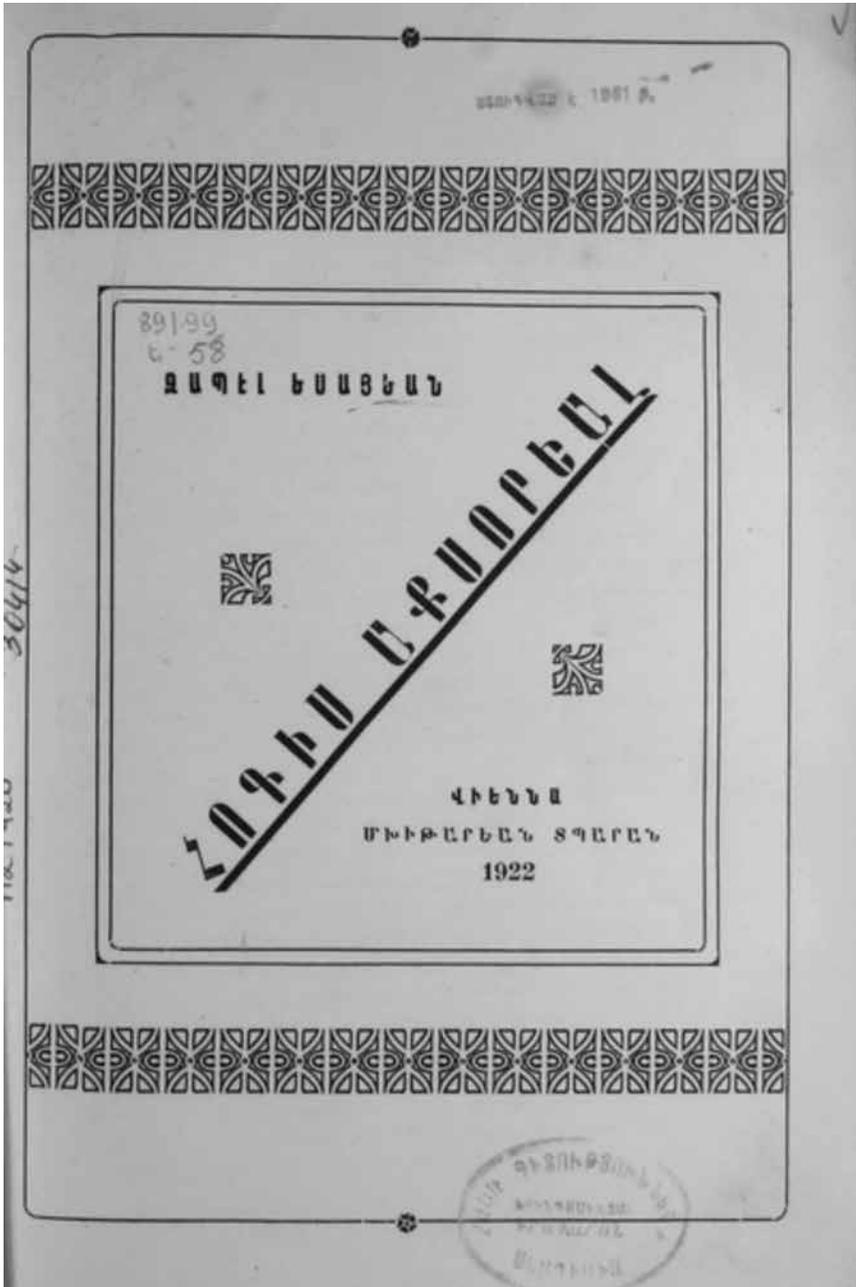
Figure 1.2 Cover of Yessayan's short novel *Hogis ak'soreal* in Armenian, published in Vienna in 1922. Available online at Union Catalog of Armenian Continuing Resources, http://tert.nla.am. Creative Commons CC BY-NC 3.0.
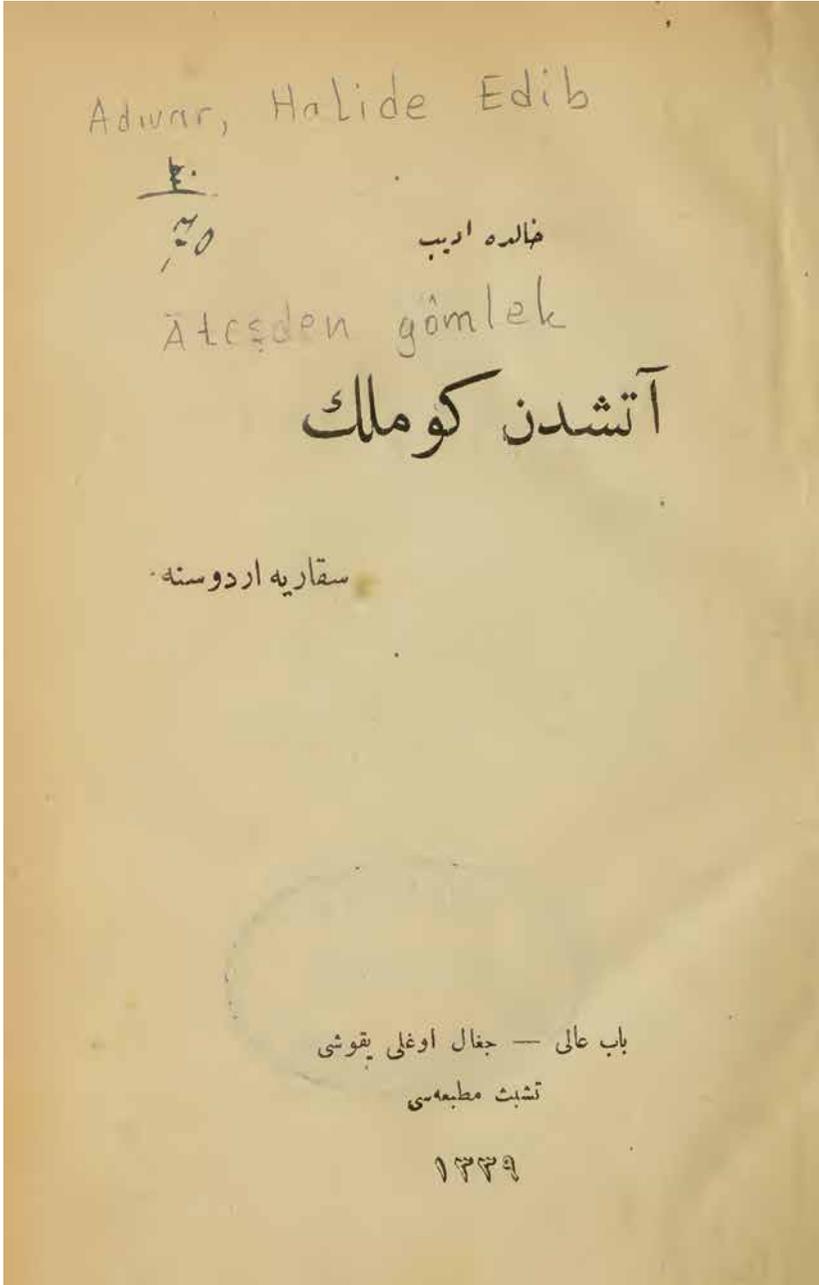
Figure 1.3 Cover of Edib Adıvar's novel *Ateşten Gömlek* in Ottoman Turkish, published in Istanbul in 1922. Available online at Internet Archive, https://archive. org/details/tedengmlek00advauoft/page/n4/mode/2up.

exile' (Yessayan 2014: 41). Eventually, though, Emma decides not to pay Mrs Danielian a visit but to 'remain alone', as she makes her way 'to the remotest recesses of the garden beneath the blossoming cherry trees' (ibid.). Although it is never explicitly mentioned from where Emma narrates this period of her life, beginning with her return to Constantinople in springtime, it seems as if this is the point from which her story is – fictively – articulated. Emma's garden functions in this novel as a miniature of the chronotope of crisis or threshold; she never leaves it but remains in her in-between stasis.[10]

The Shirt of Flame as a disease

In 1922, the same year as Yessayan's short novel was brought out by an Armenian publishing house in Vienna, Halide Edib Adıvar's melodramatic, patriotic and romantic novel *The Shirt of Flame* was published in Ottoman Turkish. Only a few years later it was self-translated into English by the author, and after the script reform it was intralingually translated into Modern Turkish. It is structured as a frame narrative which uses several written, although fictive, sources – a diary and letters. Its main story begins in Istamboul, as Constantinople is named in the Turkish novel, focusing on the events of 1919–1920 which led to the shutting down of the Ottoman Parliament. After the first four chapters it evolves further towards and into Anatolia during the Greco-Turkish War in 1920–1921. The frame story represents the continuous writing of the diary in the present tense, with entries added between 3 November and 17 December 1921. The main story is therefore narrated as the diarist's recollections of Constantinople and the war in Anatolia. He is a Turk named Peyami, thirty-six years old, a former scribe and civil servant at the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. As an interpreter who knows Greek and can take photographs and read Greek papers (Adıvar 1924: 193, 197), Peyami is sent to the western Anatolian front.[11] Thereby he is able to follow two of his friends, Ihsan and Ayesha (Tu. *Ayşe*) in the war, where Ihsan serves as an officer and Ayesha as a nurse.

[10] See also Rowe, who regards *My Soul in Exile* as part of a larger trend, as 'the beginning of a post-Genocide trend in which the figure of the Armenian passes through life, alone and alienated from the world' (2003: 232).

[11] The Swedish translation by Hjalmar Lindquist names in this case the Greek papers, 'Rizospastis' and 'Kathymerini' (Adıvar 1928: 190), and translates their names as, approximately, The Radical and The Daily (Sw. '"Radikalen" och "Den dagliga"', Adıvar 1928: 265).

The novel's title, *The Shirt of Flame*, refers to the particular fervour for the Turkish people and nation that at times grips Peyami and his friends and fellow officers (on the further symbolism of the title see Seyhan 2008: 55). However, when Peyami notes down his memories from the war he is lying in hospital in Angora (today's Ankara) waiting for surgery, since he has lost both his legs in the Battle of Sakarya and still has a bullet in his head (Adıvar 1924: 192). Eventually, as we will see, the story forms a tragedy in which all its heroic characters, including the wounded scribe-and-narrator, die. This is also how Peyami describes his life, in terms of a tragic opera: 'We are walking continually through a decorated background, talking, gesticulating and shouting, even falling here and there and dying' (ibid.: 171). His friend Ihsan uses a similar metaphor, as he compares his earlier life in Constantinople, before the war, to 'the overture to the Opera, the light and mixed melody before the real music of the tragedy' (ibid.: 207).

In this nexus of time, space and significant actions (such as writing a diary) in the novel's representation of the chronotope of crisis, Ayesha in particular appears as a symbol with national pretensions. She enters the narrative and the Constantinopolitan scene with injuries from Smyrna (today's İzmir), her native city, and she plays the symbolic as well as political and ideological role of personifying the suffering of the Turkish city of Smyrna under its Greek occupation. At the same time she contrasts herself, a simple Anatolian woman, with the Europeanized women in the city – 'They are fashionable people and I am only an Anatolian woman in mourning' (ibid.: 226) – and to Peyami she also represents the whole of the nation: 'a symbol of love, strength and pity, a symbol of my suffering country, in the midst of fire and blood' (ibid.: 236). In this way Ayesha has a triple function, symbolizing Smyrna, the Anatolian countryside and the Turkish nation. Azade Seyhan (2008: 52) dubbed Ayesha 'the walking symbol of a national trauma', a trauma which no doubt includes the contrasts between the cosmopolitan cities of Smyrna and Constantinople and the vernacular Anatolia, with its heavy dialects – though these are rendered in English in the translation (Adıvar 1924: 128, 137).

As is well known, the novel's feminist author, Halide Edib Adıvar, is herself represented, although anonymously, in one of the novel's episodes. The novel narrates the particular demonstration in which she gave a famous speech in May 1919, and one of her pithy phrases, 'The people were our friends and the government our enemies', is quoted by Peyami in his diary (ibid.: 39, Seyhan 2008: 53). From a narratological perspective, this implies a metalepsis; it is as if the author's invented characters had been present at the real meeting, listening

to her grand speech, or as if the author was a minor character in her own novel. Without doubt, Edib Adıvar has been eager to demonstrate her political importance in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation. When Peyami in his diary describes the huge Sultanahmet demonstration in the centre of Constantinople, he deliberately emphasizes the difference between the actions of the former empires and those of the new nation. According to Peyami, the Turks were instituting a new kind of observance instead of triumphal parades: 'on this white and eternal Hippodrome no review or race either of Byzantine splendour or Ottoman grandeur had been sanctified by the tears of a whole nation. Is it the new and divine Spirit which has begotten Turkey, teaching the Turks this wonderful observance of the spirit?' (Adıvar 1924: 37–8).

On the other hand, ethnic antagonism is expressed in a peculiar passage where Peyami views his own people, the Turks, through the eyes of their enemies, so that 'the victor's world' is contrasted to 'us':

> All mankind put a black mark on our faces, and spat at it. They, the victor's world, considered us not only as the assassins of the Armenians but also as enemies of civilization because we went into the war with the Germans, destroyers of civilization. We were barbarous and tyrannical and it was the duty of civilized men to exterminate us.
>
> (Ibid.: 20)

In a critical phase of the story, in March 1920, Peyami as its scribe-and-narrator cannot take part in the events, since he has fallen seriously ill with typhoid. Instead, he has to rely on what Ayesha, from her female perspective, relates about the British occupation of Constantinople in four letters addressed to him, dated 18, 20 and 25 March and 1 April 1920 – letters which he quotes in his journal a year and a half later. The use of Ayesha's letters as a source text, copied into Peyami's diary, underlines both the novel's reliance on epistolary and diary genres and the attention it pays to women's experiences.

Among many other things, Ayesha describes a situation which involves the conflicts between Turks, Greeks and Armenians in Constantinople and their prejudices about each other's poor knowledge of languages. An Armenian interpreter, who helps the British soldiers evacuate Turkish houses in Constantinople, presupposes that Ayesha 'does not speak any language', that she is 'ignorant and not used to good treatment' (ibid.: 74). As a matter of fact, Ayesha is as fluent in French as the many Constantinopolitan Turkish ladies who arrange salons from which they spread propaganda, intended to reach European newspapers. As Peyami describes in his diary, his mother is one of these ladies.

In another episode, where an English journalist is invited to such a salon to listen to Ayesha, he has to reveal his bad French in conversations with his Turkish hostess and her guests (ibid.: 45).

As Peyami's recollections move from Constantinople to the battlefront, and eventually to the hospital in Angora from which he writes his diary, the main story and its narrative frame begin to converge in both space and time. The story's direction – from the capital of the falling Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, to the Anatolian city, Angora, which will soon be proclaimed the new capital of the coming Turkish Republic – is characteristic of the Constantinopolitan chronotope of crisis. While the novel in this respect narrates the movement from empire to nationhood, it also explicitly thematizes acts of writing, since the frame narrative is composed in the diary genre (including letters, as well), and the diarist himself is a professional scribe and interpreter.

At the hospital, Peyami is waiting for surgery, which eventually causes his death and leaves the reader with his unfinished diary as of 17 December 1921. The novel ends with a short dialogue between two doctors, who discuss Peyami's case and mention the diary he has left behind. A few months after Peyami's death, their investigations have surprisingly found that no such persons as Ihsan and Ayesha exist. The doctors thus conclude that Peyami's notes are due to 'the effect on his mind of the bullet' (ibid.: 267), and they decide to assign a medical diagnosis in Latin to the phenomenon of Peyami's 'shirt of flame' (signifying his devoted commitment to and enthusiasm for Constantinople's and Turkey's coming sovereignty). What he has recounted in this diary are, then, only hallucinations, the effects of his war wounds. If Peyami's friends, as we know them from his diary, are fabrications, then his diary is a piece of fiction and equal to the novel we read. Since Peyami's diary at this moment is paradoxically presented as pure imagination, the end of the narrative may be regarded as one more metalepsis (in this case from Peyami's diary to the published novel). As a further consequence, it may also be the novel itself which is diagnosed as a deadly war wound, since the doctors assign their medical diagnosis in Latin – literally – to Peyami's 'shirt of flame', that is, to the novel with precisely this title, *The Shirt of Flame*.[12]

As we have seen, *The Shirt of Flame* is a narrative where space functions both literally and symbolically (see Lanser and Rimmon-Kenan 2019: 254–5): it names

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[12]   For other perspectives on the ending of *The Shirt of Flame*, see Göknar 2014: 334 and Seyhan 2008: 55.

several places in Constantinople and Anatolia, and both Smyrna, occupied by Greece, and the emergent Turkish nation are personified by Ayesha. Furthermore, the novel exemplifies an intriguing case of displaced narration: its frame narrative presents itself as composed in a situation of long waiting (when Peyami is to undergo surgery in the hospital), which forms rather a non-action than an action (see ibid.: 248, 263), although Peyami uses his time to write his diary. The main story Peyami tells (in the first temporality of the displaced narration) is of the Constantinopolitan occupation and the early phase of the Greco-Turkish War. Yet what he does not say in the battlefield (in the second temporality of the displaced narration) is that he loves Ayesha (Adıvar 1924: 249). His love remains unspoken until he actually writes his journal (in the third temporality of the displaced narration). But by that time Ayesha has already died in the war.

If *The Shirt of Flame* is regarded in this way as a displaced narration, it is possible to tie its political, patriotic and ideologically nationalistic aspects together with its love story. The characters who symbolically represent the new nation state and its Anatolian foundation are all killed in the battles. Peyami, the scribe-and-narrator, who represents the cosmopolitan, Europeanized milieu of Constantinople, does not tell about his love for Ayesha, personifying the new nation, until it is too late (cf. Göknar 2014: 334). His explicit wish, recorded in his diary, is to be buried at the feet of Ayesha and Ihsan, his friends from Constantinople and from the battlefield. According to Peyami's account, nothing is left – neither the characters, nor the result of their struggles. What remains is the novel with its particular use of writing (in the form of distinctly written genres such as a diary and letters), a significant act within the Constantinopolitan chronotope of crisis, but in this case it has been labelled as a disease and assigned a medical diagnosis in Latin. By means of metalepsis, the novel ends by regarding itself as a war wound.

A Russian revolutionary blast

During the same period as is narrated in *The Shirt of Flame* – a few years after the end of the First World War and the Russian Revolution – Constantinople had become flooded with Russian refugees. In 1920–1921 Il'ia Zdanevich (also known as Il'iazd) was one of the avant-garde Russian poets with a revolutionary agenda who stayed temporarily in Constantinople. He was on his way from Tbilisi to Paris, from one to another of these three influential cultural centres of

the early twentieth century: Tbilisi, Constantinople and Paris. Unlike Zdanevich, many of the Russians in Constantinople had supported the White Army against the Red Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War (1917–1923). Solita Solano, the American journalist reporting from Constantinople in June 1922 (as quoted above), described the rapid shift in their fortunes from nobles to beggars, from wealth to homelessness:

> A few Russians have been lucky enough to find positions in restaurants as waitresses or coatboys. A princess may bring the patron's coffee and a general hand him his stick. Professors, ex-millionaires, women of high birth, beseech one to buy cigarettes or paper flowers. A small colony in Pera has taken possession of an embankment and hung up two blankets to make it seem homelike.
>
> <div align="right">(Solano 1922: 654)</div>

Descriptions and enumerations of the many people of various ethnicities and languages crossing the Galata Bridge over the Golden Horn is a topos in travelogues from Constantinople (Tekdemir 2017, Bodin 2020: 787). When Solano describes this scene, she mentions first of all – before people of Armenian, Greek, Western European, American, Chinese, Japanese and Persian origin – the Russians, since they are so many; she notes 158,000 as of October 1920 (Solano 1922: 655). Escaping from one war, they had arrived in Constantinople at the time of the Greco-Turkish War. When the Russian Empire falls, the Russian refugees contribute to intensifying the crisis of Constantinople, narrated as situated within the chronotope of threshold.

This is the case in Zdanevich's novel *Philosophy* (*Filosofiia*), which, though it is certainly a piece of avant-garde aesthetics, is set in an accurately depicted Constantinople with its districts, important streets and waters in place. The novel presents nearly 300 pages or twenty chapters of intricacies and absurdities which are often associated with communication problems, and in particular with the problem of writing (Biryukov 2008). For example, there is the hope of being cured and regaining health by dissolving in water the name of the disease, written on a piece of paper; moreover, there is an alphabet of flowers to be deciphered. Among the characters, called by more or less absurd names, there is an Ethiopian eunuch, formerly at the sultan's harem and now serving as attendant of a library, an insane Jew who knows astrology and predicts the end of Christian culture in a few generations, and a group of Russian refugees who reclaim Hagia Sophia as a Christian cathedral (as was demanded by the Russians during the First World War, see Zdanevich 2008: 812, n. 17, Kudriavtsev 2016: 124–7). Last but not least, there is also the planning of a revolutionary conquest

of Stambul (the old town of Constantinople), in which the novel's protagonist, Il'iazd (namesake of the author), is involved, and this plot includes blowing up Hagia Sophia (Kudriavtsev 2016: 128).

The last chapter of Zdanevich's novel opens abruptly: 'Constantinople was no more' (Zdanevich 2008: 464; my translations from here on). What has happened is the revolution, presented as a magician, as 'the sole marvel on the earth' (ibid.: 465). At this point it is articulated several times that 'Constantinople has ceased to exist' (ibid.: 464–5), but at the same time it is clear that everything is new – 'the world is new' (ibid.: 465). The city has been 'called to life according to the will of the northern philosopher' (ibid.: 466) – that is, by Lenin. Thus Constantinople is renamed Leningrad, a name which at that time was still available, since Petrograd (former Saint Petersburg) was not called Leningrad until the death of Lenin in 1924 (see further ibid.: 814, n. 1). Walking the empty streets of the city after the blast, Il'iazd understands that 'it's all over' (ibid.: 468). By this sudden turn, the city is no longer crowned by the emperor or tsar (as in Constantinople, referring to Constantine the Great, the first Byzantine emperor, and *Tsar'grad*, the city's Russian name). Instead, it bears the name of Lenin: 'Leningrad! Finally, it was right before Il'iazd, the great city' (ibid.: 466).

Since it is an avant-garde work, Zdanevich's novel is a hard piece to examine properly as regards its narrative strategy. Nevertheless, I propose its last chapter as an instance of displaced narration. After Il'iazd, in the penultimate chapter, is informed about the revolutionary intrigue and its complicated plans, he is away for some twenty hours, and then Constantinople has suddenly ceased to exist. However, neither the blowing up of Hagia Sophia nor the revolution is narrated. In the last chapter the blast and the revolution are presented as accomplished facts as Il'iazd walks the streets of the new city and new world. The novel's absurdist and utopian programme seems, though, to displace even the displaced narration: what actually happened remains obscure – as so often before in Constantinople.

One literary world in different languages

In this chapter I explored the narration of the crisis of Constantinople in the protracted breakdown between 1908 and 1922, when empires were falling and the extension of new, emergent or extended national states was trialled. The crafting of Constantinople as an immanent literary world has been examined in

four novels in Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Russian, all set in Constantinople during this period. I posited the city's narrated site as a Bakhtinian chronotope, and more precisely as a chronotope of crisis or threshold, to explore this particular crisis of Constantinople between the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Turkish nation.

As the literary analyses have indicated, there are several features of this chronotope of crisis or threshold between 1908 and 1922 which particularly characterize Constantinople as a literary or aesthetic world. The selected novels describe definitely one and the same real city (although with a focus on different districts), often the same historical events or disasters (although from disparate perspectives) and several similar experiences of being in an in-between state, perhaps of waiting, fever or malady, sometimes articulated in the form of perceptions of a surrounding world that is illusive and evasive (as in *Leonis*), unreal and dreamlike (as in *My Soul in Exile*), theatrical or operatic (as in *The Shirt of Flame*), or just absurd (as in *Philosophy*). Moreover, the novels recollect or reclaim 'a lost world' and deploy displaced narration as a prominent narrative strategy. Acts of writing are constitutive of the novels and seem to be self- and meta-reflective, as they are thematized on different narrative levels, and issues of writing appear in narrated critical discussions of artistic and literary works. Sometimes writing has proved to be of decisive significance for the novels' subgenres, as when they are entirely or partially diary novels with embedded epistolary sections. Consequently, protagonists and characters who are (or aspire to be) writers, poets, artists, interpreters, scribes or agitators have been the focus of attention.

In none of these respects, however, has the author's ethnicity (or nationality) or language been decisive. Rather, the novels appear as strikingly congruous in spite of their different national and linguistic domains – traditionally, they are included in Modern Greek, Western Armenian, Turkish or avant-garde Russian literatures, respectively. Yet there are differences, in particular concerning the point or place to which the novels take their readers, and consequently also as regards the various perspectives of the metaphorical Constantinopolitan chronotope of threshold from which their characters are speaking. Thus the Greek novel takes us from Constantinople to Athens, where its exiled young protagonist Leonis is about to begin a new life. The final lines of the Turkish novel, pronounced by doctors at a hospital in Angora, invalidate its entire story by assigning a medical diagnosis to the deceased protagonist-and-narrator's endeavour for his nation and, by extension, to the entire novel which wears the shirt of flame as its title.

The Russian novel makes Constantinople completely new, into a new world, by a revolutionary marvel, and renames it Leningrad. While these three novels leave Constantinople behind, because of exile, tragedy or a revolutionary explosion, the Armenian novel remains in Constantinople, where Emma, the artist, stays in the garden of her father's house, alone with her memories – she does not even go to see the poet, her soul sister and comrade in exile.

It has been emphasized that 'border fictions change dominant conceptualizations of who inhabits and can speak for the border' (Rosello and Wolfe 2017: 13). If applied to our analysed novels (and their authors and characters), it is clear that all inhabit the border zone or metaphorical threshold of Constantinople in crisis between 1908 and 1922 and *can* speak for it, in their various languages – at a time when the city's multiplicity of languages and scripts will soon be set aside in favour of national Turkish monolingualism and its Roman alphabet. Ever since then, the city, be it named Constantinople or Istanbul, has continued to be narrated in novels composed in its former vernacular languages (of which some, at that time, were emerging as national and literary languages) or in the European languages of its Western visitors and residents.

About three generations after the 1920s, after the birth of the Turkish Republic and the Turkish script reform, Orhan Pamuk – writing in Modern Turkish, of course – was awarded the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature. Concerning the relation between Istanbul and his works, Pamuk declared in his address to the Swedish Academy:

> For me the center of the world is Istanbul … because for the last thirty-three years I have been narrating its streets, its bridges, its people, its dogs, its houses, its mosques, its fountains, its strange heroes, its shops, its famous characters, its dark spots, its days, and its nights, making them part of me, embracing them all. A point arrived when this world I had made with my own hands, this world that existed only in my head, was more real to me than the city in which I actually lived.
>
> (Pamuk 2007: 414)

Pamuk credits his novels for having instituted Istanbul as the centre of the world, which he earlier saw as far away from his city and its lives (ibid.: 413): 'there was a world literature, and its center, too, was very far away from me' (ibid.: 410). Clearly, Pamuk's talk is a strong vindication of literature's world-making power. But, contrary to Pamuk's view that this has been accomplished by his novels, my aim in this chapter has been to demonstrate that the four analysed novels reveal that

Pamuk's home city was certainly already the centre of the world a century earlier, while the crafting of this earlier Constantinople as a literary or aesthetic world has been scattered in the literature of several different languages (Bodin 2020). As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, three of the selected novels were also circulated in translation into various (Western) languages – in the case of the novels in Greek and Turkish from quite early on, while the Armenian novel was translated only recently (and the Russian novel remains a non-translated and posthumously published avant-garde work). These translations have basically enabled – and conditioned – my reading of them as examples of narratives situated within the Constantinopolitan chronotope of threshold. In this respect, another important point is that more recently Turkish translations of both the Greek and Armenian novels have appeared, so that readers of today, with their various connections with today's Istanbul, may share each other's stories from and about the city's former life, originally composed in different languages.[13]

In Zdanevich's novel, Hagia Sophia was blown up and Constantinople was renamed Leningrad, but in reality the city has endured as an immanent literary world crafted in various languages and as parts of various national literatures. Still, many years after the resolution of the historical crisis, readers of different languages may experience Constantinople before 1922 as a multilingual literary world from the various perspectives of the city's different ethnicities and languages, with or without aid from inter- and intra-lingual translations, and *they can live there imaginatively* (for this expression see Ekelund 2021). As this chapter demonstrates, readers may experience Constantinople as a literary (or aesthetic) world in which writing itself is challenged, questioned or interrupted, irrespective of whether the language and discourse are Greek, Armenian or Turkish, or in which writing, as in the Russian case (as a means of communication and signification), is driven to the extreme by its revolutionary creation of a totally new and renamed city.

In political and social reality, the multilingual cosmopolitan city, which historically had been the capital of two empires, came to an end and its official name was changed to Istanbul. Our four examined novels trace this break-up but do not give in to it, as they narrate the crisis in each of their languages. As

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[13] *Leonis* was published in Turkish in 2008, translated by Damla Demirözü. Yessayan's works are published in Turkish by Aras, an Istanbul bilingual publishing house with books in both Armenian and Turkish, which regards itself as the present-day representative of the long history of Armenian publishing legacy (https://www.arasyayincilik.com/hakkimizda/).

a literary world, Constantinople keeps transgressing single national literatures, and the narration of its crisis makes a linguistically multifaceted contribution to world literature.

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The worlds of multiglossia in modern Chinese fiction: Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' and the 'Shaky House'

Lena Rydholm

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of diglossia, translingual practice and multiglossia in modern Chinese fiction in the early twentieth century, based on a close reading of Lu Xun's (1918) influential short story 'A Madman's Diary', which has been regarded as the first instance of modern Chinese fiction written in the vernacular.[1] Reformists within the New Culture Movement, such as Lu Xun, advocated 'Western learning' and the abolishment of traditional culture and Confucianism to build a modern Chinese nation, able to resist foreign imperialism. Nation building also required a unified written national language in the vernacular, and a literature in this language (Hu Shi [1918] 1970). This study shows how Lu Xun 魯迅 (Zhou Shuren 周樹人1881–1936), in his efforts to reform the 'real' world, made modern literary fiction the arena for a battle of languages and ideas.

In 'A Madman's Diary', the narrative structure is constructed as a diglossic battle between the juxtaposed Preface, written in the classical literary language *wenyan* 文言, and the Diary, written in the vernacular *baihua* 白話. Through their allegiances with competing worldviews and ideologies, *wenyan* and *baihua* are the main contestants (Zhou 2011, Rydholm 2018). This study aims to show how the binary opposition between the Preface and the Diary is undermined, ideologically and linguistically, by a third contestant – what in my view may be described in Lydia Liu's (1995) terms as Western 'translated modernity' and

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[1] This is a question of both definition (see Shih 2001: 85 note 43) and impact. According to David Wang (2010: 479), Chen Hengzhe's 'One Day' (1917), a short story published in *US Student Quarterly*, could have been seen as 'the first example of modern Chinese vernacular literature' had it reached more readers in China.

'translingual practice'. I also aim to show that this has further implications for the reading of this literary work.

The analysis of 'A Madman's Diary' is preceded by a short introduction to diglossia in pre-modern China and the New Culture Movement, to the May Fourth writers and the Shaky House (Zhou 2011), and, finally, to Lydia Liu's translingual practice.

Diglossia in pre-modern China and the New Culture Movement's calls for language reform

For two millennia in China the classical literary language *wenyan* was used in the bureaucracy and in high literature, philosophy and history. In the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) the First Emperor ordered a unification of the script, and subsequently a standardized written language developed (Chen 1999: 67). A unified written language in government administration was required to cope with dialectal diversity and keep control of the vast empire. Men of the ruling class studied the Confucian classics and the literary writing style to pass the civil service examination (a system abolished in 1905), while the population at large was illiterate. According to Norman (1988: 250), the development of *wenyan* created a sociolinguistic situation that rather fits with Ferguson's 1964 definition of diglossia, with a High and a Low language with different functions. Ferguson (quoted by Norman: ibid.) depicts High language in a way that is quite compatible with *wenyan*:

> a very divergent, highly codified … superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community … which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.[2]

The Low language in the Chinese context was the written vernacular, *baihua*, with roots in folk songs, translations of Buddhist texts, oral storytelling, etc. (Børdahl 2010: 1). *Baihua* became a vehicle for popular fiction, such as the famous novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties, but fiction as a genre continued to have low status up to the late nineteenth century (Rydholm 2014). Although

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[2]   Ferguson (1964: 435), quoted by Norman (1988: 250).

the literati enjoyed reading and writing fiction in contemporary vernacular, '*wenyan* was considered refined and elegant, thus ideal for high-culture functions, while *baihua* was despised as coarse and vulgar, suitable only for low-culture functions' (Chen 1999: 69). As Norman (1988: 246) notes, '[b]efore the time of the May Fourth Movement, it [*baihua*] was considered fit only to be a vehicle of popular entertainment'.

In addition, *wenyan* was a cosmopolitan language, the *scripta franca* of the elites of East Asia up to the twentieth century (Denecke and Zhang 2015: VIII). It was also the vehicle of a cosmopolitan Confucianism (Levenson 1971: 5, Hu and Elverskog 2016: 1), promoted by the rulers of the last Qing dynasty (Guy 2016: 51–2) that fell after the 1911–1912 revolt. The semi-colonization of China by Western and Japanese imperialists after its defeats in the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century and the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) led to the rise of a 'national salvation' *jiu guo* 救國 discourse among students and intellectuals in the early twentieth century. The aim was to build a strong, modern Chinese nation, free from colonial powers. Many reformists believed that this required abandoning Confucian values and traditional culture in favour of 'Western learning'. A strong nation also required a unified national language, a written language closer to the spoken language, intelligible for the entire population and not only the educated elite. The European idea of nation-ness being connected with a specific language, as stated by J. G. von Herder (1744–1803), served as an example (Anderson 1983: 67–8, Zhou 2011: 129). So did the successful language reform of Japan's Meiji period (1868–1912) (Chen 1999: 70). The creation of a 'uniform, easily comprehensive written language' had been crucial for the development of a modern Japanese state (Twine 1983: 115).

The journal *New Youth Xin qingian* 新青年, started by Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) in 1915, became a vehicle for the New Culture Movement, promoting the reform of language and literature. In Hu Shi's 胡適 (1891–1962) manifesto in *New Youth* in 1917, he demanded the reform of Chinese literature and criticized literature written in *wenyan* for being void of substance and full of old clichés, while he condoned the use of 'vulgar [vernacular] words and expressions' 俗字俗語 (Hu [1917] 1970: 467).[3] Chen Duxiu supported Hu Shi's claims in the subsequent issue, criticizing the highly ornamented *wenyan* literature of the aristocrats, demanding a plain and 'intelligible, popular literature for society in

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[3] For a short introduction to the reformists' discourse on revision of language and literature in manifestos by Liang Qichao, Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu, see Rydholm (2018).

general' 明瞭的，通俗的社會文學 (Chen [1917] 1970: 563). In 1918, again in *New Youth*, Hu Shi stated:

> The supreme goal of my 'On the construction of a new literature' can be summed up in just ten big characters 'a literature in our national language, a national language for literature' … why has there been no true, no living literature written in *wenyan*? … It is because the literature that the literati in the past two millennia have produced is all dead, because it is all made of a written language that is already dead. A dead written language can definitely not produce a living literature … If China wants to have a living literature, we must use the vernacular, we must use our national language, we must create a literature in our national language.[4]
>
> 我的「建設新文學論」的唯一宗旨只有十個大字：「國語的文學，文學的國語」…… 何以沒有眞有價值眞有生命的「文言的文學」？…… 這都因爲這二千年的文人所做的文學都是死的，都是用已經死了的語言文字做的。死文字決不能產出活文學 …… 中國若想有活文學，必須用白話，必須用國語，必須做國語的文學。
>
> (Hu [1918] 1970: 345–7)

Hu Shi's dead-versus-living rhetoric added force to his argument and words quoted above: 'a literature in our national language, a national language for literature' became a slogan among May Fourth writers.[5] For the New Culture Movement, language reform involved new ideologies, worldviews and values: 'While *wenyan* was taken to be synonymous with traditional Chinese values, after the May 4th movement *baihua* was assumed to be the only appropriate linguistic vehicle for the whole set of new, mostly imported western concepts subsumed under democracy and science' (Chen 1999: 79).

The May Fourth writers and the 'Shaky House'

Creating a unified, national literary language for the new ideas proved to be a challenge since there was no ready-made standard vernacular, *baihua,* to adopt

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4   Translations from Chinese quotations in this chapter are the author's own unless otherwise stated.

5   The date May Fourth refers to student demonstrations in Beijing in 1919 against the Versailles Peace Treaty and Japanese imperialism. The May Fourth Movement was a major intellectual, social, political, cultural and literary reform movement circa 1917 to 1921 (Chow [1960] 1967: 1–6). Writers in that period whose literary works reflected reformist ideas and who wrote in the new vernacular are often referred to as May Fourth writers.

at the time, no consensus among authors,[6] and an abundance of new Western terms and concepts to be translated. There were several types of writing in use. The new-style *baihua* (or May Fourth-style *baihua*) favoured by the New Culture Movement was, according to Chen (ibid.: 76), 'a general name that referred to the various types of the new style that reformist writers were experimenting with at the time'. In *Placing the Modern Chinese Vernacular in Transnational Literature*, Gang Zhou discusses the Chinese vernacularization process in the context of world literature. Zhou (2011: 7), with reference to Heidegger's conception of language as the 'House of Being', introduces the concept of the 'Shaky House'. In Zhou's view, May Fourth writers belonged to a 'Shaky House' family, defined by 'the specific kind of vernacular literature produced at certain historical junctures of linguistic upheaval, whose writing begins with a revolutionary language choice, and whose literary medium manifests dramatic language change and is replete with linguistic tension and precariousness' (ibid.: 97). May Fourth writers, according to Zhou (ibid.: 7), 'were ordained to experience a dramatic language change, their *proper abode* must have been *shaky* and *precarious*. Their sense of alienation and their uncertainty about the linguistic medium they were writing in and creating distinguish them sharply from both the previous and following generations.' However, this also allowed for much experimentation with language, narrative techniques, genres, styles, etc.

The replacement of *wenyan* with *baihua* at the time was largely the work of intellectuals, cultural reformists and elite writers (Norman 1988: 255). Their *baihua* was an 'awkward mixture of styles' (Chen 1999: 78). May Fourth writers grew up with their native dialect, were educated to write in *wenyan* and then studied foreign languages abroad. They translated literary works from English, French, German, Russian and Japanese into Chinese, and many writers 'wrote in a heavily Europeanized style, producing texts that read like literal translations from a foreign language' (ibid.). Shu-mei Shih (2001: 71) stated that the May Fourth writers' 'heavily Europeanized and Japanized (i.e. translated) vernacular might in effect be as alien to the ordinary reader as *wenyan*'. May Fourth writers have faced criticism over the years for both elitism and internalizing Orientalism. Through translation, large quantities of 'Western' terms and concepts (foreign loanwords, semantic translations, phonemic transliterations, etc.) poured into the new-style *baihua*. The classical cosmopolitan literary language, *wenyan*, was

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6   Some reformists even advocated abandoning the logographic script in favour of Romanization of the Chinese script to increase literacy. See, for example, Norman (1988: 257–65).

thus replaced by a new cosmopolitan written language, a kind of 'cosmopolitan vernacular' (Pollock 1998), a new-style *baihua*,[7] characterized to a certain degree by what Lydia Liu (1995) calls translingual practice.

The new-style *baihua* and translingual practice

Stefan Helgesson and Christina Kullberg (2018: 137) claim that 'world literature can be explored … as uneven translingual events in which linguistic tensions are manifested' at different levels, such as in the individual text. 'A Madman's Diary' is a short story replete with such linguistic tensions, and some may be discussed in terms of translingual practice. In *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900–1937*, Lydia Liu (1995) highlights the importance of translation in the Chinese reformists' imagination of a modern China. Liu uses the term 'translated modernity', instead of influence, to indicate that translation is not simply a history of domination and resistance, nor just a transference of ideas from West to East (ibid.: xv–xx), thus 'granting too little to the agency of the non-western languages in these transactions' (ibid.: 22). Liu uses the terms 'guest' and 'host' language, instead of 'source' and 'target', to highlight 'the possibility that a non-European host language may violate, displace, and usurp the authority of the guest language in the process of translation as well as be transformed by it or be in complicity with it' (ibid.: 27). The focus of translingual practice is to study how words and new meanings, even entire discourses, etc., are created as a result of 'contact/collision' between a guest and a host language (ibid.: 26). According to Liu:

> Meanings … are not so much 'transformed' when concepts pass from the guest language to the host language as invented within the local environment of the latter. In that sense, translation is no longer a neutral event untouched by contending interests of political and ideological struggles. Instead, it becomes the very site of such struggle.
>
> (Ibid.)

According to Liu (ibid.: 31), 'the site of translation or wherever languages happen to meet' is a place for 'confrontations'. This is 'where the irreducible differences between the host language and the guest language are fought out, authorities invoked or challenged, and ambiguities dissolved or created' (ibid.: 32). Liu's

[7]   For a discussion of this new 'cosmopolitan vernacular' see Rydholm (forthcoming 2022).

'translingual practice' constitutes the theoretical framework for this study of 'A Madman's Diary'. I examine what I see as collisions or confrontations between guest and host languages in 'A Madman's Diary' by discussing a few specific words and expressions in the Preface and the Diary, as well as the authorities evoked by these. Liu (ibid.) discusses the complexity of the process of translating 'Western modernity' in China, as it was often mediated by translation via Japanese, a language with deep roots in Chinese script, using *kanji*, Chinese characters. This is also relevant in the case of certain Sino-Japanese-European loanwords in the Preface. In addition, I discuss a direct transliteration in the Diary from English of the word 'hyena', evoking foreign ideologies, and a new concept created by Lu Xun, 'real human being', which is more of a hybrid concept evoking both Chinese and foreign sources. Liu (ibid.: 39) also pointed out the importance of studying how 'intellectual resources from the West and from China's past are cited, translated, appropriated, or claimed in moments of perceived historical contingency so that something called *change* may be produced'. According to Liu, 'this change is always already different from China's own past and from the West, but have [*sic*] profound linkages with both' (ibid.).

The words and expressions I have selected for discussion are, in my view, examples of translingual practice which unsettle the diglossic opposition between Preface and Diary through evoking certain authorities, Chinese or foreign. This has implications for the reading of the entire story. I begin with a short discussion of 'A Madman's Diary' and its diglossic narrative structure, followed by an analysis of translingual practice and multiglossia in the Preface and then in the Diary. In my conclusions, I return to the issue of the Shaky House.

Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary': Diglossia or bilingualism?

In his essay 'Why I started to write fiction' (1933), Lu Xun stated his reasons:

> I still hold on to 'the idea of enlightenment', and that it [fiction] must 'serve human life', even improve human life … I draw my material from the unfortunate people of a sick society; my idea is to uncover the symptoms of the disease and draw attention to finding a cure (translation also in Rydholm 2014: 16).

> 我仍抱着十多年前的 "啟蒙主義"，以爲必須是"為人生"，而且要改良這人生 …… 所以我的取材，多采自病態社會的不幸的人們中，意思是在揭出病苦，引起療救的注意。

(Lu Xun [1933] 2005: 526)

Lu Xun studied medicine in Japan, but changed his subject to literature. He claimed to have realized that reforms in China demanded changes in people's attitudes, and thinking that literature was most effective in this regard, he joined the literary movement promoted by Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu (Lu Xun [1922] 2005: 439). Lu Xun started to write short stories in the vernacular, and soon became one of the most influential writers and intellectuals within the New Culture Movement. Lu Xun claimed that 'A Madman's Diary' was written after repeated requests from the editor of *New Youth* (Lu Xun [1933] 2005: 526). In his manifesto on the national language, Hu Shi ([1918] 1970: 343) had claimed that the only reason why traditional forms of literature (the 'fake literature' 假文學 and 'dead literature' 死文學) still existed was that new literature ('true literature' 眞文學 and 'living literature' 活文學) had not been produced yet – but when it appeared, the old forms would just naturally die out. 'A Madman's Diary' was published in a subsequent issue of *New Youth* – an example of a new, living literature in the vernacular. According to Ming Dong Gu (2001: 450), 'A Madman's Diary' is regarded as 'the first story that launched a fierce attack on the feudal system of Confucian morality and human relations', an interpretation based also on earlier statements by Lu Xun.

The narrative structure of this work has caused much debate. 'A Madman's Diary' consists mainly of the Diary, written by the madman in the first person. The madman lives in terror, thinking he is in mortal danger of being consumed by his fellow men. He suspects everyone around him, even his brother, and searches for evidence of man-eating in historical records:

> In ancient times, people often ate human beings, I still remember this, but I can't recall from where. I browsed a history book to check, but this one has no chronology, and scrawled all over each page are the words '[Confucian] Virtue and Morality.' I could not sleep anyway, so I kept reading carefully until the middle of the night, and finally I could see the words between the lines, the whole book had two words written everywhere – 'Eat people!'

> 古來時常吃人，我也還記得，可是不甚清楚。我翻開歷史一查，這歷史沒有年代，歪歪斜斜的每葉上都寫著「仁義道德」幾個字。我橫豎睡不著，仔細看了半夜，纔從字縫裏看出字來，滿本都寫着兩個字是「吃人」！
>
> (Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 485–6)

This often-cited passage clearly shows that 'man-eating' in the Diary is a metaphor for Confucian 'Virtue and Morality' (*ren yi dao de* 仁義道德), and that the story is to be read allegorically as a critique of Confucian morals

(Gu 2001: 446).[8] For this reason the Diary is written in the vernacular, since the vernacular was the language promoted by the reformists and had become the vehicle of the national survival discourse of building a national language and literature and a modern Chinese nation. The reader thus realizes that the madman is a rebel against traditional culture and society.

However, the Diary is framed by a Preface written in *wenyan* by a friend of the family. He claims the madman had suffered from persecution mania, but has regained his sanity and will soon take up a job as a government official. The fictional narrator of the Preface claims to publish the Diary of the madman in the service of medical research. The Preface written in *wenyan* carries the 'voice of reason' and normalcy, and contradicts the madman's critique of society and traditional Confucian morals.

Hence the narrative structure is constructed as a diglossic battle between the juxtaposed Preface and Diary: the Preface written in *wenyan*, the vehicle of traditional culture and Confucian morals, embodying a traditional Confucian cosmopolitan worldview of the Chinese empire, versus the Diary written in *baihua*, the vehicle of modernization and the national-language nation-building discourse of Hu Shi.[9] What Zhou calls 'a deadly language war' breaks out:

> His text split into two universes linked with two languages and two ideological viewpoints … The new set of binary oppositions – past/future, traditional/ modern, dead/living, East/West – that Hu Shi and other revolutionary thinkers associated with classical Chinese and the vernacular found its brilliant artistic representation in Lu Xun's 'Diary of a Madman'.
>
> (Zhou 2011: 85–6)

Zhou takes the argument further, claiming that there is a 'paradigm shift' in 'A Madman's Diary', a sharp divergence from diglossia, towards what, according to Zhou, resembles 'bi-lingualism':

> Classical Chinese and the vernacular, two complementary language varieties in the old diglossic structure, were approached bi-lingually in Lu Xun's writing, presented as two languages, and as two ideological forces completely disconnected and in conflict.
>
> (Ibid.: 93)

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[8] Lu Xun's ideas on traditional culture and society continue to be a subject of controversy among scholars. He has been variously regarded as a patriot trying to save his country or a traitor responsible for the destruction of traditional Chinese culture (Rydholm 2018).

[9] For a short summary of the 'struggle' between *wenyan* and *baihua* functionally, linguistically and ideologically in 'A Madman's Diary' see Rydholm (2018: 82–3).

Lu Xun's ideological and linguistic battle line, between the normative *wenyan* Preface speaking on behalf of traditional values and the revolutionary Diary in the new-style vernacular, is sharp. We are clearly dealing with two opposite literary worlds, each with its representative language, worldviews and values, and each seemingly confined in its own textual space. However, if we take a closer look at both the *wenyan* in the Preface and the new vernacular in the Diary at word level, there is actually a certain linguistic complexity, and evidence of what I think may be read as translingual practice in Lydia Liu's sense. In this analysis of 'A Madman's Diary', I discuss a few words and expressions in the Preface and the Diary that in my view show the text is not strictly bilingual, but rather multiglossic. While clearly fighting a diglossic language war, as Zhou (ibid.) pointed out, the text is *in addition* a multiglossic hybrid of languages and ideologies, Chinese and foreign.

'A Madman's Diary': Translingual practice and multiglossia in the Preface

The Preface, speaking on behalf of traditional society, gives the impression of having been written by a narrator with a traditional civil service education based on Confucian morals and classical literature, and who is well integrated into the government administration. This is evident in that the narrator writes in the language of the educated elite, *wenyan*, the vehicle for tradition and Confucian morals; he uses the classical literary term *kuangren* for 'madman' in the title (discussed below); he clearly refutes the madman's accusations against traditional society and Confucian morals, claiming him to be insane and suffering from *pohaikuang* (persecution mania); and, finally, he asserts as a sign of the madman's recovery that he has accepted a post in the government bureaucracy, thus when the madman gave up his critique against society and Confucian morals he regained his sanity.

However, if we take a closer look at the two words related to madness in the Preface, namely *kuangren* and *pohaikuang*, from the perspective of translingual practice, and also consider the authorities evoked by these words, the fictional narrator of the Preface may actually be contradicting the ideological and linguistic standpoint represented by this Preface. For my discussions of these two expressions in the Preface, I rely in part on two articles by Xiaolu Ma (2014, 2015) on Japanese as the intermediary in what is called the 'transculturation of

madness', which trace these words in Japanese and how they were translated into Chinese and used by Lu Xun in this story.[10] My aim goes beyond the purpose of Ma's studies, since I analyse the impact of these expressions on the overall narrative structure of the diglossic battle in this short story, and how the expressions undermine the reliability of the narrator of the Preface and thereby may affect the reading of the entire story.

Beginning with the title of the story, 'A Madman's Diary' (*Kuangren riji* 狂人日記), the narrator of the Preface claims to have edited and published the Diary with the purpose of providing material for medical research, but says the title was 'chosen by the madman himself' after his recovery (Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 883). The irony of that, as Xiaolu Ma (2014: 337) points out, is that the madman writing in the vernacular chose to be defined in *wenyan* as a *kuangren* 狂人, an expression charged with classical literary allusions. The choice of the word *kuangren* 狂人 instead of *fengren* 瘋人 for madman in the title has a symbolic value, as discussed by both Xiaolu Ma and Xiaobing Tang. Xiaolu Ma (2014, 2015) in addition claims that we need to consider the expression 'madman' in three languages and literatures, Russian, Japanese and Chinese, to comprehend the transculturation of madness and Lu Xun's choice.

Lu Xun and his brother Zhou Zuoren studied in Japan for several years. Lu Xun read European literature in Japanese and German translations, and translated several works into Chinese, some with his brother. Lu Xun knew Japanese and German very well, and also some English and Russian, but not enough to do translations in the latter two languages (Lundberg 1989: 11). Lu Xun was very fond of Russian literature, and acknowledged that 'A Madman's Diary' drew inspiration from Nikolai Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* (*Zapiski sumasshedshego*):

> In 1834 the Russian N. Gogol, had written 'Diary of a Madman' … But the later 'Diary of a Madman' [Lu Xun's own] aimed to expose the evils of the family system and the Doctrine of Propriety and was much more bitter than Gogol's.[11]

In Russian tradition the madman could be seen as a 'poetic prophet', a 'holy fool' in possession of holy wisdom; but by the eighteenth century madness had come

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[10] Regarding new vocabulary in modern Chinese, just as J. A. Fogel (2015: 1) stated, 'every single newly minted term has its own story'. In this study I do not trace all foreign loanwords in Lu Xun's story back to their original sources, showing how they travelled and transformed in modern Chinese literature over time, since that would require an article for each word. The aim here is to highlight the multiglossic features of the text, and the impact of foreign loanwords and transliteration for the reading of this short story.

[11] Lu Xun in *Lu Xun Quanji*, VI, Peking 1958, 190, quoted and translated by Chinnery (1960: 310). Hanan (1974: 66–8) discusses the influence of Andreev's *The Red Laugh* on 'A Madman's Diary', and others trace an influence of Akutagawa's *Kappa* or of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

to be regarded as the opposite of reason, and Gogol chose the term *sumasshedshii*, which means 'out of mind' (Ma 2015: 352). According to Xiaolu Ma (ibid.: 353), this shows that: 'In his [Gogol's] story, madness represents the opposite of reason: the absence of the cognitive abilities required to think rationally' and 'instead of prophetic madness, clinical madness prevails'. Gogol's madman's rebellion is very different from that of Lu Xun's madman. According to Fanger: 'Gogol's madman is unquestionably a victim of the Petersburg bureaucracy and the Petersburg press; but he is a victim because he is a quintessential government clerk … He rebels not against a world of rank, but against his lowly place within it, and he can find no more effective target for rebellion than his own self' (D. Fanger, quoted in Kowallis 2001: 104–5, note 14).

Xiaolu Ma (2015: 359) claims Japanese to be the intermediary in the process of transculturation of madness from Gogol's work to Lu Xun's. Lu Xun read Gogol's novel in Futabatei Shimei's translation.[12] Futabatei had translated the title as *Kyōjin nikki*. Written in Japanese in *kanji* (Chinese characters) the title is 狂人日記, just as in Lu Xun's title 狂人日記 (*Kuangren riji*). *Kyōjin* in modern Japanese means 'a person who has lost mental balance' (Ma 2014: 337, note 26), but although *kyōjin* in classical Japanese could have the same meaning, it could also refer to 'a defiant person who would not confirm to social norms', a meaning likely to have been derived from classical Chinese literature (ibid.: 337–8). Ma claims that *kyōjin* in Japanese could have prophetic and political connotations initially derived from classical Chinese (Ma 2015: 355). Xiaobing Tang (1992) discusses the origins of *kuang* 狂 and *feng* 瘋 and Lu Xun's knowledge about them:

> Lu Xun himself was no less aware of the semantic difference between *kuang* and *feng*. In his earlier youthful essay 'On the Power of Mara Poets' (1907), he postulates *kuang* as a Nietzschean self-affirmation that provides an essential regenerative energy for any thriving civilization. The word also characterizes talented individuals who contemptuously oppose themselves to a stagnant society and whose actions exceed the public's comprehension. … As an adjective – a usage that dates back to *The Book of Songs* (11–6 BC) – *kuang* is equivalent to 'unrestrainedly outgoing, wildly defiant.' In Confucius's *Analects*, it also occurs as a verb meaning to progress or aggress.
>
> (Tang 1992: 1226)

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[12] Lu Xun read it in the March and May 1907 issues of the Japanese journal *Interest* (*Kyōmi*) (Ma 2014: 337, note 25).

Lu Xun's brother, in contrast, chose 'A Lunatic's Diary' (*Fengren riji* 瘋人日記) for his Chinese translation of the title of Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* (Tang 1992: 1226). *Feng* 瘋 means mad/crazy/insane, and is a more recent term that, according to Xiaobing Tang (ibid.), 'was initially a pathological term denoting the mad, the neurotic, the insensible, or the sheerly stupid'. Zhou Zuoren's translation as *Fengren riji* is thus indicative of an interpretation of Gogol's story as depicting clinical mental illness, not prophetic madness.

The importance of distinguishing terms related to madness in Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary' is reinforced by the fact that using the word *feng* 瘋 for insane/crazy is actually used not in the Preface but in the Diary. In one scene the madman makes a long speech to his brother in the courtyard, trying to get him to give up 'man eating' (discussed below), and has attracted a group of curious spectators outside his doorstep. His brother loses patience and shouts to the crowd: 'Go away all of you! What's so funny about a lunatic?' 「都出去! 瘋子有什麼好看?」 (Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 491). Here the word 'lunatic' *fengzi* 瘋子 is used for madman, not *kuangren*, which reflects the perspective of the older brother, who thereby gives the impression of actually believing his younger brother to be clinically ill. The choice of terms related to madness reflects the attitude of the speaker towards the madman in the Diary. There is clearly a difference in judgement about the madman's condition between the older brother and the madman even after his recovery, since the madman chose *kuangren* for the title.

Lu Xun could thus choose between two different translations of Gogol's title, *Fengren riji* 瘋人日記 and Fubatei's *Kyōjin nikki* 狂人日記, and opted to name his own story *Kuangren riji* 狂人日記. As Xiaolu Ma (2015: 360) points out: 'Because of the long history of social and political protest associated with *kuang*, this title is an important factor in motivating the allegorical reading of the short story by many scholars.' Ma (ibid.: 362) further states:

> Even if Lu Xun did not intend to refer to the Chinese *kuang* tradition but simply to connect his story with the Russian homonymic short story, readers aware of *kuang*'s rich cultural implications would likely be led by the title to consider its connotations and extract a hidden message relating to prophetic *kuangren* who target stagnant society.

Lu Xun's choice of *kuangren* in the title thus communicates to readers that the story is in fact about prophetic madness, a rebellion against society, not simply about clinical madness. This would be common knowledge for people educated in the classical literary tradition, such as the fictional narrator of the Preface, and also the madman himself (discussed below). The information that the title

was chosen by the madman after his recovery may indicate 'a final stand against the oppressive reality' and those who had labelled him 'lunatic' *fengzi* 瘋子, as his brother did (Tang 1992: 1226). It could imply that the madman did not recover from his rebellious thoughts, that he still considered himself a wild and unrestrained rebel against society, that he had not been completely insane. In that case the fictional narrator of the Preface, for his part, in keeping the title became the madman's accomplice.

The fact that the narrator of the Preface made the effort to point out that the title was chosen by the madman, not himself, may give the impression that the narrator deemed the title inappropriate for the madman's condition. However, if the fictional narrator of the Preface 'really' thought the madman clinically ill, and the book 'really' was published to be read by medical researchers, why did he keep that title? In that case he really should have used *Fengren riji*, or could in many other ways have reflected his stated purpose (e.g. added a subtitle: 'A Madman's Diary: an example of clinical mental illness for medical researchers'). But the narrator of the Preface kept the symbolic title chosen by the madman, knowing that it invites readers of literature rather than medical researchers, and that it triggers literary allusions related to rebels and prophetic madness. Thus I think we may conclude that the narrator sympathizes with the madman's ideas, and the Diary was not published to be read by medical researchers. The narrator's purpose in publishing the Diary is not in service of medical research, but as a critique of traditional society and Confucian morals.

A second example to support my case for the unreliability of the fictional narrator of the Preface, based on a calculated use of language related to mental illness, is the term *pohaikuang* 迫害狂 (persecution madness). The narrator states in the Preface: 'I received the Diary and having read it through, I understood that what the brother had contracted was undoubtedly a kind of "persecution mania"' 持歸閱一過, 知所患蓋「迫害狂」之類 (Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 483). The word for 'persecution', *pohai* 迫害, is what Lydia Liu (1995: 284) calls a Sino-Japanese-European loanword, which in her categorizations is defined as a loanword from modern Japanese 'that consists of *kanji* terms coined by the Japanese using Chinese characters to translate European, especially English words'. The term 'persecution mania' from Western works on medicine, psychology and criminology appeared in different translations into Japanese, in different contexts, at the beginning of the twentieth century (Ma 2015: 360–1). In medical books or scientific treatises the mental disease was translated more frequently as *higai mōsō*, while in modern literature or books on social criticism

it was translated more often as *hakugaikyō* (ibid.: 361). In Ma's view, Lu Xun's choice of terms is significant, especially in consideration of Lu Xun's respect for the scientific foundation of Western medicine:

> His borrowing of *hakugaikyō* (a term often used in arts and humanities) instead of *higai mōsō* (a term often used in scientific studies) to designate 'persecution complex' in 'Diary of a Madman' demonstrates his stronger interest in social and literary criticism.
>
> (Ibid.)

The fictional narrator's decision to translate the Western medical term 'persecution mania' using the *kanji* term *hakugaikyō* 迫害狂 (*pohaikuang* 迫害狂 in Chinese) in the Preface thus gives additional strength to the interpretation of the story as a social criticism, not intended for medical research. In my view, the use of *pohaikuang* also reveals something else. The Confucian scholar and bureaucrat who we thought was the fictional narrator of the Preface, who represents tradition and reason in the ideological and linguistic binary opposition between the Preface and the Diary, is not so traditional after all. He is actually a modern man educated in Western learning. He had studied Western medicine and literature, probably in Japan, as he is familiar with terms for mental illness in Japanese, translated from Western medicine and literature. However, he is also aware that few readers in contemporary China are familiar with this terminology in Japanese, hence *pohaikuang* is placed in quotation marks in the Preface, marking it as a translated word. This narrator of the Preface even feels qualified enough in modern medicine to make a diagnosis of the madman, since after reading through the Diary he comes to the conclusion that these are the symptoms of persecution mania. But had he studied only medicine in Japan, he might have used the Japanese medical term *higai mōsō*; instead he uses the *kanji* term *hakugaikyō*. This shows that in addition to medicine the fictional narrator of the Preface had studied or read works on literature and social criticism in Japanese, and therefore he chose the latter term, indicating that he intended a reading of the Diary as social criticism.

In Gang Zhou's (2011: 84) view there are clearly two narrators in Lu Xun's short story, as opposed to traditional novels in which a *wenyan* Preface and a story written in *baihua* were 'complementing each other', thus creating 'a harmonious unity':

> a shift from the framing narrative in classical Chinese to the vernacular text in the old vernacular novels indicates no change in the narrator. The narrator is

always the same person, who uses two linguistic varieties for different purposes. But in Lu Xun's story, the framing narrative and the vernacular proper are totally separated, like two unconnected worlds, each having its own narrator.

<div align="right">(Ibid.: 85)</div>

However, in my analysis the narrator of the Preface is quite unreliable and may not be speaking on behalf of tradition. He turns out to be a modern man, educated in Western learning, so he could very well sympathize with the madman and intend a reading of the work as social criticism. The choice of using the Sino-Japanese-European loanword, such as *hakugaikyō* in the Preface written in *wenyan*, undermines the ideological and linguistic binary opposition between the Preface and the Diary, as well as the authority of the fictional narrator of the Preface as a spokesman for tradition. In spite of the binary opposition between the Preface and the Diary based on diglossia, *wenyan* versus *baihua*, there is in the Preface a linguistic hybridity which may be read as translingual practice in Liu's sense. There are multiglossia and 'confrontations' between languages at word level, leading to an ambiguity that gives away the identity of the narrator of the Preface. Lu Xun thus gives clues, in the form of the title and diagnosis, that could lead readers to think the two worlds that appear to be separated by diglossia are in fact connected, and there is only *one* narrator of both the Preface and the Diary. This one narrator is a reformist, using diglossia for different purposes, who made up the entire story about the madman and wrote the Diary himself, with the intention of criticizing traditional society and Confucian morals (just like the author himself). To argue further my case that there is only one narrator, I present evidence of multiglossia and translingual practice in the Diary (in addition to diglossia), and analyse some examples of the ideological and linguistic tensions and confrontations within the Diary at word level and the authorities evoked by these.

'A Madman's Diary': Translingual practice and multiglossia in the Diary

Although the Diary is written in the vernacular, we still find evidence of diglossia *within* it, so it is not a completely sealed-off linguistic unity. It uses several words and expressions in *wenyan*, such as quotations from ancient sources. The madman thus, like the narrator of the Preface, had a traditional education. In the Diary he tells of being home-schooled by his older brother, who taught him

how to compose traditional prose essays and read classical historical works. His Confucian moral education is made clear in the Diary through his direct reference to 'Confucian Virtue and Morality' (cited above) and his account of his impressions of the practice of filial piety in the latter part of the Diary. He also refers to Li Shizhen's 李時珍 (1518–1593) *Taxonomy of Medicinal Herbs Bencao Gangmu* 本草綱目, and quotes some well-known statements on man-eating from *Mr Zuo's Historial Commentaries Zuozhuan* 左傳: the expressions 'exchange children and eat them' 易子而食, and 'eat the flesh and use the skin to sleep on' 食肉寢皮 (Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 487).[13] In addition, he retells the story of Yiya 易牙, the cook in the state of Qi in the Spring and Autumn Period who allegedly cooked his son for an evil ruler who wanted to taste human flesh (ibid.).[14] With a solid traditional education in the Confucian classics, history, philosophy and Chinese medicine, along with the ability to read and write in the prestigious form of *wenyan*, why did the madman start to question Confucian 'Virtue and Morality'?

As it turns out, the madman, just like the narrator of the Preface, had a foreign education. A most striking example of 'Western learning' is the foreign loanword '*haiyina*' that pops up in the Diary within quotation marks:

> I remember reading somewhere of a hideous beast, with an ugly look in its eye, called 'hyena' which often eats dead flesh. Even the largest bones it grinds into fragments and swallows: the mere thought of this is enough to terrify one. Hyenas are related to wolves, and wolves belong to the canine species. The other day the dog in the Chao house looked at me several times; obviously it is in the plot too and has become their accomplice.
>
> <div align="right">(Lu Xun 1972: 13; translation by the Yangs)</div>

> 什麼上說有一種東西叫，「海乙那」的，眼光和樣子都很難看；時常吃死肉、連極大的骨頭都細細嚼爛嚥下肚子去，想起來也教人害怕。「海乙那」是狼的親眷，狼是狗的本家。前天趙家的狗，看我幾眼，可見他也同謀早已接洽。
>
> <div align="right">(Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 488)</div>

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[13] According to Lyell, the first quote refers to an officer in 448 BCE urging his fellow men not to surrender to the enemy, claiming that people in the capital of Song under siege in 603 BCE exchanged their children and ate them rather than surrender to the Chu army. The second quote refers to an officer bragging before the ruler in 551 BCE, claiming that he could easily take on two of the toughest men in the ruler's service and what he could do to them (Lu Xun 1990: 34, note 6).

[14] A story from the seventh century BCE philosophical work *Guanzi* 管子, although the madman mixes up the rulers' names, probably to add to the impression of his confusion (Lu Xun 2005: 455–6, note 8). Moreover, the madman can only recall half the title of Li Shizhen's work.

This is a clear case of translingual practice in the Diary. The word within quotation marks, pronounced *haiyina* 海乙那, is a direct phonemic transliteration of the English word hyena (Lu Xun 2005: 455, note 7; Liu 1995: 362). At the time many foreign words were translated into Chinese in different ways before standardization, but most people were not keen on phonemic translations and preferred proper semantic/loan translations (Liu 1995: 36), and the standard term for hyena became 'mane-dog' *liegou* 鬣狗. So why did Lu Xun, an experienced translator, use a transliteration from cosmopolitan English, the language of an imperial power threatening to colonize China?

As Lydia Liu (ibid.: 39) points out, Theodor Adorno in his *Notes on Literature* stated that: 'Every foreign word contains the explosive material of enlightenment'. In my view, Lu Xun chose this word because it is 'explosive' – it immediately stands out as a foreign word in a Chinese text, confronting the host language, to use Lydia Liu's terminology, which is the Chinese new vernacular. However, the *haiyina* is not a friendly 'guest' but an intruder, a foreign beast which brings the threat of foreign aggression into the Diary. It is introduced as a foreign species that is kin of wolves and dogs, as it is categorized in Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Lu Xun, like so many other reformists at the time, was influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, but also by Social Darwinism, the survival of the fittest among peoples and cultures. In an essay from 1908, Lu Xun described imperialists as beasts when he spoke of 'animal-natured patriots' 獸性愛國之士, who used the theory of evolution as a pretext for invading weaker nations, aiming to conquer all nations and subdue their peoples (Lu Xun [1908b] 2005: 34–5). Lu Xun, like so many intellectuals at the time, had read *The Theory of Cosmic Process Tianyan lun* 天演論 (1898), Yan Fu's 嚴復 translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. Huxley's work 'actually represented an attack on Social Darwinism', as stated by Benjamin Schwartz in *In Search for Wealth and Power* (Kowallis 1999: 245). Yan Fu, in contrast, influenced by Herbert Spencer, used Huxley's work in support of Social Darwinism. The idea of how 'the weak fall prey to the strong' 弱肉強食 sparked a fear of 'national subjugation and extinction' 亡國滅種 by the imperialist nations among reformists in China at the time (Qian 1980: 157). However, in his commentary Yan Fu managed to fuse Huxley's determinism with Spencer's ideas of progress (Pusey 1998: 67), offering hope of survival for the peoples of weaker nations if they would only become stronger (Qian 1980: 157). Thus *Tianyan lun* rendered strong support for the 'national survival discourse' of the reformists, and the demand for radical reform and

the building of a strong, modern Chinese nation. Hence it makes perfect sense that these authorities are evoked by the rebellious madman in the Diary, since it strengthens his claim that Chinese people had to change. First the *haiyina* turns up, in the language of a foreign aggressor, bringing the threat of imperialism. Then the madman presents his own distorted view of the theory of evolution of mankind from reptile to a 'real human being', in an effort to convince his brother to change his ways:

> Elder Brother, way back in the beginning, it's probably the case that primitive peoples all ate some human flesh. But later on, because their ways of thinking changed, some gave up the practice and tried their level best to improve themselves; they kept on changing until they became human beings, real human beings. But the others didn't; they just kept right on with their cannibalism and stayed at that primitive level. You have the same sort of thing with evolution in the animal world. Some reptiles for instance, changed into fish, and then they evolved into birds, then into apes, and then into human beings. But the others didn't want to improve themselves and just kept right on being reptiles down to this very day. Think how ashamed those primitive men who have remained cannibals must feel when they stand before real human beings. They must feel even more ashamed than reptiles do when confronted by their brethren who have evolved into apes.
>
> (Lu Xun 1990: 38, translation by Lyell)

> 大哥，大約當初野蠻的人都吃過一點人。後來因爲心思不同，有的不吃人了，一味要好，便變了人，便變了眞的人。有的卻還吃 —— 也同蟲子一樣，有的變了魚鳥猴子，一直變到人。有的不要好至今還是蟲子。這吃人的人比不吃人的人何等慚愧。怕比蟲子的慚愧猴子還差得很遠很遠。
>
> (Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 490)

The madman had obviously read Darwin's work and Yan Fu's translation of Huxley's work, but also Nietzsche. These words echo *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Discussing 'A Madman's Diary', Lu Xun once stated: 'Fr. Nietzsche had put in Zarathustra's mouth the words "ye have trod the way from worm to man, and much in you is yet worm. Once ye were apes, and even yet man is more ape than any ape"' (Chinnery 1960: 310).

Nietzsche's influence on Lu Xun, as well as the mad diarist, is also present in the expression 'real/true human being' *zhenderen* 眞的人 used in the Diary (in the passage about the evolution of mankind cited above). This was a new hybrid concept that Lu Xun developed in his early essays of 1907–1908, based on evolution theory, Nietzsche's 'superman' and Chinese philosophy

(Jiang 2014: 90). Lu Xun's view of evolution theory has been the subject of innumerable studies.[15] Combining several essays from 1907 to 1908, we may sum up some of Lu Xun's main ideas, as expressed by Chinese scholars. Zhao and Tang (1986: 100) conclude that Lu Xun thought that to 'establish a nation' *li guo* 立國 one must first 'establish the human being' *li ren* 立人, and this is done through freeing one's mind and developing one's thinking. Strong independently minded individuals were the foundation of strong Western countries, and it was vital to develop spiritually advanced real human beings who could step out of slavery and oppression (Wu and Wang 2018: 52–3). Lu Xun, referring to Nietzsche's view of the inherent life force in savages, thought the potential for developing civilized thinking and becoming real human beings was already embedded in barbarians (Zhao and Tang 1986: 99). Thus Lu Xun, according to Zhao and Tang (ibid.), envisioned an evolution from an uncivilized state to a civilized society through liberating the individual's thinking, a kind of 'spiritual evolution' *jingshen jinhua lun* 精神進化論. In an early essay written while still in Japan, 'On the power of Mara poetry', Lu Xun shows that real human beings could turn into Nietzschean style supermen, 'warriors of the spirit' 精神界之 戰士 (Lu Xun [1908a] 2005: 87). These warriors would be like the brave writers Byron, Shelley, Pushkin, Lermonotov, Mickiewicz and others, who could raise the spirits of the people through literary works filled with passion and patriotism (ibid.: 65–103). Lu Xun yearned for such warriors of the spirit who could instil courage in their fellow countrymen and 'increase the global impact of their nation' 大其國于天下 (ibid.: 101).

　　Lu Xun's ideas of the real human being, i.e. his faith in human nature and compassion for the weak and the poor, are also rooted in Chinese philosophy. For Lu Xun, human beings are initially born with a 'pure heart' *baixin* 白心, a concept that, according to Tian Gang, is derived from the Daoist Classic *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Jiang 2014: 90). Kindness towards one's fellow men *ren* 仁, often

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[15] Lu Xun discussed evolution theory in several essays in 1907–1908 prior to writing 'A Madman's Diary'. For a discussion of Lu Xun's early views on evolution theory, see e.g. J. R. Pusey's (1998) *Lu Xun and Evolution*. Many scholars in China before the 1980s aimed to trace a development in Lu Xun's thoughts on evolution, often depicting 'the "evolution" of Lu Xun from a patriot with an ill-founded faith in evolution towards a patriot with a faith in the revolutionary science of Marxism-Leninism' (Dikötter 1999: 813). The 'main thesis' in Pusey's *Lu Xun and Evolution*, according to Kowallis (1999: 246), is rather that Lu Xun's thoughts did not really change. He concludes that 'the *real* Lu Xun was a true Confucian' (Pusey 1998: 170, Kowallis 1999: 246). The aim of this study is not to explore Lu Xun's complex and sometimes conflicting thoughts on evolution theory and how his thoughts evolved over time, but to show that his ideas at a certain time are embedded and expressed in the fictional work 'A Madman's Diary', as a case of translingual practice, and to discuss the implications of this for the reading of the story.

translated as 'humane(ness)', is a central concept in Confucianism. Pusey (1998: 87) claims that the core of Lu Xun's idea of 'true human beings' is being 'humane' *ren* 仁, and thus the madman was in essence 'a Confucian prophet'. Lu Xun, as Davies (2013: 233) points out, advocated 'self-aware, other-oriented altruism' and 'attached great importance to the active cultivation of moral (or righteous) emotional guidance in life'. Education and moral self-cultivation is in line with traditional Confucian values, which may seem ironic since Lu Xun wrote 'A Madman's Diary' to fight Confucian morals. Apparently he still shared some of the ideas of this philosophy, and included these in his own kind of spiritual evolution and embedded them in his concept of the real human being. Lu Xun's view of evolution and the concept of the real human requires a much deeper study and discussion than I can provide here. However, I think I have been able to show that it is a new hybrid concept built on both Chinese and Western ideas and authorities, thus it is an example of translingual practice.

To sum up, the madman's use of the *haiyina* and the evolution of mankind from reptiles into real human beings in the Diary shows that the madman had read Darwin, Huxley (in Yan Fun's translation) and Nietzsche. The importance of changing one's thinking to become real human beings indicates that the madman believed human spiritual development could save the Chinese and China, which was facing foreign imperialists who justified conquering weaker nations through the logic of Social Darwinism. In the Diary the madman shouts to a crowd outside (before being dragged into the house and locked up by his family), in a final, desperate call (to listen to the warnings in Yan Fu's *Tianyan lun*) basically to change their ways or die:

> You can change, you can truly change in your hearts! You should know that in the future man-eaters won't be allowed to live in this world. If you do not change, you will all eat and finish each other off. Even if you give birth to many children, you will all be wiped out by real human beings, just like hunters kill off wolves – and reptiles.
>
> 你們可以改了，從眞心改起!要曉得將來容不得吃人的人活在世上。你們要不改，自己也會吃盡。即使生的多，也會給眞的人除滅了，同獵人打完狼子一樣! —— 同蟲子一樣!
>
> (Lu Xun [1918] 1970: 492)

This is very explicit. However, the foreign beast *haiyina*, the concept of real human beings, along with the passages alluding to Yan Fu's *Tianyan lun*, would have meant very little to the average population at the time. These expressions

and the ideological implications could only be understood by intellectuals with a foreign education, and appreciated by Lu Xun's fellow reformists within the *New Youth* camp. To grasp the concept of a real human being, one would benefit from having read Lu Xun's early essays, such as the essay on the Mara poets.

In the Diary written in the new vernacular, just as in the case of the Preface written in *wenyan*, there is multiglossia. There is diglossia – that is, *wenyan* and new-style vernacular, within the Diary itself, such as the quotes from ancient Chinese sources in *wenyan*. In addition, there is evidence of translingual practice in Liu's sense: transliteration of the English word *haiyina*, evoking foreign authorities and theories, and a new hybrid concept of the real human being, evoking both domestic and foreign authorities and ideologies. However, the multiglossia, building on translingual practice, under the surface of the diglossic binary opposition between the Preface and the Diary serves different purposes. The Sino-Japanese-European loanwords about madness in the *wenyan* Preface undermine the narrator's reliability, revealing his identity as a modern, foreign-educated man and his tacit support of the madman, even opening up the possibility that he is the narrator of both the Preface and the Diary. The 'foreign intrusions' in the Diary, linguistically and ideologically – the hyena, Social Darwinism and Lu Xun's spiritual evolution theory, which evokes both foreign sources and Chinese philosophy – do not break up its unity. Instead, these linguistic and ideological 'confrontations' support the madman's claims and add to his credibility, proving his identity as a modern man with both a classical and a foreign education, advocating reform and Western learning, vernacularization and the building of a strong, modern Chinese nation. He is a reformist with a strong agenda, and capable of being the narrator of both the Preface and the Diary.

'A Madman's Diary': Translingual practice and the Shaky House

It may appear very bold of Lu Xun to take on the task of producing the first piece of a new 'living' literature in the vernacular in *New Youth*. Lu Xun was certainly aware of the experimental quality of the May Fourth literature, and the criticism of new-style *baihua* by proponents of *wenyan* for being 'vulgar', 'childish' etc.

(Davies 2013: 252).[16] As Zhou (2011: 7) pointed out, the May Fourth Shaky House family of writers lacked literary models for writing in the contemporary vernacular. However, Lu Xun had several foreign literary examples written in the vernacular from which to draw inspiration.[17] He had read Fubatsei's translation of Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* into Japanese. Fubatsei has been recognized for his contributions to the vernacularization of Japanese, precisely though his translations of Russian works (Ma 2014: 340). Ma (ibid.: 341) claims that 'the colloquial style of Futabatsei's narrative was unprecedented in Japanese literary history'. Knowing some Russian, Lu Xun may have been aware of the subversive quality of the innovative and absurd use of language in Gogol's *Diary of a Madman*. Maija Kononen has discussed 'the idiosyncratic norm-breaking style of Gogol's mad diarist':

> The flawless punctuation, as well as grammatically and stylistically correct use of language are to be perceived as signs of normalcy, whereas deviation from norms would imply either stupidity or some kind of anomaly. Despite his efforts, Popriscin is not capable of holding to the norms of written language. He slips from the style of the written word to the language of his thoughts in his diary entries. This language of his inner monologue incorporates alternating styles of thought, imitating now speech manners, now written word, ranging from a sentimental literary style to the wordy phrasing of official jargon.
>
> (Kononen 2008: 87)

Gogol's norm-breaking use of language for the madman's thoughts, which reinforces his deviation from normalcy, may have inspired Lu Xun in his decision to split his short story into a Preface written in the normative, sane, *wenyan* of the Confucian nobility while the madman uses the vernacular when expressing his thoughts in the Diary entries. However, Lu Xun's aim is not clinical madness, but prophetic madness. The Preface at first seems to be the language of reason and normalcy, but when reading the Diary one realizes that the madman is a rebel and his thought language, the vernacular, is the vehicle for reformist discourse. Lu Xun's aim is the creation of a literary language in the new-style vernacular for the national-language-nation-building discourse of Hu Shi and other reformists at the time.

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[16] In 1927 Lu Xun confronted the critique of *baihua* using the example of a child learning to walk: 'The childish can grow and mature. As long as they do not become decrepit and corrupt, all will be well' (translated by Davies 2013: 252).

[17] Lu Xun ([1933] 2005: 526) stated that in his preparations for writing 'A Madman's Diary' he 'completely depended on earlier readings of more than a hundred foreign literary works and a little medical knowledge'.

Hanan (1974: 53) states that 'each story of Lu Hsün's is a venture in technique, a fresh try at the perfect matching of subject and form'. Indeed, 'A Madman's Diary' is an example of Lu Xun's mastery, staging a linguistic and ideological battle in a diglossic literary world. In addition, through translingual practice and multiglossia he brings in the third player in the fictional literary arena, foreign languages and ideologies, as reinforcements of the rebels' claims. When integrating foreign, cosmopolitan languages and ideas, the new-style vernacular turned into what may be seen as a variety of what Pollock (1998) calls 'cosmopolitan vernacular'.[18] Wang Hui has pointed out that the cosmopolitanism of Lu Xun's vernacular, writing in *baihua* with frequent references to Western writers and philosophers, created a Europeanized hybrid language, far removed from the language of the masses that Lu Xun advocated, which became the lingua franca of the new elite (Davies 2013: 250).

To write 'A Madman's Diary' required a comprehensive education, both a traditional and a modern, foreign education, which in my view leads readers to the conclusion that both the Preface and the Diary were written by one and the same fictional narrator, a 'modern' man with reformist views. However, reading this short story was equally challenging. The *wenyan* part of 'A Madman's Diary' posed challenges for those not schooled in classical literary language and the ancient historical, philosophical and medical sources evoked. Ma (2015: 362) points out that while *kuangren* was well known to people with traditional education, few contemporary readers in China had insight into Japanese translation and would know of the distinction between *higai mōsō* and *hakugaikyō*, thereby being able to see the connection to literary works on social criticism and reform in Russia and Japan. To appreciate fully the diglossic linguistic and ideological battle in Lu Xun's story, readers needed to be aware of this battle going on in society at the time, and Hu Shi's and the reformists' discourses in *New Youth*. And to appreciate the Nietzschean implications of *kuang* (see Tang 1992: 1226) and Lu Xun's new concept of real human beings, one would benefit from reading Lu Xun's earlier essays on evolution theory, the Mara poets and so on. Indeed, Lu Xun's intended readers at the time were mainly the readers of *New Youth* and reformists like himself, many of whom had studied in both China and Japan, had undergone both a traditional and a modern education, and in many ways shared his views.

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[18] For a discussion of this cosmopolitan vernacular and a comparison between Lu Xun's vernacular in 'A Madman's Diary' and Lao She's vernacular in the novel *Cat Country*, see Rydholm (forthcoming 2022).

For Western readers the diglossic battle between *wenyan* and *baihua* in 'A Madman's Diary' goes completely undetected. In most English translations there is no difference in style between the Preface and the Diary and there are no footnotes concerning this stylistic difference or its significance.[19] 'A Madman's Diary' is regarded as part of the world literary canon today, but its major qualities and their significance are lost in translation. Reading 'A Madman's Diary' in English translation and with a title identical to Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* Western scholars may mistake Lu Xun's story for a simple case of local content in foreign form (Moretti 2013: 57); a case of passively adopting foreign models of fiction writing in the context of a power imbalance between the imperialist nations and a semi-colonized country. This study shows the strong agency displayed in Lu Xun's work: it does not demonstrate a passive reception of Western influence and nor is it the site of straightforward resistance, just as Liu (1995: xv–xx) pointed out. In 'A Madman's Diary', multiglossia is skilfully constructed through what in my view fits Liu's description of translingual practice; 'translation is no longer a neutral event untouched by contending interests of political and ideological struggles. Instead, it becomes the very site of such struggles' (ibid.: 26). The Sino-Japanese-European loanwords and transliterations from English undermine the traditionalist Preface linguistically and ideologically, and instead support the claims of the rebel in the Diary. Lu Xun's new concept of the 'real human being' is not a simple adoption of foreign ideas, but part of his 'spiritual evolution' theory. It is a combination of Darwin's theory of evolution, Social Darwinism, Nietzsche's superman, Daoist ideas of human beings having a pure heart by nature and the Confucian tradition of humaneness, moral self-cultivation and the didactic purpose of literature. At the site of contact or collision or confrontation, just as Liu (ibid.: 32) describes it, 'the irreducible differences between the host language and the guest language are fought out, authorities invoked or challenged, and ambiguities dissolved or created … until the new words and meanings emerge in the host language itself'.

Although Lu Xun certainly made 'a revolutionary language choice' in 'A Madman's Diary', he shows no evidence of 'uncertainty towards the linguistic medium', a feature of many of the May Fourth Shaky House family of writers

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[19] Lyell's translation is commendable in this regard. Lyell created a stylistic difference between the Preface and the Diary in his translation and added a footnote stating that the Preface was written in classical Chinese, unlike the Diary entries, which 'are all in the colloquial language' (Lu Xun 1990: 29).

(Zhou 2011: 7, 97). Lu Xun's dilemma, according to Zhou and many other scholars, is revealed in his ambivalence towards classical Chinese, denouncing it while still using it (for instance when writing classical-style poetry venting private emotions), thus he seems to be 'obsessed' with what he claims to want to eradicate (ibid.: 80–1). Gloria Davies's (2013) *Lu Xun's Revolution* depicts Lu Xun's lifelong struggle against *wenyan* and in favour of *baihua*, a language of the masses. He even came to favour Latinization, the alphabetization scheme 'latinxua' (Norman 1988: 260). Still, he continued to use *wenyan* expressions and/or classical allusions in many writings. In 'A Madman's Diary', classical Chinese is indispensable as one of the two major combatants in the diglossic and ideological battle it is destined to lose. It is evidence of Lu Xun's mastery of language and narrative technique, of uniting subject and form (Hanan 1974: 53). Lu Xun was using *wenyan* to fight *wenyan*. He thrived in the Shaky House; it provided an opportunity for developing both language and narrative technique, for conscious word play, for translingual practice and creative use of the potential 'linguistic tensions' and 'confrontations' provided by translated terms and concepts in the new-style *baihua*. The Shaky House situation, which allowed serious experimentation with language and narrative structure, was a prerequisite for the success of 'A Madman's Diary'. Lu Xun displayed confidence and strong agency through his skilful use of diglossia and translingual practice to stage the battle between languages and the Chinese and foreign ideas they embodied at the time in his fictional literary worlds of multiglossia, hoping to reform the 'real' world. His stories contributed to the development of the new-style vernacular, of a new kind of elite 'cosmopolitan vernacular' in China to replace the classical cosmopolitan literary language.

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Writing vulnerable worlds: Siberian exile and the anthropology of world-making

Mattias Viktorin

On his descent through Hell, close to its bottom, Dante comes upon a giant locked up in chains. Virgil, who serves as Dante's guide, identifies him as Nimrod, the Hebrew king who instigated the building of the Tower of Babel, and explains the horrible punishment the giant has to endure as a result: 'this is Nimrod, through whose wicked thought / one single language cannot serve the world. / Leave him alone – let's not waste time in talk; / for every language is to him the same / as his to others – no one knows his tongue' (Inferno XXXI: 77–81). Nimrod himself utters but one unintelligible sentence – *'Raphael mai amech izabi almi'* (ibid.: 67) – before Dante and Virgil move along, leaving him as they found him: banished from the face of the earth, despairing, outside of time, in complete linguistic isolation.[1]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century more than 300,000 people were living in exile or in prison camps in Siberia. Most of them were illiterate and without means to let the outside world know about their fates. '[T]his should all be written up! Only, no one's writin' it … I'll die, 'n' so ever'thin'll disappear, like it ne'er happened', one penal labourer lamented (quoted in Iakubovich [1895–1898] 2015: 175). Yet some prisoners did write about their experiences, and attempted to speak also on behalf of those whose own words failed: to let a wider public know what life was like 'in the world of the outcasts' – an expression that was used as a title for one prominent autobiography (Iakubovich [1895–1898] 2014, 2015). Others travelled voluntarily to Siberia to witness and document the realities of the exile system. Several such writers made references to Dante's pilgrimage. 'I

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[1] All translations from the *Divine Comedy* are by Allen Mandelbaum. The entire text is available online at https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/ (accessed 24 January 2021).

feel that this is Inferno; I am Dante, and that my investigations might be called "Studies in Hell"', wrote Benjamin Howard in his book *Prisoners of Russia*, which was based on a journey he made in 1890 to Sakhalin Island (Howard 1902: 265). Peter Kropotkin ([1887/1906] 1971: 124–5), Harry de Windt (1896: 94), Vlas Doroshevich ([1903] 2011: 13–14, 129), and Elsa Brändström (1921: 61) – along with many others – made similar comments. Indeed, in Siberia the exiled prisoners suffered a fate not entirely unlike that of Nimrod and other condemned souls Dante encountered. Locked up in chains and banished, in Anton Chekhov's phrase, to 'the end of the world', they were left to perish in despair. No wonder, then, that they longed, like those in Inferno's 'eternal exile' (Inferno XXIII: 126), for someone who would write their stories down and report back to the world of the living. 'There was a chorus', Howard (1902: 107) tells us, 'of "Don't forget me! Put me in," etc.' Other authors recall similar scenes (see e.g. Iakubovitch [1895–1898] 2015: 174). These writers, however, had in turn to overcome another kind of problem; a predicament they shared, in fact, with Dante himself: 'Who, even with untrammelled words and many / attempts at telling, ever could recount / in full the blood and wounds that I now saw?' (Inferno XXVIII: 1–3).

The analogies between Inferno and Siberian exile on the one hand, and between Dante and writers like Howard on the other, help to illustrate how Siberian exile writing actualizes fundamental aspects of the problem of witnessing. John Durham Peters (2001: 708) has observed how 'the witness' has appeared more recently as an actual 'survivor of hell, prototypically but not exclusively the Holocaust or *Shoah*'. In the Preface to the 2006 translation of *Night* (republished in the 2018 edition), for example, Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel ([1958] 2018: xiv–xv) writes, 'I knew that I must bear witness. I also knew that, while I had many things to say, I did not have the words to say them … It became clear that it would be necessary to invent a new language.' Wiesel here identifies three facets of the problem: the urge to bear witness, the lack of appropriate words, and the need to reinvent language. This resonates with what Primo Levi has observed about the literature of Nazi camps more generally:

> In all of our accounts, verbal or written, one finds expressions such as 'indescribable', 'inexpressible', 'words are not enough … ', 'one would need a language for … ' This was, in fact, our daily thought [in the camps]: that if we came back home and *wanted to tell*, we would be *missing the words*. Daily language is for the description of daily experience, but here it is another world, here one would need *a language 'of this other world'*, a language born here.
>
> (Levi 1994: 185, emphasis added)

Wiesel and Levi exemplify, in these quotes, 'the fragility of witnessing: the difficult juncture between experience and discourse' (Peters 2001: 710, cf. Rabinow 2017: 12–14). To witness thus has two faces: 'the passive one of *seeing* and the active one of *saying*. In passive witnessing an accidental audience observes the events of the world; in active witnessing one is a privileged possessor and producer of knowledge' (Peters 2001: 709, emphasis in original). In this way, witnessing relates to world-making. To 'translate knowing into telling' (White 1987: 1) by narrating personal experiences stabilizes, however momentarily, a world for others to share; and the 'presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us' as Hannah Arendt ([1958] 1998: 50) points out, 'of the reality of the world'. However, when Levi says that a language, in order to describe a world, needs to be *of* that world, he also intimates that a world could bring forth a language; that the relationship between language and world is a reciprocal one.

This chapter, which is an investigation of Siberian exile writing from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, unfolds against the backdrop of the problem of witnessing conceptualized in this way. I am interested in what these narratives could tell us about language and world-making (Ganguly 2016, Goodman 1978, Hayot 2012). To explore this, I seek to elucidate the anthropological problems to which the texts respond when, for example, they speak of Siberia as a Dante-esque inferno at 'the end of the world'.[2] But what kind of literature are we dealing with here, exactly?

Siberian exile writing

Background

Banishment to Siberia reached its most infamous and deadly form with the Gulag system of forced labour camps during the Soviet era (see e.g. Applebaum 2003, Barnes 2011, Jakobson 1993, Khlevniuk 2004). Along with historical research, a considerable corpus of Gulag memoirs and works of literature has continued to grow since the early 1950s. These narratives have played a major role in terms of

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[2]   This inquiry takes a phenomenological assumption as its theoretical starting point: that the reciprocal relation between world and language is characterized not by congruence, where world and language fully coincide (and which would reduce expression to either pure repetition or pure creation), but by levels of *non-coincidence* that call for continued, and continuous, expression (Merleau-Ponty 1968; Landes 2013; Viktorin 2017: 40–4; Wiskus 2013).

providing insight into the camp system's unspeakable circumstances of suffering and death (Maltsev 1976: 171–251, Toker 2000, 2019). Gustaw Herling's *A World Apart* (1951, in Polish), Eugenia Ginzburg's *Journey into the Whirlwind* and *Within the Whirlwind* (1967, 1981, in Russian), Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* (1954–1974, in Russian) and Alexander Dolgun's *An American in the Gulag* (1975, in English) stand out as particularly powerful examples.[3] There exist in addition a large number of works of fiction about Soviet Gulag camps and Siberian exile under Stalin – for example Victor Serge's *Midnight in the Century* (1939, in French), Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1940, in German), Vasily Grossman's *Everything Flows* (1955–1964, in Russian), Herta Müller's *Hunger Angel* (2009, in German), Sergei Lebedev's *Oblivion* (2010, in Russian) and Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes* (2015, in Russian).

Inseparable from the Soviet regime of repression, the Gulag system was in many ways historically unique. Yet the Gulag is also part of a much longer and, indeed, still ongoing history of exile and prison camps in Russia. The 'history of the post-Stalinist Gulag is not yet encapsulated', as Leona Toker reminds us: 'the camps still exist in Putin's Russia, though more as forced-labour prisons than as preextermination facilities' (Toker 2019: 207; see also Attius Sohlman 2019: 91–2). The Gulag was also preceded by a system of exile and prison camps that had existed in Siberia for more than 300 years (see e.g. Badcock 2016, Beer 2016, Gentes 2008, 2010, Wood 2011: 118–42). Following the Battle of Poltava in 1709, for example, when Peter the Great defeated the Swedes, it is estimated that about 25,000 Swedish soldiers were banished to Siberia (Jonsson and Salytjeva 2009, Villstrand 2011: 212–15). Some of them wrote memoirs and diaries; and such documents, collected and published in the eighteenth century, constitute early examples of Siberian exile writing. In addition to recollections and personal experiences from life in exile, several of these narratives include careful ethnographic and geographical observations (see e.g. Sjebaldina 2009).

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[3] Other classic Gulag memoirs include Andrei Almarik, *The Involuntary Journey to Siberia* (1970); Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (1975, 1978); and Alexander Dolgun and Patrick Watson, *Alexander Dolgun's Story: An American in the Gulag* (1975). Other memoirs, published in the late 1990s, have more recently found their way into the mandatory corpus: e.g. Janusz Bardach and Kathleen Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man: Surviving Stalin's Gulag* (1998); Lev Razgon, *True Stories* (1997); and Julian Better, *Jag var barn i GULAG* (2013). Recent years have seen the publication of diaries and memoirs by Gulag guards: Ivan Chistyakov, *The Day Will Pass Away: The Diary of a Gulag Prison Guard 1935–1936* (2017) and Fyodor Vasilevich Mochulsky, *Gulag Boss: A Soviet Memoir* (2011) are powerful examples.

As such, they have remained significant points of reference. Jonas Stadling (1847–1935), a Swedish author I discuss, refers for example in his book *Genom Sibirien* (*Through Siberia*) to several stories from these documents (Stadling 1901: 52–3, 318–19). Verner von Heidenstam's ([1897–1898] 1934) *Karolinerna* (*The Carolines*), a two-volume collection of short stories, also helped establish this early episode of Siberian exile as a literary theme in Sweden.

The scale and intensity of the exile system in Imperial Russia continued to increase until the turn of the twentieth century, with more than one million people being banished between 1801 and 1917 (Beer 2016: 4). During this period, Siberian exile writing also evolved into something of a literary genre in Russia, characterized by recurrent tropes about Siberia, about exile and about life in prison (see e.g. Diment and Slezkine 1993, Murav 1993, Tiupa 2006). Inaugurated with the publication in 1861–1862 of Fyodor Dostoevsky's semi-biographical *Notes from a Dead House*, this genre includes such books as Chekhov's *The Island of Sakhalin* (1895), Dmitry Mamin-Sibiryak's *Ural Stories* (1895), Pëtr Iakubovich's *In the World of the Outcasts* (1895–1898), Leo Tolstoy's *Resurrection* (1899), Vlas Doroshevich's *Sakhalin* (1903) and Vladimir Korolenko's 'Siberian Stories' (1880–1904).

A world literary corpus

In this chapter I detach Siberian exile writing from this national literary tradition, and approach it instead as *a world literary corpus* (Beecroft 2015, Cheah 2016, Helgesson et al. 2018, Viktorin 2018a: 229–32). It is a literature which is *of the world* in several ways, which the following five observations illustrate.

The first observation concerns language. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the publication of a great number of books on Siberia in languages other than Russian. If we move beyond 'the nation and its literature', we are left with a significant body of texts of extraordinary plurality in terms of linguistic, cultural and geographical scope (see Viktorin 2018b, 2019: 41–8). This corpus comprises several different and occasionally overlapping genres.[4] These include memoirs and first-hand accounts, for example Ewa Feliñska, *Revelations of Siberia* (1852, in Polish), Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899,

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[4]   The years refer to when the texts were first published in their respective language. Some of the texts have not been translated into English. In such cases I have provided provisional translations of the titles within parentheses.

in English), Marie Sukloff, *The Life-Story of a Russian Exile* (1914, in Russian),
Ivar Hasselblatt, *Förvisad till Sibirien* (*Banished to Siberia*, 1917, in Swedish),
Henrik Wrede, *I Sibirien för trettio år sedan* (*Thirty Years Ago in Siberia*, 1918,
in Swedish) and Jan Welzl, *Thirty Years in the Golden North* (1932, in Czech).
Another genre is travel writing and journalism. Henry Lansdell, *Through Siberia*
(1882), George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891), Harry de Windt,
The New Siberia (1896) and Benjamin Howard, *Prisoners of Russia* (1902)
are frequently cited examples, all written in English, while various books by
Scandinavian authors are less well-known: Jonas Stadling, *Genom Sibirien*
(*Through Siberia*, 1901, in Swedish), Holger Rosenberg, *Det ny Sibirien* (*The
New Siberia*, 1904, in Danish), Fridtjof Nansen, *Through Siberia* (1914, in
Norwegian), Elsa Brändström, *Bland krigsfångar i Ryssland och Sibirien* (*Among
Prisoners of War in Russia and Siberia*, 1921, in Swedish) and Ester Blenda
Nordström, *Byn i vulkanens skugga* (*The Village in the Shadow of the Volcano*,
1930, in Swedish). Travel writing also sometimes takes the form of a more
academically oriented ethnography. Representative examples include Benjamin
Howard, *Life with Trans-Siberian Savages* (1893, in English), Charles Hawes,
In the Uttermost East (1904, in English) and Kai Donner, *Among the Samoyeds
in Siberia* (1915, in Swedish). 'Siberia' and 'Siberian exile' appear in addition as
literary motifs in several works of fiction, such as Jules Verne's *Michel Strogoff:
The Courier of the Czar* (1876, in French), William Murray Graydon's *Exiled to
Siberia* (1897, in English), and Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911, in
English). I should also note here that there is a growing body of literature of later
dates that in various ways continues to address Siberian exile at the turn of the
twentieth century (e.g. McConkey 1984, Petri and Sjöberg 1992, Donner 2006,
Frazier 2010).[5]

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[5]   If we take into account all of those who were banished or travelled to Siberia but did not write
      about it for publication, the cultural and linguistic plurality of Siberian exile becomes even more
      remarkable. Several studies retrace such unpublished exilic experiences. In *The Princess of Siberia*,
      for example, Christine Sutherland (2001) narrates the life of Maria Volkonsky, wife of one of the
      leaders of the 1825 Decembrist Rising, who spent twenty-nine years in Siberian exile between
      1826 and 1855. Erik Appel (1998) draws on letters, diaries and other archival sources to retrace
      the story of a group of Swedish-speaking Finns who attempted, rather unsuccessfully, to establish a
      commune in the Amur region in the mid-nineteenth century. Sergei Kan's (2009) biography about
      Lev Shternberg – anthropologist, Russian socialist and Jewish activist – documents in detail how
      Shternberg was arrested, incarcerated in St. Petersburg, banished to Siberia and ended up spending
      seven years in exile on Sakhalin Island between 1889 and 1897, before he returned to become a
      prominent Russian anthropologist. And Erkki Räikkönen's book *Svinhufvud in Siberia*, which was
      first published in Finnish in 1928, draws on interviews conducted with Per Evind Svinhufvud, who
      was exiled to Tomsk between 1914 and 1917 (and later became the third president of Finland, from
      1931 to 1937).

The second observation has to do with the politics of representation. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Siberian exile writing took shape in a context that transcended the geographical boundaries of Imperial Russia, and in relation to transnational debates about crime and punishment and legitimate forms of governing (see e.g. Adams 1996, Foucault 2015, Schrader 2002). Polemical exchanges characterized by explicit animosity were common. One of the first foreigners to compose a book-length overview of exile and prisons in Siberia, and whose text exemplifies the political context of exile writing, was the English priest Henry Lansdell (1841–1919). In his *Through Siberia*, a two-volume book of almost 800 pages published in 1882, Lansdell criticizes almost all previous texts on the subject as 'garnished accounts of horrible severities, which they [the authors] neither profess to have witnessed, nor attempt to support by adequate testimony' (Lansdell 1882, vol. II: 4). He goes on to assert his own position of authority: 'I have visited Russian houses of detention from the White Sea in the north to the Black Sea and the Persian frontier in the south, and from Warsaw in the west to the Pacific in the east' (ibid.: 5). His claims of authority were met by counterclaims. The Russian prince Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), for example, was not impressed by Lansdell's work. In the Preface to the 1906 Russian edition of his own book, *In Russian and French Prisons*, which had originally been published in English in 1887, Kropotkin called Lansdell a 'Russian agent' (Kropotkin [1887/1906] 1971: xxi), and dedicated an entire chapter to a critique of him:

> The truth is that Mr. Lansdell has cast a hasty glance on what the authorities were willing to show him; that he has not seen a single central prison; and that had he visited every prison in Russia in the way he visited some of them, he still would remain as ignorant as he is now about the real conditions of prison-life in Russia.
>
> (Kropotkin [1887/1906] 1971: 233)

My third observation concerns the epistemology of representation. The particular ways in which Lansdell, Kropotkin and other authors vied for authority is significant. 'I was there' was increasingly turning into something of a foundational knowledge claim within the era's scientific culture, which connects Siberian exile writing to turn-of-the-century developments within the emergent social sciences in Russia, Europe and the United States (see e.g. Beer 2008, Debaene 2014, Kuklick 2008). Anthropology, which at the time was developing into an ethnographically oriented field science, constitutes an illuminating example. A synchronic focus on sociological functionalism reoriented anthropology

towards the empirical collection of first-hand data, and long-term participant observation among 'real people on the ground' turned into a trademark of the discipline (Viktorin 2016: 234–6). In Russia, anthropology co-evolved in this regard very concretely with the institution of exile and Siberian exile writing, as the discipline's 'founding fathers' had themselves been banished to Siberia as political prisoners. It was during exile that Vladimir Bogoraz (1865–1936), Lev Shternberg (1861–1927) and Vladimir Jochelson (1855–1937) had taken an interest in the lives of indigenous peoples and begun to conduct ethnographic work (see e.g. Kan 2009, Ssorin-Chaikrov 2008: 191–206, Vitebsky and Alekseyev 2015: 441). Stadling, who was personally acquainted with Bogoraz, makes the following observation on how exactly this came about:

> The official research expeditions always have the disadvantage that the participants must conduct their research trips in their capacity as *public officials*, of whom the natives are afraid, and as a rule they also lack knowledge of the native languages. Both of these circumstances of course constitute serious obstacles, particularly for detailed ethnographic or anthropological studies. The banished political prisoners, on the other hand, come to the natives as their equals, earning their trust and often establishing true relations of friendship with them. By living in such a way among them, spending time with them on intimate terms for several years, they have had the opportunity to study their everyday life, their language, traditions and religious beliefs, etc.
>
> (Stadling 1901: 114–15, emphasis in original, my translation)

A fourth observation is that writers from different countries who took an interest in Siberia often became personally acquainted. Such transnational connections of friendship helped shape Siberian exile writing into a world literary corpus. The American journalist George Kennan's (1845–1924) *Siberia and the Exile System* (Kennan [1891] 2012) is one of the best-known accounts of Siberian exile in Imperial Russia. While the Russian government, as Bruce Adams (1996: 6) notes in his book *The Politics of Punishment*, was far from thrilled with what Kennan had written, most Russian and foreign commentators agreed that the result was trustworthy. The book appeared in 1891 and had required fifteen months of travel – which led to physical exhaustion and near mental collapse for both Kennan and his travelling companion, the artist George Frost. In addition to his first-hand examination of the exile system in Siberia, which took ten months, Kennan also studied the conditions in European Russia, and met with Russian revolutionary émigrés in London (Travis 1990: 111–52). Kropotkin recalls in his memoirs how he met with Kennan:

> When Kennan came back to London from his journey to Siberia, he managed, on
> the very next day after his arrival in London, to hunt up Stepniák, Tchaykóvsky,
> myself, and another Russian refugee. In the evening we all met at Kennan's room
> in a small hotel near Charing Cross. We saw him for the first time, and having no
> excess of confidence in enterprising Englishmen who had previously undertaken
> to learn all about the Siberian prisons without even learning a word of Russian,
> we began to cross-examine Kennan. To our astonishment, he not only spoke
> excellent Russian, but he knew everything worth knowing about Siberia.
>
> (Kropotkin [1899] 2010: 181–2)

The friendship between Stadling and Leo Tolstoy is another example of such
acquaintances. Stadling and the Russian author had first met in the 1880s (see
Stadling 1893: 29–94), and in 1898, on his way back through European Russia
after having travelled through Siberia, he received an invitation to visit Tolstoy
in his home. 'He greeted me with a heartfelt welcome', Stadling remembers, 'and
immediately steered the conversation to our journey through Siberia. … He
was at the time of my visit eagerly occupied with the writing of "Resurrection"'
(Stadling 1901: 278, my translation). Social connections among authors –
whether friendly or antagonistic – arguably played an important part in the
composition of texts. Also, they illustrate how Siberian exile writing of this time
must be understood as a world literary corpus in sociological terms, too.

My final observation here is that Russia – and Siberia itself – was remarkably
diverse in terms of the ethnic and national origins of its inhabitants (Hingley
1967: 65–90, Wood 2011: 95–117). Such plurality shaped the experience of exile
and of Siberia. Examples that illustrate this abound in the literature. Stadling, for
instance, makes the following observation from his 1898 journey on the Lena
River:

> Many decent and sympathetic people were among the passengers, and life aboard
> [the steam ship] had a cosmopolitan touch to it. Unintelligible Tartar dialects
> could be heard, German and French were spoken, and once we had crossed the
> border between Irkutsk and Yakutsk, we heard for the first time the Yakutsk
> language, which would then sound in our ears until we reached the mouth of
> the Yenisay in the month of November. The only thing reminiscent of Russia was
> 'The Volga Song', its majestic notes echoing between the high riverbanks during
> the light nights of spring.
>
> (Stadling 1901: 73–4, my translation)

The exiles, too, comprised a category that was far from homogeneous. In the
following scene, Kennan inspects a convict barge ready to depart from Tiumén:

The exiles, although uniformly clad in gray, presented, from an ethnological point of view, an extraordinary diversity of types, having been collected evidently from all parts of the vast empire. There were fierce, wild-looking mountaineers from Daghestán and Circassia, condemned to penal servitude for murders of blood-revenge; there were Tatárs from the lower Vólga, who had been sunburned until they were almost as black as negroes; Turks from the Crimea, whose scarlet fezzes contrasted strangely with their gray convict overcoats; crafty-looking Jews from Podólia, going into exile for smuggling; and finally, common peasants in great numbers from all parts of European Russia.

<div align="right">(Kennan [1891] 2012, vol. I: 114)</div>

Even Sakhalin – 'the island of punishment' (Hawes 1904: 78) – was characterized by cultural and linguistic plurality.[6] 'With twenty-five languages spoken on the island and large populations of Catholics, Lutherans, Muslims and Buddhists, Sakhalin Island was', according to Sharryl Corrado (2010: 7), 'one of the most diverse regions of the empire'. In Vladivostok and other places the national and ethnic diversity of the population had given rise to a cosmopolitan atmosphere (Ingemanson 1996); in contrast, on Sakhalin Island the fact that inhabitants shared no common language, culture, ethnicity or religion led to what might be described as 'failed world-making'. The island appeared, to several witnesses, as 'the end of the world'.

Literary tropes and anthropological truths

The five observations above illustrate what I have in mind when I speak of Siberian exile writing as a world literary corpus. While it is a literature which is mostly *about* a particular world – 'a world apart' (Dostoevsky), 'the world of the outcasts' (Iakubovich) and so on – Siberian exile writing in various ways also extends beyond 'Siberia', 'exile' and 'literature' *per se*, and thereby reflects more general features *of* the world at large (cf. Viktorin 2018a).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century 'Siberia' had also begun to circulate *in* the world as a literary motif in its own right. The novel *Exiled to Siberia* by the American author William Murray Graydon ([1897] 1900), exemplifies this. An adventure book for a youth audience in the West, it tells the story of two

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6   Sakhalin Island is the focus of several of the first-hand accounts I discuss in this chapter: Chekhov ([1895] 1989), Doroshevich ([1903] 2011), Hawes (1904), Howard (1893, 1902) and Windt (1896). For scholarly overviews of the island's significance see Beer (2016: 241–69), Corrado (2010), Semjonow (1955: 195–202) and Stephan (1971).

nineteen-year-old boys from the USA who travel to Russia, where they find themselves falsely accused of espionage and end up in Siberian exile. The boys manage to escape, and through an incessant succession of implausible events they ultimately make it back to America. Siberia functions in the novel as little more than a sensational setting for the adventurous plot, and to evoke the right atmosphere Graydon makes repeated use of a number of tropes: that Siberia is the epitome of a remote place – 'Before them stretched the dominions of the czar, an empire that reached thousands and thousands of miles across Siberian wastes and deserts to the far-away Pacific coast' (Graydon [1897] 1900: 24); that suffering in Siberia resists verbal representation – 'The period of suffering and misery that began with the departure from Tomsk almost defies description' (ibid.: 105); and that Siberian exile disrupts temporal orientation – 'There were times when the boys found it difficult to convince themselves that the past was not all a dream' (ibid.: 106).

Sometimes, however, outworn clichés like these turn out to be true. In what follows, I allow for this possibility and take seriously the literary work through which different authors attempt to convey authentic experiences. My investigation evolves in an anthropological fashion as a 'tentative twining of conceptual work and empirical materials through inquiry' (Rabinow 2017: 5). More specifically, I approach Siberian exile writing as *anthropological sources* that have something to tell us about language and world-making. Rather than reducing the texts to examples of already existing literary forms, I want to understand what the texts seek to accomplish. I am interested in the problems to which the texts respond, which means that I am interested in the relation between the texts and what they represent.

The end of the world

Literary work

In 1890 Anton Chekhov (1860–1904) travelled across Siberia to Sakhalin Island, where he stayed for three months to conduct fieldwork (Friedlaender 1959: 115–28, Kleberg 2010: 106–27). In the arrival scene in his subsequent book, Chekhov characterizes Sakhalin thus:

> Scarcely visible ahead is a hazy strip of land; this is the penal island. To the left, dropping away in its own convolutions, the shore disappears into the haze on its way to the unknown North. This seems to be *the end of the world*, and there is

nowhere else to go. The soul is seized with the same emotion which Odysseus must have experienced when he sailed an unknown sea, filled with melancholy forebodings of encounters with strange creatures.

<div align="right">(Chekhov [1895] 1989: 4, emphasis added)</div>

'The end of the world' is a trope of Ovidian exile ('*Nobis habitabitur orbis / ultimus, a terra terra remota mea*'),[7] which previously had been redeployed in Russia by Pushkin (see Kennedy 2011). Chekhov makes repeated use of this and other literary references – 'the same emotion which Odysseus must have experienced', and so on – to convey what he felt when he came face to face with Sakhalin.

'The end of the world' also suggests that Sakhalin exhibits something for which Chekhov does not have the right words; that Sakhalin forces him to extend language beyond the vernacular world that produced it. In a letter to his publisher, written on his return trip, Chekhov intimates as much when he reports that 'I saw *everything*; so the question now is not *what* I say, but *how* I say it.'[8] In this section, I am interested in how Chekhov and various other writers responded to this kind of challenge. A consideration of several different texts evinces a pattern, and I explore the recurrent themes towards which the texts gravitate.

'Lost to history'

Sakhalin is represented as the end of the world, not only in terms of geographical limits but frequently also in the sense of an ending. The Russian journalist Vlas Doroshevich (1864–1922), for example, who visited the island a few years after Chekhov, addresses precisely how the world from Sakhalin's horizon seems to vanish:

You cannot believe that somewhere in the world there is an Italy, blue sky, warm sun, that there are songs and laughter in the world … Everything ever seen up to now seems so distant, as if on some other planet, as if it were dreamt, unreal, unfeasible.

<div align="right">(Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 6)</div>

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7 '[M]y habitation is *the end of the world*, a land far removed from my own land' (Ovid, *Tristia*, 1.1: 127–8; translation by D. F. Kennedy, emphasis added). On Ovidian exile, and exile after Ovid, see Inglehart (2011) and Williams (2002).

8 Anton Chekhov, letter to A. S. Suvorin, the Gulf of Tartary, on the steamship *Baikal*, 11 September 1890 (McVay 1994: 97).

Several authors make similar observations. The Englishman Benjamin Howard (1836–1900), for example, who travelled to Sakhalin in 1890, writes that 'Sakhalin is the place of the dead; the world has long become but a distant recollection' (Howard 1902: 265). Pëtr Filippovich Iakubovich (1860–1911), himself a former penal labourer, recalls how fellow prisoners spoke of Sakhalin Island as 'a living grave from which no one ever returned' (Iakubovich [1895–98] 2014: 222). Kennan ([1891] 2012, vol. I: 60) deploys analogous imagery: 'the Siberian *túndra* not only becomes inexpressibly lonely and desolate', he writes, 'but takes on a strange, half terrible unearthliness, which awes and yet fascinates the imagination'. And, most famously, Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) describes the Siberian prison where he was incarcerated as 'an alive dead house, a life like nowhere else' (Dostoevsky [1861–62] 2015: 8).

The references to unearthliness and death are not coincidental. Exile is often compared to death (again, an Ovidian trope), and in the Siberian case the metaphor has particular resonance. 'A person sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia is removed from normal human environment without any hope of ever returning', writes Chekhov; '*he is dead* to the society in which he was born and bred. So the convicts say, "The dead never return from the grave!"' (Chekhov [1895] 1989: 214, emphasis added). Those exiled to Siberia were indeed treated in certain respects as if they were in fact dead. Kennan explains:

> As a general rule, exile to Siberia, under the severer sentences and for felony, involves first, deprivation of all civil rights; second, forfeiture of all property, which, upon the conviction of the criminal, descends to his heirs *as if he were dead*; and third, severance of all family relations, unless the criminal's family voluntarily accompanies him to his place of exile.
>
> (Kennan [1891] 2012, vol. I: 82, emphasis added)

At the same time, actual deaths were managed without any of the dignity commonly shown to the dead. Henrik Wrede (1854–1929) was a Swedish-speaking Finn who spent two years in Irkutsk and other parts of Siberia in the mid-1880s under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In his memoirs, published in Swedish in 1918, he relates how a group of exiled prisoners from Finland turn to him in distress. They tell him how the corpse of a fellow Finn who had just died in the infirmary has been thrown into a grave, too shallow and poorly covered, 'like a dead dog', without any religious ceremonies. He accompanies the men to the cemetery, where they remove the coffin from the grave and begin digging until it is twice as deep. Wrede then leads a funeral

service before they rebury the coffin and cover the grave. 'On our way back', he recalls, 'these hardened lifetime prisoners were more than distressed by the thought of who would one day bury them, and in what manner it would be carried out' (Wrede 1918: 88, my translation; cf. Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 257).

Siberian exile seems to be located not only at the end of the world, but also outside of time. It is perhaps not surprising to learn that people who were exiled to 'the end of the world' would tend to feel deprived of a future. Yet on Sakhalin people also lost their pasts. 'Nowhere are past times so quickly forgotten as on Sakhalin', writes Chekhov ([1895] 1989: 196). 'What transpired twenty to twenty-five years ago is considered to belong to a dark antiquity, already forgotten, lost to history.' Some people had lost track of time entirely, and were unable to recall when exactly they had arrived on the island:

> 'When did you arrive on Sakhalin?' Very few of the Sakhalin dwellers answered this question immediately, without strain. The year he arrived on Sakhalin was the year of dire misfortune. Furthermore, they don't even know the year, or have forgotten it. I asked an old convict woman when she had arrived on Sakhalin and she answered dully, without thinking, 'Who knows? Maybe in '83.' Either her husband or her lover interrupts, 'So why do you wag your tongue for nothing? You came in '85.' 'Maybe in '85', she agrees with a sigh.
>
> (Ibid.: 23–4)

If people happened to meet someone from their old home town, however, the 'forgotten past' would reappear in a flash, fully reanimated (Badcock 2016: 82–90, Donner 2006: 59, Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 363). In his 1917 book *Förvisad till Sibirien* (*Banished to Siberia*), the Swedish-speaking Finn Ivar Hasselblatt (1864–1948) recalls a scene from an overcrowded Petrograd prison where he unexpectedly meets a fellow countryman:

> Then appeared from the group a young, blond man with an open, bold look in his blue eyes. He reached out his hand to greet me, and asked me in Swedish: 'Do you speak Swedish?' Surprised to be addressed here in my own mother tongue, I asked in turn who he was that spoke this language. He then presented himself as a trader S., from Helsinki, who was engaged to be married to a daughter of Captain P. in Hangö, an old friend of mine. The ice within now began to melt. The friendly greeting made me feel warm inside, and we soon sat down together in pleasant conversation, and the remaining hours of the evening disappeared quickly.
>
> (Hasselblatt 1917: 29–30, my translation)

Another example comes from Ewa Feliñska (1793–1859). In her memoirs, *Revelations of Siberia*, originally written in Polish and published in English in 1853, Feliñska recalls a conversation she had with a soldier who had been stationed in her old home village:

> This circumstance, trifling as it may appear, made us consider each other in the light of old acquaintances; such as had *seen the same objects and places, or, at least, had some reminiscences in common*, which alone speaks volumes to those who, removed from their native place, happen to meet in a distant land. I shall for ever remember the few moments of conversation I had with the veteran soldier.
>
> (Feliñska 1854: 7, emphasis added)

Yet most of the time there was no one around who had 'seen the same objects and places', as Feliñska phrases it. There were few elderly people present, and almost no old objects existed either. On Sakhalin Island this caused for Chekhov 'a persistent feeling that something important is missing; no grandmother, no grandfather, no old paintings, no inherited furniture; consequently, the household contains *nothing from the past*, nothing traditional' (Chekhov [1895] 1989: 26, emphasis added). This helps explain why those who did have an older object in their possession treasured it immensely. Among so-called free convicts and their families, for example, Howard (1902: 93) discovered that 'great pains are taken by each person to wear something or other which is both an ornament and a souvenir of a former home'.

World-making demands the humanization of time. Since time itself is intangible, this means it has to be manifested through rituals, material objects and, as in the examples above, social relations (see e.g. Viktorin and Widmark 2013, Viktorin 2013). Indeed, without such displays of the past, and without people who have 'seen the same objects and places', world-making fails. Hannah Arendt explains:

> The reality and reliability of the human world rest primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced, and potentially even more permanent than the lives of their authors. Human life, in so far as it is world-building, is engaged in a constant process of reification, and the degree of worldliness of produced things, which all together form the human artifice, depends upon their greater or lesser permanence in the world itself.
>
> (Arendt [1958] 1998: 95–6)

On Sakhalin Island, no shared forms for expressing the passing of time existed. Without common time–space configurations, time never becomes truly humanized, which means that a world fails to appear. Instead, there seems on Sakhalin to exist a 'present without a future, or an eternal present'. From a phenomenological perspective, this is 'precisely the definition of death' (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012: 388).

Changing fates

Myths and stories on exile often tell us that a banished person cannot continue to exist in the same way as before, but must recreate her sense of self and fashion a new world around her. In Siberian exile this was sometimes literally the case. So-called *brodiagi* (vagabonds) deliberately tried to conceal their pasts and claimed not to remember who they were, assuming nicknames such as 'Ivan I-Don't-Remember'.

In 'the world of the outcasts', this strategy to conceal, or deliberately forget, one's identity and one's entire past sometimes made sense. Doroshevich claims, for example, that 'Few escape [from Sakhalin Island] with the prospect of returning to Russia, but each hopes "to change his fate", to proclaim himself a *brodiaga* while on the lam and so cut a ten- or twenty-year *katorga* [penal labour] sentence in half' (Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 239). Charles Hawes, an anthropologist who spent fifty days on Sakhalin in preparation for his book *In the Uttermost East* (1904), explains how exactly the prisoners sought to accomplish this:

> If identified, he [the escaped prisoner] will have his sentence lengthened by an addition; but if he professes to have forgotten his name and family, and whence he comes, and he cannot be identified, there is nothing to be done but to sentence him as a *brodyaga* to four years' hard labour. On Sakhalin it is not so easy to outwit the authorities as in the vast region of the mainland, but should he succeed, this 'Mr. Ivan Dont-remember' scores considerably.
>
> (Hawes 1904: 151)

In Siberian prisons it was considered an obligation for every penal labourer to help a fugitive. According to Stadling, Siberian etiquette also strictly forbids one to interrogate another person about his past (Stadling 1901: 163). Thus no one would reveal the true identity of a recaptured prisoner. For prisoners who were in debt from gambling, to escape and then return, claiming to have forgotten

one's past, would also clear them of debt – at the price, of course, of irrevocably losing one's identity. According to Doroshevich:

> Once a man has escaped from prison all his responsibilities and debts amount to nothing and can never be renewed. Often, a man buried in debts flees without any hope of gaining freedom. Having wandered for two weeks half-insane from hunger, bloodied by thorns in the taiga and chilled to the marrow, he returns in rags to the same prison he fled from. He receives an extended term (a 'bonus') and settles former debts with his flesh. But because of this his debts are wiped out and he is once again a credit-worthy man.
>
> (Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 238)

Others lost their past in an even more radical way – by selling their identity for a trifle. Dostoevsky's *Notes from a Dead House* includes one of the most famous accounts of this custom:

> For instance, some Mikhailov, sentenced for murder or some other capital offense, finds going to hard labor many years unbeneficial. Suppose he's a clever fellow, an old hand, who knows his business; so he's on the lookout for somebody in the same party who is of a simpler, more downtrodden, more uncomplaining sort, and whose sentence is comparatively lighter: a few years in a mill or a settlement, or even at hard labor, only for the shorter term. Finally, he comes across Sushilov. Sushilov is a house serf and is simply being sent to a settlement. He has already gone a thousand miles, naturally without a kopeck to his name, because Sushilov will never have a kopeck – he goes on, exhausted, worn-out, eating only government rations, without a fleeting bite of something good, in nothing but government clothes, serving everybody for pitiful small change. Mikhailov strikes up a conversation with Sushilov, makes his acquaintance, even becomes friends with him, and finally, at some stopping place, treats him to vodka. He finally makes the suggestion: how would he like to exchange? 'I, Mikhailov, this and that, I'm going to hard labor, not really to hard labor, but to a "special section." It's hard labor, but special, meaning better.' … Sushilov is a bit tipsy, a simple soul, filled with gratitude for Mikhailov's kindness to him, and therefore does not dare to refuse. … They come to an agreement. The shameless Mikhailov, taking advantage of Sushilov's extraordinary simplicity, buys his name from him for a red shirt and a silver rouble, which he gives him on the spot in front of witnesses.
>
> (Dostoevsky [1861–1862] 2015: 71–2)

This story relates in particular ways to fate, time and the authenticity of being. The prisoner is not himself, but someone else. He has lost both his past and

his future. 'On his legs are fetters – another's. His crime – another's. His fate – another's. His name – another's. No, now all this is not another's, but his' (Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 209). While some people, like Sushilov, too easily gave up their fates for vodka or money, others, like Mikhailov, too readily took advantage of them.

The Siberian custom of changing fates is a radicalization of its mythological template – the Genesis story about how Jacob talks Esau into selling his birthright, simply by offering him some food, and later receiving his blessing too, by fooling his father, thus in practice exchanging fates with him (Genesis 25: 29–34). The person who too easily merges with the present – who focuses too much on immediate satisfaction – to the detriment of a long-term perspective appears not to deserve what he has lost. Genesis seems to suggest that since Esau has 'despised' his birthright, he 'has no right to complain about his fate' (Shinan and Zaikovitch 2012: 156). Again, in Siberia this logic is repeated, even exaggerated, as fellow prisoners, according to several accounts, merely find it amusing to see how an exchange will unfold: 'Will he hang himself?' (Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 209). The exiled person who left his old life behind and sold his identity for a trifle is thus forced into 'the world of Esau' – a dehumanized world 'of hunting, tracking, transformations of the human-animal margins. Here one becomes whatever one has to become, in order to eat and to feed others' (Zornberg 1993: 155).

Deathly silence, endless noise

In his description of the Sakhalin village of Dué, Chekhov notes that it is 'always quiet'. 'The ear soon becomes accustomed to the measured clang of chains, the roar of the surf and the hum of the telegraph wires, and because of these sounds the impression of *dead silence* becomes even stronger' (Chekhov [1895] 1989: 74, emphasis added).

The Siberian soundscape recurs as a significant theme of Siberian exile writing (cf. Mrázak 2020: 83–103). Many authors speak about silence and sounds. Stadling, Howard and Doroshevich, for example, all characterize their impressions of Siberia in relation to silence:

> Everything is quiet and still: you listen, and hear only the sound of your own heart beating; you walk, and only the sound of branches crushed under your foot interrupts the profound silence. Something enigmatic and horrible creeps up on you in this semi-darkness and deathly silence, as you walk among mute

immobile tree trunks, that surround you like pillars in a gloomy temple or columns in a dark tomb, while the clammy air helps to generate a peculiar indeterminable blend of moods, reminiscent of those sometimes conjured up in dreams.

<div align="right">(Stadling 1901: 39, my translation)</div>

The song of birds is an unknown sound. This all-pervading silence deepens, if possible, the dreaminess of the forests, in which the deadliness of the solitude finds its most dismal expression.

<div align="right">(Howard 1902: 313)</div>

There is a deathly silence. Only the crunching of wind-fallen branches underfoot. Stop, and there's no sound. No bird sings, not a peep … One is awestruck, as if in an empty church. The silence of the Sakhalin taiga – it is the stillness of a desolate abandoned cathedral beneath whose arches no whispered prayers are heard.

<div align="right">(Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 6)</div>

When we hear sounds – or, as in the examples above, encounter unexpected silence – we 'grasp something at a sensuous level that is considerably more abstract and difficult to convey in a written ethnography' (Feld and Brennies 2004: 465). Ethnography, according to the anthropologist Steve Feld, should therefore ideally also include what it is that people hear every day, what he calls *acoustemology*: 'one's sonic way of knowing and being in the world'. The central idea here is 'to have the sound raise the question about the indexicality of voice and place, to provoke you to hear *sound making as place making*' (ibid.: 462, emphasis added). As an integral part of Siberia's acoustemology, silence signifies the end of the world in the sense that it powerfully suggests something 'non-human' and undomesticated.

When faced with the profoundness of nature, people also tend to respond with silence. Indeed, in the Siberian wilderness, as Stadling writes, 'The old songs fall silent, old memories fade, even the voice is muted' (Stadling 1901: 41, my translation). The Swedish journalist Ester Blenda Nordström (1891–1948), who spent over two years in a small Kamchatka village in the 1920s, suggests something similar. As the 'surrounding beauty sank into' her, she recalls how it filled her 'with silence and a sort of almost shy dread'. It was as if 'there was nothing else on earth but this wilderness' (Nordström 1930: 138–9, my translation). Ordinary language seems to fail in situations like these. 'Our conception of a forest', as Stadling puts it, 'is *not applicable* for the *taigá* of Siberia' (Stadling 1901: 36–7, emphasis added, my translation). Such moments of silence,

however, also constitute potential moments of world-making literary work, and an imperative to rethink and reinvent language. To 'speak with the clarity of the poet', as Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg observes, is precisely 'to hear in the silence the babble of infinite combinations', and such word-making is world-making (Zornberg 1993: 118–19, 108, cf. Goodman 1978, Merleau-Ponty 2007: 241–82).

Inside the prisons another kind of silence reigned, which in contrast suggests the failure of world-making and the dehumanization of language. Doroshevich tells the story of how a Sakhalin prisoner, Matvey, was approached by one of the highest-ranking criminals – this category of criminals were called Ivans (not to be confused with 'Ivan I-Don't-Remember'). The Ivan turned to Matvey: 'The warden wants me for something at the chancery. But I've sold my cassock. Gimme your gov'ment issue to wear. Gimme it, y'hear? If the warden sees me without a cassock he'll stick me in the "dryer"' (Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 197). Matvey found himself in an impossible situation, and finally gave up his cassock.

> No one stood up for Matvey, whose last piece of property was taken and for which he'd have to answer with his back. No one stood up for him because: 'You don't talk back to Ivans!' …
>   As they were telling me this story they introduced Matvey himself.
>   Well, how about that cassock, chap?!
>   Matvey was silent.
>   'Don't be scared. The barin [master, lord] already knows everything. Nothing bad'll happen to you!' the prisoners urged him on. But Matvey maintained the same gloomy downcast silence.
>
>   (Ibid.)

The literature of Siberian exile also includes examples of what, following Elaine Scarry (1985), we might call 'the destruction of language'. These are the torture scenes (Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 28–9, 151, 180–2, 356–8, cf. Wiesel 2018: 64–6). On one occasion, Chekhov was permitted to witness the flogging of a prisoner:

> The executioner stands to one side and strikes in such a way that the lash falls across the body. After every five strokes he goes to the other side and the prisoner is permitted a half-minute rest. Prokhorov's [the prisoner's] hair is matted to his forehead, his neck is swollen. After the first five or ten strokes his body, covered by scars from previous beatings, turns blue and purple, and his skin bursts at each stroke.
>   Through the shrieks and cries *there can be heard the word*s: 'Your worship! Your worship! Mercy, your worship!'

And later, after twenty or thirty strokes, *he complains like a drunken man or like someone in delirium*:

Poor me, poor me, you are murdering me … Why are you punishing me?

Then follows a peculiar stretching of the neck, the noise of vomiting. *Prokhorov says nothing; only shrieks and wheezes*. A whole eternity seems to have passed since the beginning of the punishment. The warden cries, 'Forty-two! Forty-three!' It is a long way to ninety.

(Chekhov [1895] 1989: 208, emphasis added)

The torture successively deprives the prisoner of his ability to speak and then his ability to keep silent. At first he begs for mercy. Next, while he continues to utter words, his speech does not make any sense: he is 'like a drunken man'. Finally, he 'says nothing; only shrieks and wheezes'. 'To witness the moment when pain causes a reversion to the pre-language of cries and groans', according to Scarry (1985: 6), 'is to witness the destruction of language, but conversely, to be present when a person moves up out of that pre-language and projects the facts of sentience into speech is almost to have been permitted to be present at the birth of language itself'. Siberian exile writing illuminates both these extremes.

Those who were flogged lost their ability to speak, but they could not remain silent. Yet the sounds they uttered were incomprehensible and repellent, 'the noise of vomiting'. Several accounts describe the penal colonies as defined by precisely such noise, what Doroshevich ([1903] 2011: 27) calls Sakhalin's 'repulsive vernacular'. In his novel *Resurrection* (1899), for example, Tolstoy describes a scene within a Siberian prison:

While still in the yard Nekhlyudov could hear the din of voices and the general commotion going on inside, as in a beehive when the bees are preparing to swarm; but when he came nearer and the door opened, the din grew louder and changed into distinct sounds of shouting, abuse, and laughter. He heard the clatter of chains and smelt the well-known foul air.

(Tolstoy [1899] 2009: 419)

Chekhov, too, speaks about a 'diversity of sounds':

Under my windows the convicts passed along the street to the measured clanging of their irons. Opposite the apartment, in the military barracks, musicians were learning the marches with which they would greet the Governor-General. The flute played passages from one song, the trombone from another, and the bassoon from still another, and the result was inconceivable cacophony.

(Chekhov [1895] 1989: 16)

The ethnographer and journalist Nikolai Iadrinchev, who was incarcerated in the prison in Omsk, similarly describes how each of the prisoners was occupied with his own things, which gave rise to contrasts that were at the same time comic and repulsive:

> The sounds sometimes merge together and sometimes fragment, crashing into each other in striking contrasts. In one cell someone is reading the Bible aloud while alongside him another convict is dancing in the most disgusting manner.
>
> (Quoted in Beer 2016: 167)

E. Krivorukov, a former *katorga* prisoner, remembers how this 'endless noise' in the cells made up 'an infernal symphony that made one feel like it was nearly impossible to exist' (quoted in Badcock 2016: 38).

A world does not appear out of such diversity, only particularities where everything seems to demand equal attention but nothing matters any more. And outside, there is silence: 'Neither a rustle. Nor a peep. Only a woodpecker occasionally taps, as if nailing shut a coffin's lid' (Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 298).

Semiotic perplexity

For many authors, previous attempts to replicate Siberian exile and prison life appeared inadequate. At the beginning of *In the World of the Outcasts*, for example, Iakubovich eulogizes Dostoevsky, who is often regarded as the untouchable literary master of Siberian exile writing. Yet Iakubovich points out that so much has changed during the thirty years that have gone by since the publication of *Notes from a Dead House* that this book fails to speak to the present. Like Dante, who had to leave Virgil behind when he entered Paradise and trust his own power of expression without the support of literary tradition, Iakubovich realizes that he ultimately has to face his task alone. But unlike Dante he is not in paradise, but in what appears to be hell.

Yet even 'hell' falls short of expressing Siberian exile. Cathy Popkin (1992) has suggested that, for Chekhov, one of the most shocking aspects of Sakhalin was precisely that it diverged from the central notion of the myth of hell as represented for instance by Dante. While the forms of punishment in Inferno are often exceptionally cruel, they always correspond to particular crimes: the more serious the offence, the more terrible the punishment. This allows Dante to retain, and convey to the reader, a sense of divine justice. On Sakhalin such correspondence is missing (see e.g. Chekhov [1895] 1989: 35; Doroshevich

[1903] 2011: 123, 128; Beer 2016: 275). There appears to be no relation between the crimes committed and the punishments meted out. This observation led Chekhov to experience what Popkin (1992; cf. Young 2013) diagnoses as an 'epistemological crisis'.

Situations when we fail in our capacity to read and produce signs, of which Chekhov's epistemological crisis is an example, might be characterized as instances of 'semiotic perplexity' (Toker 2019: 6). Semiotic perplexity constitutes a literary topos that recurs in much travel writing. For example, Douglas Botting (1973: 76) suggests that Alexander von Humboldt and Aime Bonpland experienced a kind of semiotic perplexity, what he describes as 'sensory ecstasy', when they arrived in the port of Cumaná, Venezuela, on 16 July 1799: 'Nothing – no shape, no form, no voice, no colour, no smell – was familiar to them. Nothing would readily fit into their existing pattern of memory and experience, therefore everything seemed to demand equal attention.' This helps explain why even with the best will, and the greatest insistence on precise observation, early European observers could not accurately record what they saw: 'human perceptions and the ability to communicate depend on the existing stock of cultural and intellectual knowledge, and a long process of rapprochement and growing familiarity had to take place before the peculiar contours of the New World could become visible' (Liebersohn 2008: 19).

The semiotic perplexities of Siberian exile writing exhibit several intriguing features. Rather than gradually rendering visible a 'New World', these texts instead speak of 'the end of the world'. Rather than Humboldt's 'sensory ecstasy', travellers, exiles and prisoners in Siberia instead repeatedly speak of *apathy* (see e.g. Doroshevich [1903] 2011: 231, Howard 1902: 145, 179, Wrede 1918: 62, 161). For Humboldt everything seemed to demand equal attention; in Siberia nothing matters any more. Although emotionally reversed, the perplexity itself is founded on similar premises: nothing fits into existing patterns of memory, language or experience. Indeed, semiotic perplexity, and its condition of such 'non-coincidence', is constitutive of the exilic experience (cf. Viktorin 2017).

Literature, anthropology and world-making

What is the significance of Siberian exile writing? How exactly does this literature, understood as a world literary corpus, relate to world-making? To

address these questions, I place Siberian exile writing, by way of conclusion, in a larger historical context of world-making literature.

Literature on travel and exile traditionally tends to project an already established worldview on to the new and the foreign, thereby domesticating it. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is perhaps the most obvious example, but we recognize the same tendency in older works too. Grimmelshausen's (1621–1676) *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (1669) is illuminating in this regard. In response to the anxieties of living in involuntary exile on an uninhabited island, Grimmelshausen's hero Simplicissimus strives to make the desolate wilderness less frightening by engaging in deliberate symbolic work. He forces himself to think about his surroundings in terms of a biblical landscape, and succeeds in fashioning a world around him by projecting on to it what he holds to be universal truths (Hirn 1928: 76–8).

Such literary and symbolic work, which reveals the world-making capacity of language in a very distinct way, has religious origins. According to the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament, God created the world through a series of speech acts. 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made … For he did speak and it came to be', and so on (Psalms 33.6, 9). Humans were in turn invited to praise God's creation – and to grasp and make sense of the world – by reciting it: 'when I recall Your wonders of old. / I recite all Your works, Your acts I rehearse', etc. (Psalms 77.12–13). Humans, as God explains, were thus made 'to hold sway' over the world (Genesis 1.27), to take care of, reproduce and expand it. Literature on travel and exile that repeats this logic thereby tends to reiterate a particular configuration of the universal as well.

This kind of domesticating world-making is widespread outside the domain of religion, too. Dante's *Commedia* helped enable such proliferation, as neither theological comprehension nor fluency in Latin (or Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek) was required to access biblically configured universality once it was rendered as literary allegory in a vernacular language. Indeed, one could argue, as does Peter Hawkins (2007: 139), that the larger effort of the *Commedia* was precisely to rewrite the Bible: 'Dante reimagined the world of the Bible and turned its sacred *figura* into his own literary "fulfilment". What this entailed most obviously was the transformation of biblical character, narrative, and typology into the vernacular of his imagination.' In the process, however, the vernacular went through a remarkable transformation: it seemed as if the particular configuration of the universal animated through the vernacular was also derived from within it.

In the eighteenth century, with the publication of voyage narratives by Captain James Cook (1728–1779), Louis de Bougainville (1729–1811) and others, descriptions of real geographical locations gradually became more important in relation to social imaginaries than the fictitious worlds of older literature (see e.g. Edwards 1994: 1–14, Hirn 1928: 399–450, Hirn 1941: 293–306, Liebersohn 2006). The poet Friedrich Wilhelm Zachariae (1726–1777), as if to mark how reality had literally surpassed fiction, even explicitly eulogized Bougainville as a seafarer more significant than Odysseus (see Hirn 1928: 427–8). Although the fictitious now seemed to have given way to the actual, travellers and authors nevertheless continued to project on to exotic locations pre-existing representations: 'the scene we saw was the truest picture of an arcadia', wrote Joseph Banks (1743–1820), for example, in an attempt to convey his first impressions of Tahiti (quoted in Edwards 1994: 101). Through such projections, along with the invention of domesticating place-names and other colonization practices, a certain concept of the universal now seemed to be mapped on to the actual world, where it could then be 'discovered'.

Yet the 'literature of report' (ibid.: 221) is nevertheless significant precisely because it originates in the real. In spite of its tendency to reproduce existing beliefs, it also inevitably takes shape in response to what one might call 'the resistance of the real': situations characterized by 'semiotic perplexity', situations that inspire, or even compel, world-making literary work. Nineteenth-century Siberian exile writing evinces key dynamics of this mode of world-making, and I conclude by highlighting what I take to be the four most important such insights.

First, Siberian exile writing is a world literary corpus that reflects a modern world in the making. The narratives are themselves *of* this world, and appear as decidedly modern in the sense that they are 'premised on the emergence of advanced communication techniques and a global public sphere' (Osterhammel 2014: 138). In the transnational debates, which began in the 1860s, of the pros and cons of the Siberian exile system, it is obvious that the authors had an educated, cosmopolitan audience in mind. But memoirs and works of literature, too, are typically directed towards the wider world. The exile texts in addition tend to address the questions actualized at the time by the emergent social sciences. What are the limits of progressive thought? Is it possible to draw a line between the variable and the invariable in relation to human behaviour? Do human universals exist? And what, ultimately, is *anthropos*?

Second, Siberian exile writing gravitates towards similar empirical observations, which function as 'negative examples' of world-making. One such

observation concerns temporality. Sakhalin Island seems, for example, to be located 'outside of time', where those banished live in an eternal present, while the past, as Chekhov notes, has disappeared without giving way to the hopes of a future. Another concerns language. Sakhalin, as Doroshevich ([1903] 2011: 27) phrases it, exhibits its own 'repulsive vernacular', which consists of endless and odious noise, unintelligibly Babel-esque and ultimately meaningless. And a final observation here has to do with social relations. In place of an authentic community, there exists in the penal colony what several accounts characterize as a plurality of seemingly interchangeable particularities. Through recurrent observations such as these, the exile narratives collectively convey what is conspicuously missing in Siberia. As such, the texts function as anthropological sources that intimate what must exist for a world to flourish.

Third, Siberian exile writing invites a rethinking of a particular configuration of the universal. In the voyage narratives of the eighteenth century, real geographical locations, such as Tahiti, appeared astounding precisely because they seemed to coincide even more fully with existing discourses than the fictitious worlds they thereby 'surpassed'. By contrast, attempts to 'recite' Sakhalin Island by using well-known imagery invariably failed. An attempt to represent 'the world of the outcasts' truthfully in writing actualizes three facets of the problem of witnessing: the imperative to speak, the lack of appropriate words and the necessity to reinvent language. For Chekhov and others, the semiotic perplexity they experienced in Siberia ultimately inspired them to engage in world-making literary work. However, to allude to Dante, as Howard and so many others tended to do, did not ultimately offer a productive way forward. Instead, I think it would be fair to conclude that Sakhalin appears here truly as 'the end of the world', if by that we have in mind a domesticating and one-directional worldview which the reality of the island resists and thus forces us to rethink.

Finally, Siberian exile writing contributes to the emergence of a cosmopolitan worldview. In their attempts to represent Sakhalin Island – along with Siberia and the exile system more generally – authors repeatedly oscillate between different language registers. On the one hand, they characterize Siberia as 'a world apart'; but collectively, on the other hand, their narratives also actualize facets of 'the world at large'. This is arguably the ultimate world-making promise of the corpus. Siberian exile writing – again, not any individual text, but the world literary corpus considered as a collective whole – transcends the vernacular worlds it represents by placing them within a single world which thereby epiphenomenally begins to appear.

Acknowledgements

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The making of Paris in novels by Balzac and Flaubert

Annika Mörte Alling

In the nineteenth century, Paris was a preeminent focal point of the world. It was mythologized as the city of love, fashion and literature, seemingly radiant with the promise of personal fulfilment and happiness. In Alfred de Vigny's estimation it was the 'shaft of the world', Victor Hugo saw it as the 'city of the future' (Prendergast 1992: 16–17) and, retrospectively, Walter Benjamin (1999) dubbed it 'the capital of the nineteenth century'. It has since then been the object of countless representations and descriptions in various types of texts, as in art. Notwithstanding, Paris has also remained peculiarly elusive, both for characters in novels and for authors trying to give shape to the city as a delimited and defined place. Christopher Prendergast (1992) has analysed this problem from a social and cultural-historical perspective. Even in novels generally associated with the realist mode, the Parisian world does not really seem to exist but has to be constructed again and again. Such world-construction will be the object of this study, at a close character level, in two novels by Balzac, *Le Père Goriot* (1835) and *Illusions perdues* (1837–1843),[1] and two by Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (1857) and *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869). More precisely, I examine the Parisian world as it is created and imagined by the protagonists, from their particular viewpoints and linked to their desires, emotions and values. Strikingly, these desires tend first to emerge in the countryside or the provinces. It is mostly at this level, in this broad sense, that my chapter considers the 'vernacular', or rather 'the

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[1] The novel was originally published in three parts: *Les deux poètes* (1837), *Un grand homme de province à Paris* (1839) and *Les souffrances de l'inventeur* (1843), but to simplify the reading of the chapter I only note the year of publication of the novel as a whole, in the Furne edition of 1843. For a thorough analysis of the genesis of the novel see Stéphane Vachon (2010).

domain of the vernacular', as discussed in the overall introduction to this book series. Thus this chapter does not consider the vernacular in its linguistic aspect, but in relation to the 'little world' of the subject that is contrasted dynamically to a larger, more cosmopolitan world.

Paris plays an important role in all four novels, although in different ways. Both *Le Père Goriot* and part of *Illusions perdues* are set in the capital, as is *L'Éducation sentimentale*. With his passivity and detachment from society, the protagonist of this last novel, Frédéric Moreau, is different from Balzac's Rastignac and Lucien in character, but his point of departure is similar to theirs in certain ways; Frédéric, too, expects a happiness in the capital that seems unattainable in the provinces – a life, success, excitement – even though he moves back and forth between the two worlds rather than leaving one for the other. Emma in *Madame Bovary* remains in the provincial environment she abhors, and maybe she *has to* stay there. This unattainability of Parisian life makes her case special. The resemblances in character between her and Frédéric Moreau are striking, and she shares traits with Madame de Bargeton in *Illusions perdues*, who also dreams fervently of Paris, without having to refrain from going there.

Le Père Goriot is the first novel Balzac envisages within *La Comédie humaine*, and in *Illusions perdues* he lets characters reappear for the first time. More than ninety novels and novellas are included in this vast work, where Balzac wanted to capture the whole of society, all types of human beings, as Buffon tried to do in the realm of zoology (Balzac [1842] 2010: 77). As an example of world-making, such an all-encompassing experiment is interesting. In his preface to *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac expressed the intention to describe a world of 'men, women, and things; that is to say persons and the material expression of their minds; man, in short, and life' (ibid.: 93) ('Ainsi l'œuvre à faire devait avoir une triple forme: les hommes, les femmes et les choses, c'est-à-dire les personnes et la représentation matérielle qu'ils donnent de leur pensée; enfin l'homme et la vie' (Balzac [1842] 2012: 47)).

Thematizing a city and the lives lived therein is a project that seemingly allows for the representation of a whole world in concentrated form. In fact, as Balzac points out, capitals are places where extremes meet, the good and the bad, all types of human beings, tastes, vices, unbridled forces. All this is what he wants to capture in *Scènes de la vie parisienne* ('le tableau des goûts, des vices et de toutes les choses effrénées qu'excitent les mœurs particulières aux capitales où se rencontrent à la fois l'extrême bien et l'extrême mal'

(ibid.: 66–7)).[2] At the same time, he underlines the necessary local colours in the scenes and seems to say that Paris is not describable without its antithesis, the provinces ('Chacune de ces trois parties a sa couleur locale: Paris et la province, cette antithèse sociale a fourni ses immenses ressources' (ibid.: 67)). Balzac makes the complex world of *La Comédie humaine* graspable, knowable, by giving us access to smaller, simplified versions of this world in a similar way to Charles Dickens, as discussed by Caroline Levine (2016).

As Wetherill (1983: 123) points out, from the nineteenth century the preoccupation with cities is at the very centre of the occidental novelistic experience; in Balzac, Dos Passos, Dickens, Zola, Proust and Joyce almost everything happens in the city. During the eighteenth century the interest in Paris was less manifest; the desirable life was that in the countryside, and in literature it was rather the escape *from* the city that was thematized (Dufief 1994: 4).

Realism[3] as it developed in the nineteenth-century novel reveals a new conception of the cosmopolitan in relation to the individual and to the local, provincial context – a conception that of course reflects the situation in reality. The industrialization, the urbanization and the explosive development in society in general imply a movement from provincial contexts to larger cities, especially Paris. New technology and modes of transport mean new access to the outside world. The world surrounding the protagonists receives new focus and importance. Those who are not strong enough to withstand the destructive forces of the city are shattered and dispersed, and have problems asserting their individualism against the values of the modern world. There is a distance in the texts regarding the protagonists, an indifference (the title of Flaubert's novel is Madame, not Emma, Bovary), at the same time as they are the objects of the narration and the focalizers of the world, which makes them interesting and exceptional to the reader. In fact, it is possible to talk about a dynamic or tension between the local and the global on a narratological level as well; between intra- and extradiagetic perspectives.

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[2]   The translations in English of the novels are the editions accessible on the site Gutenberg.org, since these are the most broadly available. In general, my intention is to cite longer passages both in translation and in French. For shorter, unproblematic citations, I only refer to the English translation to make the chapter more readable. Where I find that fundamental aspects of the original are not respected in the translations, I either translate myself or paraphrase in English.

[3]   Since a definition of literary realism is not unproblematic, I directly refer to the traits mentioned by Jennifer Yee (2016: 9), which I find sufficient in a definition of the French realist novel as it developed roughly between 1830 and 1890: some sort of 'rejection of idealism in favour of materialism', a predilection for everyday subjects, for a representation of human types rather than that of exceptions, for 'a holistic vision' (implying for instance a close relation between character and milieu), and the aim, not least, to give the impression that the real world is reflected, even to give 'the illusion of a directly mimetic relation to the outside world'.

On the one hand, realism implies an interest in describing the world *as it is* and the *visibility* of this world, as Sara Danius (2013) has underlined. This objective is expressed in Balzac's cited preface. Something objective, general and typical is aimed at, as well as a totality, such as a human life. At the same time the novels reveal how difficult it is to grasp reality: at description level, thematically and existentially, for the characters. *What* is visible and *to whom*? How does one handle life in the new, modern, cosmopolitan world?

A theoretical perspective that seems relevant to keep in mind in this chapter is the model of 'significant geographies' proposed by Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora and Francesca Orsini (2018: 294): 'trajectories and imaginaries that are *recurrent* and/or that *matter* to actors and texts'. The authors are right to underline the importance of geographies in studies within literary texts (although their model applies to levels outside texts too), and the close relation between subject and place; a geography is 'significant' *for someone*; the question of angle and scale is always relevant. Moreover, there are advantages to a term in the plural over the singular 'world', because it 'underlines how "the world" is not a given but is produced by different, embodied, and located actors' (ibid.). Within literary texts, Laachir, Marzagoza and Orsini (ibid.: 303–4) see 'objective geographies (setting, narrator's descriptions, characters moving in space), subjective geographies (character's worldviews), and the implicit geographies (terms, "traces" of other locals in the narration, for example traces of other languages, hints to different traditions …)'. At the end of the study I return to these categories in an overall discussion of the four novels.

In the following sections, different descriptions and views of Paris are examined in each of the novels, beginning with Balzac's. I also analyse the factors that play a role in this world-making process, how conceptions of the capital take form, what provokes the protagonists' desire to live there and how they deal with the new world that confronts them. The initial quote under each novel title is central in the section, but not immediately commented upon.

Le Père Goriot

Paris is in truth an ocean that no line can plumb.

(Balzac [1835] 2010: 24)

Paris est un véritable océan. Jetez-y la sonde, vous n'en connaîtriez jamais la profondeur.

(Balzac [1835] 1971: 34)

Paris appears in the first sentence of *Le Père Goriot*, but it is significant that the first words are 'Madame Vauquer'. She and the boarders at her pension are in focus in the long, very local description of the capital that follows, famous for its zooming technique and the strong interdependency of the characters and their milieu: 'Mme. Vauquer (*nee* de Conflans) is an elderly person, who for the past forty years has kept a lodging-house in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, in the district that lies between the Latin Quarter and the Faubourg Saint-Marcel' (Balzac [1835] 2010: 6) ('Madame Vauquer, née de Conflans, est une vieille femme qui, depuis quarante ans, tient à Paris une pension bourgeoise établie rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, entre le quartier latin et le faubourg Saint-Marceau' (Balzac [1835] 1971: 21)). The description that follows of this ugly district, its streets, the lodging house and in particular its interior and lodgers, even uglier, is one of the most detailed in the novel, and also very subjective. This is the most abhorrent part of the capital and also the least known, says the narrator ('Nul quartier de Paris n'est plus horrible, ni, disons-le, plus inconnu' (ibid.: 23)). In fact, according to the narrator, the story about this district and its inhabitants is too particular to be understood or appreciated anywhere outside the walls of the city, or even beyond the district: 'Sera-t-elle comprise au-delà de Paris? Le doute est permis. Les particularités de cette scène pleine d'observations et de couleurs locales ne peuvent être appréciées qu'entre les buttes de Montmartre et les hauteurs de Montrouge …' (ibid.: 21–2). In fact, from the beginning, local aspects of the capital are underlined in the novel, rather than cosmopolitan ones. There are actually few other detailed descriptions of Paris in *Le Père Goriot* when it comes to the exteriors of the city, as was observed by Wolfgang Matzat (2004: 14).

At different points in the novel the reader is reminded of the vagueness and vastness of the capital, of its indescribable traits, of the fact that this city defies any observer who tries to grasp it. It is referred to as 'an ocean that no line can plumb' (Balzac [1835] 2010: 24),[4] 'the ocean of Paris' (ibid.: 146), 'an ocean of mud' (ibid.: 413), 'the labyrinth of Paris' (ibid.: 53) and 'a forest in the New World' (ibid.: 186).

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4 'Paris est un véritable océan. Jetez-y la sonde, vous n'en connaîtriez jamais la profondeur. Parcourez-le, décrivez-le! quelque soin que vous mettiez à le parcourir, à le décrire; quelque nombreux et intéressés que soient les explorateurs de cette mer, il s'y rencontrera toujours un lieu vierge, un autre inconnu, des fleurs, des perles, des monstres, quelque chose d'inouï, oublié par les plongeurs littéraires' (Balzac [1835] 1971: 34).

At the end, Rastignac has learnt certain things about the capital, which his elevated position on top of the Père Lachaise hill suggests. He is no longer down there, in the sordid quarters of Paris, but contemplates the city from above. The difficulty of grasping the capital remains, though, and it is still not described with any precision; the only elements that help us recognize the capital as Paris are the River Seine, the Place Vendôme and the top of the Invalides. Rastignac is strongly affected by the tragic life and death of his friend Goriot, and sheds a tear that presumably blurs his view of the city, which is almost seen as a creature, a snake, lying tortuously ('tortueusement couché') close to the banks of the Seine, reminding us of evil forces. The narrator is not more objective, contrary to the idea of 'objective geographies', since he is clearly behind the comments on his youth coming to an end, and on his pure heart ('cœur pur', not transmitted exactly in the translation):

> It was growing dusk, the damp twilight fretted his nerves; he gazed down into the grave and the tears he shed were drawn from him by the sacred emotion, a single-hearted sorrow. When such tears fall on earth, their radiance reaches heaven. And with that tear that fell on Father Goriot's grave, Eugene Rastignac's youth ended. He folded his arms and gazed at the clouded sky; and Christophe, after a glance at him, turned and went – Rastignac was left alone.
>
> He went a few paces further, to the highest point of the cemetery, and looked out over Paris and the windings of the Seine; the lamps were beginning to shine on either side of the river. His eyes turned almost eagerly to the space between the column of the Place Vendome and the cupola of the Invalides; there lay the shining world that he had wished to reach. He glanced over that humming hive, seeming to draw a foretaste of its honey, and said magniloquently:
>
> Henceforth there is war between us.
>
> And by way of throwing down the glove to Society, Rastignac went to dine with Mme de Nucingen.
>
> <div align="right">(Balzac [1835] 2010: 580–1)</div>

Le jour tombait, un humide crépuscule agaçait les nerfs, il regarda la tombe et y ensevelit sa dernière larme de jeune homme, cette larme arrachée par les saintes émotions d'un cœur pur, une de ces larmes qui, de la terre où elles tombent, rejaillissent jusque dans les cieux. Il se croisa les bras, contempla les nuages, et, le voyant ainsi, Christophe le quitta.

Rastignac, resté seul, fit quelques pas vers le haut du cimetière et vit Paris tortueusement couché le long des deux rives de la Seine où commençaient à

briller les lumières. Ses yeux s'attachèrent presque avidement entre la colonne de la place Vendôme et le dôme des Invalides, là où vivait ce beau monde dans lequel il avait voulu pénétrer. Il lança sur cette ruche bourdonnant un regard qui semblait par avance en pomper le miel, et dit ces mots grandioses: 'À nous deux maintenant!'

Et pour premier acte du défi qu'il portait à la Société, Rastignac alla dîner chez madame de Nucingen.

<div align="right">(Balzac [1835] 1971: 367)</div>

This scene is also interesting in that it reveals the fundamental tension between the local and the global in the novel, between the hero in his private sphere and the new urban reality that reveals itself at a distance. The present moment seems united with the past (the churchyard, Rastignac's dead friend, his lost dreams) and with the future down there below him, his life in the capital.

The translation above of his exclamation 'À nous deux maintenant!' does not respect the ambiguity of these words in French, but corresponds approximately to 'It is you and me now!' In fact, it can be interpreted both as an exhortation to combat between Rastignac and the city *and* as a desire to cooperate with it, a willingness to adapt to its conditions and laws. At this point he has already gained important insights about the mechanisms of Parisian society, such as the lack of authenticity in people living there and their egoism. Goriot has been ruthlessly exploited by his own daughters until his death. Rastignac has learned that empathy and true love do not have a place in Paris and that it is impossible to change Parisian people. This bleak truth is not only valid in higher circles, but also in Madame Vauquer's lodging house, where total indifference dominates the moments after Goriot's death, at dinner.[5]

The fact that the view of Paris is so blurred and lacking in detail contradicts the idea that the Balzacian novel should be regarded as a typical realistic representation of cosmopolitan Paris and urban modernity. This idea is expressed by for instance Anna Westerståhl Stenport (2004: 42), according to whom Balzac constitutes the very basis of this convention for authors like August Strindberg.

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[5] This indifference regarding Goriot's death is revealed in the statement by the private teacher: 'It is one of the privileges of the good city of Paris that anybody may be born, or live, or die there without attracting any attention whatsoever … Father Goriot has gone off the hooks, has he? So much the better for him. If you venerate his memory, keep it to yourselves, and let the rest of us feed in peace' (Balzac [1835] 2010: 463). ('Un des privilèges de la bonne ville de Paris, c'est qu'on peut y naître, y vivre, y mourir sans que personne fasse attention à vous … Que le père Goriot soit crevé, tant mieux pour lui! Si vous l'adorez, allez le garder, et laissez-nous manger tranquillement, nous autres' (Balzac [1835] 1971: 362).)

This said, it is beyond doubt that Strindberg was influenced by *Le Père Goriot* when writing the panorama scene in *The Red Room* (*Röda rummet,* 1879), where Arvid Falk contemplates Stockholm from Mose Backe hill (see Alling Mörte 2018: 73–4). To compare these scenes in Balzac and Strindberg is interesting, since in both cases the heroes lose their sense of determination and control as soon as they approach the capital and disappear in it again. There is necessarily a loss of perspective, not only in space but also existentially; they both need models and initiators to show them which life to live. Everything is a matter of perspective and scale.

In both cases the subject has to accept becoming peripheral, this being the irrevocable condition of the new modern world, as in the new type of novel. In *The Red Room* this occurs directly; Arvid is not a hero, nor even at the centre of the novel. Rastignac becomes peripheral in the next novel, *Illusions perdues*. It is not possible to have an overview of life in the capital, nor to control it – as impossible as it is for the reader to get a full overview over the novel he is reading. There is fragmentation at all levels. The experience of fragmentation is at the core of the realist novel.

At several levels, a comparison between the novels of Balzac and Strindberg reveals the dynamics between a local or vernacular context and one that is larger, more global. The panorama scenes are local in several respects: a solitary hero at a specific point in space and time. But something larger is also present: Paris, Stockholm, the new world he is facing, modern times, a new type of novel. In addition, the comparison between the two novels reveals a relation at a literary history level: the fact that Balzac's scene is referred to, implicitly at least, in a novel by Strindberg almost fifty years later makes this an exemplary scene. It is viewed, as are Balzac's novels in general, as representative of realistic description in nineteenth-century novels, as Westerståhl Stenport (2004: 42) showed, even though we have seen that this view is somewhat problematic. *Le Père Goriot* appears as a sort of convention or background, a referential point in relation to Strindberg's Swedish novel.

Illusions perdues

Paris, besides, is the capital of the intellectual world, the stage on which you will succeed; overleap the gulf that separates us quickly. You must not allow your ideas to grow rancid in the provinces …

(Balzac [1843] 2004: 324)

> D'ailleurs Paris, capitale du monde intellectuel, est le théâtre de vos succès!
> Franchissez promptement l'espace qui vous en sépare! Ne laissez pas vos idées
> rancir en province …
>
> <div align="right">(Balzac [1843] 1974: 159)</div>

At the beginning of *Illusions perdues*, Lucien de Rubempré dreams of Paris in a
way that echoes Rastignac's determination to dine with Madame de Nucingen
at the end of *Le Père Goriot*: 'Does not my success entirely depend upon my
entrance on life in Paris through the Marquise d'Espard's salon?' (Balzac [1843]
2004: 335). ('N'est-ce pas faire fortune que d'entrer pour mon début à Paris dans
le salon de la marquise d'Espard?' (Balzac [1843] 1974: 164)). What is more, the
bird's-eye view of Paris reappears in this novel, from Lucien's point of view this
time, as he listens passionately to Madame de Bargeton's words about a future
success for him in the capital, starting with the words cited above about Paris as
'the capital of the intellectual world':

> To Lucien, listening to the alluring words, and bewildered by the rapid bird's-
> eye view of Paris which they brought before him, it seemed as if hitherto he had
> been using only half his brain and suddenly had found the other half, so swiftly
> his ideas widened. He saw himself stagnating in Angouleme like a frog under a
> stone in a marsh. Paris and her splendors rose before him; Paris, the Eldorado of
> provincial imaginings, with golden robes and the royal diadem about her brows,
> and arms outstretched to talent of every kind. Great men would greet him there
> as one of their order. Everything smiled upon genius. There, there were no
> jealous booby-squires to invent stinging gibes and humiliate a man of letters;
> there was no stupid indifference to poetry in Paris. Paris was the fountain-
> head of poetry; there the poet was brought into the light and paid for his work.
> Publishers should no sooner read the opening pages of *An Archer of Charles IX,*
> than they should open their cash-boxes with 'How much do you want?'
>
> <div align="right">(Balzac [1843] 2004: 326–7)</div>

Lucien, hébété par le rapide coup d'oeil qu'il jeta sur Paris, en entendant ces
séduisantes paroles, crut n'avoir jusqu'alors joui que de la moitié de son cerveau;
il lui sembla que l'autre moitié se découvrait, tant ses idées s'agrandirent: il se vit,
dans Angoulême, comme une grenouille sous sa pierre au fond d'un marécage.
Paris et ses splendeurs, Paris, qui se produit dans toutes les imaginations de
province comme un Eldorado, lui apparut avec sa robe d'or, la tête ceinte de
pierreries royales, les bras ouverts aux talents. Les gens illustres allaient lui
donner l'accolade fraternelle. Là tout souriait au génie. Là ni gentillâtres jaloux
lui lançassent des mots piquants pour humilier l'écrivain, ni sotte indifférence

pour la poésie. De là jaillissaient les œuvres des poètes, là elles étaient payées et mises en lumière. Après avoir lu les premières pages de *l'Archer de Charles IX*, les libraires ouvriraient leurs caisses et lui diraient: 'Combien voulez-vous?'

(Balzac [1843] 1974: 159–60)

Obviously this view of the capital is anything but objective; she rises before him with 'golden robes', a 'royal diadem' and her 'arms outstretched', and as 'the Eldorado of provincial imaginings'. This reference to Eldorado can, by the way, be seen as an interesting inversion of the colonial relation – here it is not Latin America but Paris, the centre of the empire, that is to be conquered. Moreover, this passage shows that Paris is closely related to the potential of the subject, to what Lucien could become there: a famous poet, the lover of Madame de Bargeton.

It also seems as if Lucien's desire to succeed in the capital is not spontaneous, but 'mediated' by Madame de Bargeton, in the sense of René Girard (1965). The space she exhorts him to overleap seems to correspond to the one that separates the two types of mediation of desire, according to Girard (ibid.: 9): 'external mediation' and 'internal mediation'. In Girard's description of internal mediation, the distance between the subject and the mediator is 'sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly' (ibid.). The internal mediator is not only a model in the eyes of the subject, but also a rival who desires or could desire the same objects as the subject. In Lucien's case, to go to Paris will not be enough to surpass the important step Madame de Bargeton speaks of. He shows later that he is quite conscious of this: observing the beautiful upper-class Parisians travelling through the Tuileries, 'Lucien saw a great gulf fixed between him and this new world, and asked himself how he might cross over, for he meant to be one of these delicate, slim youths of Paris […]' (Balzac [1843] 2004: 381). He has to imitate his internal mediators (among them, Rastignac) – their behaviour, desires, gestures, way of dressing – and this conquest of Parisian manners is a process that will take a long time.

To some degree Lucien also seems to get his desire to succeed from books that he read earlier in life, by Schiller, Goethe, Lord Byron, Walter Scott, Lamartine and André Chenier, among others. Absorbed by these books, brought from the capital, Lucien and his friend David Séchard forget about the sorrows of the countryside, cry together and plan for a future of fame: 'Incessantly they worked with the unwearied vitality of youth; comrades in poverty, comrades in the consuming love of art and science, till they forgot the hard life of the present, for their minds were wholly bent on laying the foundations of future fame' (ibid.: 75–6).

For Lucien, this future means obtaining glory as a writer in Paris, which we have seen Madame de Bargeton convince him of in the longer passage above.

Madame de Bargeton in her turn is also very influenced by the literature she reads, and suffers as much as David and Lucien from the monotony of the countryside. She is a passionate reader of, for instance, Lord Byron and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and adores 'all the poetic and dramatic lives' (my translation)[6] ('toutes les existences poétiques et dramatiques' (Balzac [1843] 1974: 64)). Unlike Emma Bovary, she is able to realize her desire to live a cosmopolitan life, and travels to the capital with Lucien at the beginning of the novel's second part. Life in Paris, she says to Lucien, 'is the only life for a woman of quality, and I have waited too long before entering upon it. […] There, beloved, is the life for a man who has anything in him' (Balzac [1843] 2004: 324). She feels a strong necessity for 'rubbing off Angoulême' (ibid.: 362), a desire that is mediated by Baron Sixte Du Châtelet, who tells her the latest news of the capital, such as where to find the best clothes and dressmakers, and brings her books from there.

However, as is the case with Lucien, to learn how to dress and behave like real Parisian women will take time. After her arrival in Paris, Madame de Bargeton is seen in a less favourable light by Lucien when compared to these women, and she feels the same way about Lucien. The distinction they saw in each other in the countryside vanishes quickly. The reason for this is Paris, states the narrator: 'a process of disenchantment was at work; Paris was the cause' (ibid.: 370). More precisely, the causes seem to be the comparison in itself, the mechanisms of internal mediation – in other words the importance of models, of the conceptions and desires of authentic Parisians.

In *Illusions perdues* as well as in *Le Père Goriot*, space is generally very intimately related to ways of being and desiring, to values, to what is considered right and wrong in that place – by the protagonists, by the other characters, by the narrator. The opposition between Paris and the provinces in *La Comédie humaine* is well known; Balzac even comments on its importance in his preface, as we have seen.

For Lucien and Madame de Bargeton, Paris represents something positive: career, success, events, literature, the possibility of individual blossoming, the opposite of dull country life. At the same time, from other points of view, Paris is associated with danger and negative behaviour. David is apprehensive about

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6   The translation by Ellen Marriage is further away from the original: 'or anybody else with a picturesque or dramatic career' (Balzac [1843] 2004: 85).

Lucien's future life there: 'he had terrible presentiments of the fate awaiting Lucien in Paris' (Balzac [1843] 2004: 276). The narrator, too, predicts a sad consequence of Parisian life for Lucien, namely the end of his sincere attachment to family and friends: 'The so-powerful ties that bind young hearts to home, and a first friendship, and all early affections, were to be severed at one ruthless blow' (ibid.: 328).

The reader of *Le Père Goriot* already knows of these bad characteristics of Parisian life from Vautrin's speech to Rastignac – honesty is pointless and success can only be obtained through corruption or genius.[7] Another of Rastignac's models, the Vicomtesse de Beauseant, had a similar message: that the Parisian world is villainous and mean, corruption and vanity rule and it is crucial to hide one's true emotions (Balzac [1835] 1971: 115). What Vautrin explains to Lucien in *Illusions perdues* is along the same lines: to be a real Parisian, one has to strive for glory and money. Both Rastignac and Lucien grasp these rules, even if the latter will not live by them (and consequently does not succeed).

Thus, at least on the surface, there seems to be a certain coherence between several points of view of the Parisian world, as well as with what Rastignac and Lucien experience. As for the countryside, some sort of convention is manifest here too, even if there are exceptions, as always in Balzac. According to Madame de Bargeton and Lucien, country life is very dull and inimical to the blossoming of the self and the realization of a career as an author for Lucien. The narrator also evaluates the provinces negatively: immobility, narrowness, greed, gossip and ridicule rule, and ideas are narrow and mischievous. He is unreliable, though, for instance in stating that love in the countryside is a type of love that is not satisfied;[8] the sincere feelings between Lucien's sister Eve and David clearly contradict that. For this couple the countryside becomes something different than for Lucien and Madame de Bargeton. David is not interested in a career, in Paris or anywhere, but wants to live a harmonious life with his family in the country, and it is significant that this choice is valued positively by the narrator on the last page of the novel. Once again, to make a career in Paris is not represented as something given. Not even Lucien believes so when he stands on the hill of

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7 'Savez-vous comment on fait son chemin ici? par l'éclat du génie ou par l'adresse de la corruption' (Balzac [1835] 1971: 151); 'L'honnêteté ne sert à rien' (ibid.: 152); 'il faut se salir les mains' (ibid.: 153).

8 'Provincial life, moreover, is singularly well calculated to keep desire unsatisfied' ([1843] 2004: 235). 'La vie de province est d'ailleurs singulièrement contraire aux contentements de l'amour …' (Balzac [1843] 1974: 145).

Père Lachaise gazing out over Paris at the end of the novel's second part, with quite different thoughts than Rastignac: of loved ones, of his family, David, his mother and sister, and life in the provinces (Balzac [1843] 2004: 471–2). His beloved Coralie has just died and he is ready to leave Paris and life itself. What is more, he does return to the provinces at the end of the novel (after having been saved and brought back to life by Vautrin), as does Madame de Bargeton, to gain a more elevated position. Finally, we cannot say that a dichotomy exists between the countryside and the capital, nor that the characters' movements are directed only from the local space to the cosmopolitan one. It is rather a question of a dynamic between the vernacular and the cosmopolitan, of a force exerting attraction on the characters in both directions.

Madame Bovary

> She wished at the same time to die and to live in Paris.
>
> (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 129)

> Elle souhaitait à la fois mourir et habiter à Paris.
>
> (Flaubert [1857] 1972: 95)

Charles Bovary never longs to go to Paris. This has nothing to do with the city in itself, but with his general lack of curiosity, his character. Very much unlike Emma, Charles simply never desires that which is beyond his reach and is content with what he has and where he is, in the little Normandy village of Tostes, where he has succeeded the only doctor. He knows he would never be successful in Paris, or in any larger city. The opening classroom scene in *Madame Bovary* is well known; Charles, '*the new*', is hopelessly provincial, with too little experience of the world even to fit in in a country school. Everything is wrong with him. He is too tall (presumably older than the others), dressed up 'en bourgeois', with a provincial haircut and red wrists (revealing too much outside life), too attentive, too shy (to get up when the bell rings, to throw his cap, new and shining, on the floor like the other boys) and too clumsy (dropping the cap when he gets up, to the amusement of the others) (ibid.: 23). He is unable to stand up and articulate his name clearly, only mumbles a '*Charbovari*' (ibid.: 25).

This is the man Emma Bovary marries, she from an isolated farm, not even a village, mentioned only with the family name Les Bertaux. Thus marrying Charles means a move towards a more urban environment. After a while he

accepts moving from Tostes to the 'bourg' Yonville-l'Abbaye, near Rouen. Emma's bad health, he presumes, must have to do with the place. But Yonville is equally dull, Emma finds quickly, a dullness that is also noted by the narrator and Léon, whom she meets there. She dreams intensely of Paris.

These dreams are first mentioned after the ball at Vaubyessard, where Emma gets a glimpse of glamorous Parisian people and a cosmopolitan life, as she imagines it, and has a decisive dance with the handsome viscount. More precisely, her Parisian dreams are triggered by a green silk cigar case, dropped from a passing carriage and found by Emma and Charles on their way home from the ball. She assumes it belongs to the viscount: 'She was at Tostes; he was at Paris now, far away! What was this Paris like? What a vague name! She repeated it in a low voice, for the mere pleasure of it; it rang in her ears like a great cathedral bell; it shone before her eyes, even on the labels of her pomade-pots' (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 123). ('Elle était à Tostes. Lui, il était à Paris, maintenant; là-bas! Comment était ce Paris? Quel nom démesuré! Elle se le répétait à demi-voix, pour se faire plaisir; il sonnait à ses oreilles comme un bourdon de cathédrale; il flamboyait à ses yeux jusque sur l'étiquette de ses pots de pommade' (Flaubert [1857] 1972: 91).)

Obviously, this Paris has very little to do with a real place, it is a construction of Emma's imagination. She buys a map and goes for walks in the city with her fingertip, up and down the boulevards. She avidly reads about Parisian life in the lady's journal *La Corbeille* and in *Sylphe des Salons*; about theatrical first nights, horse races, soirees, concerts, the latest fashions and best tailors. She studies furniture in Eugène Sue, devours Balzac and George Sand and thinks continually about the viscount. This is how her impression of the capital is formed, in a total mixture of everything, originating from the experiences at the ball, her reading and her bovarystic desire to be other than she is, and elsewhere.[9] The vagueness and heterogeneity of her dreams are striking and, as in Balzac, Paris is associated with an ocean: 'Paris, more vague than the ocean, glimmered before Emma's eyes in an atmosphere of vermilion' (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 126). ('Paris, plus vague que l'Océan, mirotait donc aux yeux d'Emma dans une atmosphère

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[9] Departing from Emma Bovary's case, Jules de Gaultier (1902: 13) defined 'bovarysme' as the general 'capacity of man to conceive of himself as other' (my translation): 'le pouvoir départi à l'homme de se concevoir autre qu'il n'est'. Later in the same book he redefines Emma's case as a pathological version of bovarysme, that is 'when man is incapable of realizing this conception of himself' (my translation); 'en tant que l'homme est impuissant à réaliser cette conception de lui-même' (ibid.: 217). In other words, bovarysme in itself was eventually found to be a good and healthy capacity, helping us to progress and strive forward in life. For more analyses of 'bovarysme' see Alling Mörte 2007: 231–50.

vermeille' (Flaubert [1857] 1972: 93).) As the subsequent passage reveals, life there becomes a jumble of ambassadors, pale duchesses, dresses with trains, men riding horses to death, fantastic actresses and authors.

Emma never goes as far as Paris, but regularly travels to Rouen for her trysts with Léon and adopts the luxurious habits of a metropolitan woman (to the point of reminding Rodolphe, her other lover, of a 'Parisienne' (ibid.: 180)), although she hardly has the prerequisites for such a life. In everything, she adapts reality to her desires. In a bird's-eye view from the Hirondelle, Rouen appears as 'an enormous capital, as a Babylon into which she was entering' (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 545). Babylon not only represents something vast, which is ironic in contrast to little Rouen, but also something evil, signalling to the reader what is to come. Nothing characteristic of Rouen is discernible, nor of any town in particular. There is fog, chimney smoke, mist. It is a world full of life, people and noises, but to Emma it appears as an immovable picture. Compared with the strategic panorama scenes in *Le Père Goriot* and *The Red Room* analysed above, not the slightest impression of control or insight is provoked by the city here. Emma does seem to experience a sort of overview at this moment, or rather a 'mass of existence' (in French in the plural: 'ces existences amassées'), but this experience only results in a 'giddiness' and a heart swelling from the vapour of the passions in the city, a vapour then transformed in Emma to a liquid of love that she pours on to the city, filling every street:

> A giddiness seemed to her to detach itself from this mass of existence, and her heart swelled as if the hundred and twenty thousand souls that palpitated there had all at once sent into it the vapour of the passions she fancied theirs. Her love grew in the presence of this vastness, and expanded with tumult to the vague murmurings that rose towards her. She poured it out upon the square, on the walks, on the streets, and the old Norman city outspread before her eyes as an enormous capital, as a Babylon into which she was entering.
>
> (Ibid.: 545)

> Quelque chose de vertigineux se dégageait pour elle de ces existences amassées, et son cœur s'en gonflait abondamment comme si les cent vingt mille âmes qui palpitaient là lui eussent envoyé toutes à la fois la vapeur des passions qu'elle leur supposait. Son amour s'agrandissait devant l'espace, et s'emplissait de tumulte aux bourdonnements vagues qui montaient. Elle le reversait au-dehors, sur les places, sur les promenades, sur les rues, et la vieille cité normande s'étalait à ses yeux comme une capitale démesurée, comme une Babylone où elle entrait.
>
> (Flaubert [1857] 1972: 340)

This is the only time Babylon is mentioned, but fragments reminiscent of a larger world appear elsewhere in connection to Emma's dreams and readings, even though they are always grounded in her very particular and selective interpretation of things. For instance, images from Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788) appear, a novel set in Mauritius under French rule: a 'little bamboo-house, the nigger Domingo', red fruit on 'trees taller than steeples' (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 77). We also know she has read about the 'great world' in feuilletons ('du *grand monde* que l'on racontait dans le feuilleton' (Flaubert [1857] 1972: 97)),[10] and that the organ-playing man outside her window gives her 'echoes of the world'; inside the instrument she sees images of 'women in pink turbans, Tyrolians in jackets, monkeys in frock coats, gentlemen in knee-breeches', all behind 'a curtain of pink taffeta under a brass claw in arabesque' (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 133). She is obviously not interested in the places themselves, but only thinks about them insofar as they fit her moods and desires, longing to go to 'lands with sonorous names' (ibid.: 88) where one could breathe the 'perfume of lemon trees', imagining 'certain places on earth [that] must bring happiness, as a plant peculiar to the soil, and that cannot thrive elsewhere', wanting to 'lean over balconies in Swiss chalets, or enshrine her melancholy in a Scotch cottage' (ibid.: 88). These dreams of other places, in a total mixture, represent a rather typically French and uncritical conception of the world at the time of Flaubert. In an article on Rancière and *La Peau de Chagrin,* Baidik Bhattacharya (2017: 558, 560) observes that objects in Balzac's novels 'mostly invoke great civilisations like Egypt, Rome, China and India' and that the texts of Balzac and his contemporaries also 'produced a distinct textuality of the Orient'. Although this does not seem to be the case in *Le Père Goriot* and *Illusions perdues*, it is certainly true of *Madame Bovary* and also in works by for instance Chateaubriand, Lamartine (in *Itinéraire* by the former and *Voyage en Orient* by the latter, as Said notes, cited by Bhattacharya) and in Flaubert's *Salammbô*. In these representations of the world, a clear manifestation of power and racial oppression, of colonial governance, is sometimes revealed. Paul and Virginie in Emma's readings own slaves, even though they treat them well and even though the author of the novel argues for the emancipation of slaves and criticizes eighteenth-century French society.

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[10] In the English translation, 'le grand monde' ('the great world') corresponds to the 'upper ten' (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 133).

However, the world of most importance to Emma is naturally Paris; close geographically, and a natural place to go to, at least for characters like Léon and, in *Illusions perdues*, Lucien and Madame de Bargeton. What lies behind Léon's decision to move to Paris is a desire for success, but also the same sense of deep boredom with provincial life from which Emma suffers. However, in his case nothing prevents a realization of his Parisian dream, as he quickly concludes: 'This apprehension soon changed into impatience, and then Paris from afar sounded its fanfare of masked balls with the laugh of grisettes. As he was to finish reading there, why not set out at once? What prevented him?' (Flaubert [1857] 2006: 247). He has eager plans to study law, live the life of an artist, take guitar lessons – the possibilities for a young man in Paris are many.

It should be said also that Léon's determination to go to the capital seems to be in accordance with the expectations of others around him: his employer, his mother, the pharmacist Homais. Only Charles shows a resistance to the idea of a life in Paris, and feels sorry and anxious about Léon. Again, Charles never imagines a life in the capital, satisfied with his situation as he always is. Unlike Madame de Bargeton (accompanied by Lucien), Emma has no man with whom to go to Paris, but whether or not this plays a role in the realization of Emma's Parisian dream the novel does not reveal.

In any case, even for the characters who do not go to the capital, Paris seems to exert both positive and negative powers. On the plus side, it inspires courage, blurs limitations and limits and gives hope of success, change and happiness and of becoming 'other', beyond social and spatial origins. Emma often talks to Léon of a happy life in Paris: 'Often, when they talked together of Paris, she ended by murmuring, "Ah! how happy we should be there!"' (ibid.: 559). As for Léon, we know little of the life that follows for him there, but Paris does give him the power he needs to return to Rouen in triumph and to despise provincial manners, determined to do what he did not dare to before: possess Emma.

However, the capital also represents something negative, a behaviour that is immoral – as in the famous love scene when Emma and Léon travel in the horse cab up and down the streets of Rouen, a scene entirely described from an extradiegetic perspective. Emma hesitates somewhat before succumbing to their mutual desires: '"Ah! Leon! Really – I don't know – if I ought," she whispered. Then with a more serious air, "Do you know, it is very improper" – "How so?" replied the clerk. "It is done at Paris." And that, as an irresistible argument, decided her' (ibid.). The capital's destructive forces are also suggested in relation to the

fatal club-foot operation, affecting Charles's reputation irreversibly: 'These are the inventions of Paris! These are the ideas of those gentry of the capital!' (ibid.: 379) ('Voilà les idées de ces messieurs de la Capitale! …' (Flaubert [1857] 1972: 242). The consequences of these negative influences of the capital are disastrous if there is a maladaptation between place and behaviour. In Emma's case, such a maladaptation is the fundamental problem of her bovarystic character. There is a deep conflict between her life in the provinces and her cosmopolitan desires – for luxury, beautiful clothes and a glamorous life. Thus Emma's quest for a life in the capital may correspond partly to the type of negative 'detachment from one's place of origin' that Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta (2017: 2) discuss in *Cosmopolitanisms*. This detachment means a refusal of the values and conventions of the local place and a desire to be part of a larger, more compelling context, enabling a richer mode of life, socially as well as existentially. In fact, it is probably in this wide, emotional meaning that the cosmopolitan is best understood in this chapter.

L'Éducation sentimentale

> Paris was associated with her person, and the great city, with all its noises, roared around her like an immense orchestra.
>
> (Flaubert [1869] 2011: 188)

> Paris se rapportait à sa personne, et la grande ville avec toutes ses voix, bruissait, comme un immense orchestre, autour d'elle.
>
> (Flaubert [1869] 1973: 87–8)

In the first paragraph of the novel, Frédéric Moreau's life in the capital has already started. It is 15 September 1840, at six in the morning, and he is on board the ship *La Ville-de-Montereu* at the Quai St. Bernard in Paris, going back to Nogent-sur-Seine. We know that he has only spent a short time in Paris, and will soon start his law studies there after two months of boredom in his home village. Like the Balzacian heroes he is full of expectations of his future life in the capital, thinking about his apartment, 'on the plan of a drama, on subjects for pictures, on future passions' (Flaubert [1869] 2011: 15). His immediate initiative to approach the influential Jacques Arnoux on the boat is in line with this desire for success.

However, Frédéric only occasionally behaves like an ambitious Balzacian hero. To judge from his behaviour most of the time, his desire for success in

Paris does not come from within, but from people around him, notably his mother and his close friend Deslauriers. His first plans to go to the capital appear in the scenes describing his childhood years with Deslauriers. What motivates Frédéric's desire to live in Paris simply seems to be a need to be with his friend, who goes there before him to study law. Together they dream about a life in the capital after college and their travels: 'Then they would come back to Paris; they would work together, and would never part; and, as a relaxation from their labours, they would have love affairs with princesses in boudoirs lined with satin, or dazzling orgies with famous courtesans' (ibid.: 43). ('Puis ils reviendraient à Paris, ils travailleraient ensemble, ne se quitteraient pas; – et, comme délassement à leurs travaux, ils auraient des amours de princesses dans des boudoirs de satin, ou defulgurantes orgies avec des courtisanes illustres' (Flaubert [1869] 1973: 31).)

Interestingly, it is with reference to Rastignac that Deslauriers tries to inspire a desire for success in Frédéric: 'Remember Rastignac in the *Comédie humaine*. You will succeed, I have no doubt' (Flaubert [1869] 2011: 52–3). ('Rappelle-toi de Rastignac de *La Comédie humaine*! Tu réussiras, j'en suis sûr!' (Flaubert [1869] 1973: 35).)[11] In this context Deslauriers makes a proposition that reminds us of Rastignac's resolution at the end of *Le Père Goriot*: that Frédéric should become the lover of an influential Parisienne, Madame Dambreuse. Hearing this advice, he smiles, forgets his true love, Madame Arnoux, for a moment, and soon pays his first visit to the Dambreuse family. Nonetheless, to judge from his behaviour most of the time, the desire to be a Rastignac is not sincere. Throughout the novel, Frédéric's only object of interest in Paris is Madame Arnoux: 'Every street led towards her house; the hackney-coaches stood in their places to carry her home the more quickly; Paris was associated with her person, and the great city, with all its noises, roared around her like an immense orchestra' (ibid.: 188).

When he contemplates the capital from his balcony for hours, Frédéric's panorama view is quite different from Rastignac's at the end of *Le Père Goriot*. He observes the city below him, the river, trees, details, people, buildings, but without the least desire to be active there. The only thought that comes to Frédéric's mind has to do with Madame Arnoux, with where she must live: 'Madame Arnoux's house must be on this side in the rear!' (Flaubert [1869]

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[11] The references to Balzac's 'Scènes de la vie parisienne' have been observed by others too, of course. See Leclerc 1997: 9, Rey 2004: 132.

2011: 179). In other words, the view of Paris does not inspire him to dream about the future at all, as in the scene with Rastignac. It is only when Frédéric is back on his divan that he abandons himself to thoughts and plans, as if the reality of the capital has frightened him (Dufief 1994: 41).

In general, Paris is not at all described as the centre of novelistic action, but from Frédéric's particular perspective, fragmentarily, passively, everything else but systematically. The focus of the novel is Frédéric's total lack of action, despite the ongoing 1848 revolution and all the other activities around him. He contemplates the world rather than acts in it. As Leclerc (1997: 9) notes, when Dambreuse is buried – about where Rastignac pronounces his dramatic words – Frédéric does nothing other than admire the landscape.

What we see in the descriptions of the capital is actually mostly Frédéric's character traits. The world is inseparable from the person, they are both revealed in each other, as Rey (1983: 73) observes. In the scene from the balcony referred to above, Frédéric's emptiness is mirrored in the unusually deserted and quiet streets of the city before him (Dufief 1994: 38). Interestingly, studies of different versions of the novel reveal that Flaubert systematically removed details from the urban landscape to put forward the subjective, particular Paris that is perceived by Frédéric (Wetherill 1983: 129).

Like Emma, Frédéric is strongly influenced by romantic books. This is clear in the first scenes of the novel, when he contemplates Madame Arnoux: 'She resembled the women of whom he had read in romances' (Flaubert [1869] 2011: 32). Her whole appearance seems to be imbued with colonial exoticism. He sees a 'negress' by her side, and directly assumes that 'she must be of Andalusian descent, perhaps a Creole: had she brought this negress across with her from the West Indian Islands?' (ibid.: 23). When Frédéric later imagines travelling with Madame Arnoux, his dreams of 'distant countries' have similarities with Emma's. At least they are as stereotypically exotic and marked with orientalism; a sight of a palm tree in the Jardin des Plantes transports Frédéric into dreams where he is riding with Madame Arnoux on dromedaries, elephants and mules with little bells:

> When he went into the Jardin des Plantes the sight of a palm-tree carried him off into distant countries. They were travelling together on the backs of dromedaries, under the awnings of elephants, in the cabin of a yacht amongst the blue archipelagoes, or side by side on mules with little bells attached to them who went stumbling through the grass against broken columns.
>
> (Ibid.: 188)

Quand il allait au Jardin des Plantes, la vue d'un palmier l'entraînait vers des pays lointains. Ils voyageaient ensemble, au dos des dromadaires, sous le tendelet des éléphants, dans la cabine d'un yacht parmi les archipels bleus, ou côte à côte sur deux mulets à clochettes, qui trébuchent dans les herbes contre des colonnes brisées.

(Flaubert [1869] 1973: 88)

There is no question about Flaubert's irony when describing this artificial image of distant countries.[12] His way of juxtaposing the different elements of the dreams makes them seem absurd, as in Emma's case.

Regarding the relation between the countryside and the capital, there is much less of an opposition between these two worlds than in Balzac's novels. As already noted, the details of the city are less present in the final novel than in the earlier versions of *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Wetherill (1983: 128) also observes that the specificity of the provinces as well as the provincialization of Frédéric are less apparent in the novel than in the manuscript. This effacement of spatial limits accentuates the importance of Frédéric's state of mind. He is bored wherever he is; what happens within him is what matters.

This is not to say that there is no difference between the countryside and the capital in the novel – there is, of course. The detailed descriptions are many, of both these worlds and of important activities surrounding Frédéric, not least connected to the revolution of 1848. Moreover, even for Frédéric there is of course a difference between the provinces and Paris. His mind sometimes lightens considerably when he moves from the cosmopolitan context to green Fontainebleau or Auteil, for instance, as Wetherill (ibid.: 131) observes. At the same time, it is true that he values the provinces negatively, associating them with boredom, as at the beginning of the novel when he reluctantly leaves Paris for Nogent-sur-Seine, 'where he would have to lead a languishing existence for two months' (Flaubert [1869] 2011: 13), before returning to the capital and his law studies. Altogether, his repeated trips between the countryside and Paris suggest that he is in need of both these worlds. Paradoxically, it is perhaps in this very movement back and forth that he can find his only fixed point and force, the only thing he is able to *do*.

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[12] For an analysis of the general patronizing attitude towards Middle Eastern, Asian and North African societies, see Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism*.

Concluding remarks

In the examples analysed above, Paris is represented and constructed in relation to a subject's desire and potential, to what the protagonist could be and become in that place. Important existential things are at stake, and strong emotions involved.

The desire to go to Paris, to live and be successful there, does not seem to be spontaneous, but is mediated, by literature and by other people. In other words, it appears as if the capital does not *by itself* exert an obvious force of attraction on the protagonists, at least not as a real and defined place. Thus, in a way, the novels relativize the cosmopolitan prestige and authority attached to Paris in literature as well as in reality, by for instance Pascale Casanova (2004).

In fact, the conceptions of the capital are very vague; it is more of an imagined place than a world corresponding to a real city. From distant positions, on heights, or from the point of view of maps and texts, the protagonists try to grasp the world of the city, but as soon as they move closer and start living in it according to cosmopolitan conventions, the illusion of control is revealed. To get into it and submit to its laws is difficult if you come from outside. As the narrator affirms at the beginning of *Le Père Goriot*, it is hardly possible to understand the story of Paris for people 'extra muros'. No overview is conceivable, and this is true also on the reader's level; no general understanding of the novel can be reached. The subject's identity is relentlessly absorbed, in the vast city, in the new world, in the modern novel. Momentarily, however, going back to the countryside can mean a reinforcement of identity and a feeling of having become someone in the eyes of non-Parisians. In this way the dynamics between the local, provincial sphere and the cosmopolitan one play an important role. The tension between these two worlds is fundamental in both Balzac and Flaubert (as in novels by many other authors during this century, not least Stendhal). It is in this power field that the modern subject is born and provincialism and cosmopolitanism are produced. Paris takes form in contrast to the provinces, through the distance to them. It is therefore better to speak of a dynamic than of a dichotomy or twofold world. Even if some sort of convention is possible to identify in the city as well as in the provinces – concerning desires, values, behaviours, ways to dress – the differences between these two worlds are not absolute. The criticism of country life and people is not consequent, needless to say, in any of the novels.

What has been in focus in this chapter seems to correspond to the category 'subjective geographies', mentioned at the beginning (Laachir, Marzagora and

Orsini 2018: 303–4), that is the 'character's worldview'. In the novels analysed here there is indeed a close – and emotional – relation between subject and place. Paris is 'significant' for these characters in different ways, and the question of scale is important; their distance from the capital plays an important role when they form their conceptions of the city and of themselves.[13] The concept of 'objective geographies' is more difficult to apply. No Paris 'as such' seems possible to identify outside the characters. In the analysed passages of *Le Père Goriot*, the narrator too is subjective and emotional. The countryside cannot be said to exist as 'objective geography' either, and the values that at first seem to characterize its inhabitants are not more fixed there. As for the 'implicit geographies' (ibid.: 304), the novels by Flaubert do reveal fragments of an exotic world outside Paris, but these are seen from a highly subjective, selective point of view and reveal a world conception that is full of clichés. As Jennifer Yee (2016: 11) pointed out, this interest in the foreign and distant in a way challenges realism as a genre, and we can add that so do the vagueness and subjective character of the urban descriptions above.

Finally, it should be said that the protagonists' desire to change their situations does not only have to do with their longing for a life in Paris (even if they seem to think so at times) or for any place in particular. This is also something that relativizes the role of the capital. There are examples in all the novels of a more general type of desire, generated by boredom, especially in the countryside; Emma feels it, as do Frédéric, Lucien, David and Madame de Bargeton. It is linked to what Jules de Gaultier (1902: 13) called 'bovarysme', that is a capacity to conceive of themselves as other and different than they are, to transgress limits. Their reading of literature promotes this capacity, and should not be seen only as causing illusory images of reality and deceptions. Literature helps them to cope with the dullness of the countryside, to imagine a world beyond it, even to transgress its limits (in the cases of Madame de Bargeton and Lucien). Thus the novels demonstrate the capacity of fiction to offer consolation as well as open new dimensions and facets of the world. These important functions and capacities of literature should be remembered, not least in a context where we want to grasp and study 'the world'. What is more, if 'there is no concept of the world', as Hans Blumenberg states (Jordheim 2019: 6), and 'no conception of the totality of being', it may be only through literature that the world and life as a whole can be captured in some way.

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[13] This is in line with what Eric Prieto (2013: 13) states: that a place is above all a human relation.

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Joseph Brodsky's returns to Venice in *Watermark*: Old-world cosmopolitanism revisited

Anna Ljunggren

Joseph Brodsky's *Watermark,* an essay dedicated to Venice, was completed in that city in November 1989, almost exactly two years after the author had been awarded the Nobel Prize, at the height of his fame and recognition. The work was commissioned by the consortium Venezia Nuova in an attempt to draw attention to the city's severe ecological problems. It appeared initially in Italian translation from the original English in 1989 under the title *Fondamenta degli Incurabili* (*Embankment of the Incurables*), followed by a version in English the same year published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux under the title *Watermark*. The essay is autobiographical; it combines into one text the experiences and observations from 'seventeen winters' (Brodsky 2013: 21) of Brodsky's yearly pilgrimage to Venice from the USA. Written in long retrospect after his first visit to Venice in 1972, *Watermark* should be read not as a summarized account of the poet's holiday trips from America to 'the heart of civilization' (ibid.: 12) in Europe, but as a summation of his whole life journey between cultures, from the counterculture of Leningrad in the 1960s to his status as a cosmopolitan cultural personality, an internationally acclaimed Anglo-American essayist and a Russian poet.

Watermark is a cosmopolitan text not only by virtue of being written by a Russian poet in his non-native English, nor simply through the circumstances of its publication, but intrinsically. A product of displacement and mobility, transcultural writing on the whole, and in Brodsky's case in particular, is considered here as a way of world-making that is complementary to, or to be more precise combined with, the circulation of texts. It can be regarded as a product of what David Bethea (1994: 48–9) has called a complex cultural

'triangulation', involving at least four literary traditions referred to and quoted in the text: Russian (Akhmatova, Pasternak), Anglo-American (Auden), French (Henri de Régnier) and Italian (Saba, Montale). 'Triangulation', by drawing on sources from different languages, makes visible what is easily effaced in discussions of intertextuality – the act of translation involved. In that sense, *Watermark* can be regarded as a translingual 'event' inviting a translingual mode of reading (Helgesson and Kullberg 2018: 150). I argue that this 'event' has a double action: it places the text into the wider sphere of world literature, and at the same time reconnects it to the pre-Soviet cultural tradition, reestablishing in both ways the disrupted continuity. World poetry was perceived in its entirety by Brodsky as 'one living organism' or a 'cultural ocean' (Polukhina 2005). In *Watermark,* the element of water, the ocean, which brings together those with whom he has an affinity is called the genre of the world: 'Should the world be designated a genre, its main stylistic device would no doubt be water' (Brodsky 2013: 124).[1]

To introduce the text briefly, the narrative starts with Brodsky's first trip to Venice and is dated indirectly by a reference to the author's age, thirty-two, placing the events at the end of 1972, the year of his expulsion to the West. For obvious reasons it is common for the autobiography of a transcultural author to be fused with travelogue; in the case of *Watermark*, one more dimension should be added to understand the genre of this piece – poetry. Its narrative is initially set up as linear, telling a story of an encounter with and rejection by a beautiful Veneziana (Maria Doria de Zuliani, an acquaintance from his time in Leningrad). However, the love plot which sets the story in motion is soon relinquished, and the principle of composition shifts to that of poetry.[2] The bulk of the text is built as a series of returns to the subject of Venice in fifty-one chapters, the last being a conclusion. Through the reiteration of variations on the theme, *Watermark* achieves a 'stanzaic congruity' (Polukhina 1997: 230) analogous to that of a long poem or musical piece, like a concerto in prose.[3] As shown below, the structural device of reiteration, along with the notion of the return both as a theme and as a conceptual frame, is fundamental to the essay.

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[1] Galin Tihanov (2017) proposes including a meta-dimension in the discussion of world literature, to study images of world literature within individual literary works.

[2] For a detailed list of different forms of parallelism and reiteration in *Watermark* see Valentina Polukhina (1997: 223–40).

[3] Valentina Polukhina mentions that some earlier poems were modelled on music by Haydn and Mozart. See some examples in Polukhina (1997: 231).

The episodes belonging to different trips to Venice are not chronologically arranged. The narrative is fluid, non-linear; the text is kaleidoscopic, combining anecdotes, fragments of memories from Leningrad times and different visits to Venice, speculations about the nature of beauty, and suggestions on how to transform and save the city of Venice and clean its bay (for which purpose the city should consult the municipality of Stockholm, where 'the salmon leap out of the water to greet you' (Brodsky 2013: 99)). These narrative fragments are spun into the web of the book's main themes: water, time and man-made beauty. These main themes return with variations throughout the text, unfolding through metaphoric (water – time – music) and metonymic (sight – eye – tear) sequences.

Venice was first seen in a photograph in Leningrad; it stands for the ideal West, the West perceived as an aesthetic phenomenon:

> And the more I read them [the photographs], the more apparent it became that this was what the word 'West' meant to me: a perfect city by the winter sea, columns, arcades, narrow passages, cold marble staircases, peeling stucco exposing the red-brick flesh, putti, cherubs with their dust-covered eye-balls: civilization that braced itself for the cold times.
>
> (Brodsky 1995: 15)

The transition presented in *Watermark* is a constant exchange between the vision of what the American anthropologist Alexei Yurchak (2005: 126–207) has called the 'imaginary West' of the late Soviet era and the Venice immediately present and absorbed by all senses. Real encounters are presented as directly emanating from literary works (for instance, Brodsky's (2013: 132–3) quote from Auden's poem 'Fall of Rome' precedes the episode where the poet appears). In contrast to images emanating from literature, the beginnings of the opening chapters are all dedicated to one of the senses: first comes the smell of the frozen seaweed; then sight, the dominant sense, is represented by the eye and the tear; then hearing appears in the chimes of the bells being compared to the sound of a huge china set. Later in the text the senses are combined into synesthesia, first uniting sight and tactile perception, and further on sight and sound. The whole city by night is compared to an orchestra pit as a vision of universal musical harmony, sight and sound together: 'In fact, the whole city, especially at night, resembles a gigantic orchestra, with dimly lit music stands of palazzi, with a restless chorus of waves, with the falsetto of a star in the winter sky' (ibid.: 97).

The narrative outlined at the beginning is picked up again at the end. Two encounters frame the text: that with a Venetian beauty personifying Venice is

mirrored by the accidental sighting of Auden through the window of the Café Florian, in the company of Chester Kallman, Stephen Spender and Cecil Day Lewis with their spouses. The beauty and the poet are symmetrical; they are guides and gatekeepers in the poet's passage into the 'heart of civilization' (ibid.: 12). The episode acquires considerable weight in the text due to its semi-final position: the return from a gondola ride to San Michele (where Brodsky is buried today) concludes the main body of the text. The episode is set apart from temporal progression ('Inside, it was 195?' (ibid.: 133)), and Lev Loseff (1996) has plainly described it as fictional.[4] In *Watermark* it acquires an additional dimension, since 'seeing something through the glass' also means seeing on the 'other side', after death. This finale makes the whole text not only a homage to Venice but also a posthumous homage to Auden, Brodsky's benefactor in his transition to the West during their brief acquaintance between 1972 and 1973. Although *Watermark* bears a dedication to Robert Morgan, an American painter residing in Venice and Brodsky's friend, the very act of writing in English itself constitutes a dedication to Auden, as explained in the essay to honour Auden's memory, 'To Please a Shadow' (Brodsky 1986: 357). Auden's face, laughing and weeping at the same time, is the last image preceding the invasion of the fog into the city, veiling the scenery.[5]

Following this chapter, the conclusion elevates the theme of Venice, the city of water, to an existential, metaphysical dimension: the city represents the materiality of art at the border of time. The theme of transition from Russia to the West gives way to that of transiency in time (Brodsky shifts here to the

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[4] Lev Loseff (1996) calls this episode 'hallucinatory'. Cecil Day Lewis died in May 1972, so Brodsky could not have met him around Christmas 1972. The episode, however, is not altogether fictional; it is probably a reconstruction based on one or a number of photographs taken during the Pen Club reunion in Venice in 1949. A series of photographs featuring all the mentioned participants of the episode in different combinations were taken in front of Café Florian. The two best known of the series feature Auden, Cecil Day Lewis and Stephen Spender (https://www.bridgemanimages. co.uk; MTS 617282); for other pictures of the series taken in front of Café Florian see Bridgeman images: Auden, Natasha Spender and Chester Kallman (MTS 495694); Auden and Natasha Spender (MTS 495800), etc. Brodsky could have seen one or several of them in the Spenders' household during the years of their friendship. For photographs in connection with the theme of memory and mourning see 'In Memory of Stephen Spender' (Brodsky 1995: 466). The acquaintance with Auden starts with Brodsky's attempt to decipher his photograph published in an anthology in Leningrad. In the posthumous tribute to Stephen Spender another photograph is described: the author is already included in it, the integration in 'the mental family' having been accomplished ('In Memory of Stephen Spender', Brodsky 1995: 469).

[5] Sanna Turoma (2010: 184) observed a connection between the final invasion of the fog in *Watermark* and Auden's poem 'Thank You, Fog' in the eponymous book published posthumously: *Thank You, Fog: Last Poems by W. H. Auden* (1974) and related this parallel to the theme of immigration shared by both poets. In contrast to Turoma, I read this passage as a farewell to Auden, preparing for the closure of the text.

generalizing pronoun 'we'), with its inevitable separations and departures. The 'eye' (visual beauty) and 'tear' (related to water) are inseparable in *Watermark*.

While writing in English is a homage to Auden, the text of *Watermark* is at the same time saturated with auto-quotes from Brodsky's own poetry in Russian. His English prose and his Russian poetry are thus communicating vessels; in *Watermark,* Brodsky borrows a great deal from his Italian, particularly Venetian, poems. These auto-quotes are translations of fragments of his Russian poetry incorporated into his English text. A number of intertextual links of this kind have been identified by Polukhina (1997: 225) and Turoma (2010: 162–3), among them from the diptych 'Venetsianskie strofy' (Venetian Stanzas) (1982), 'Laguna' (Lagoon) (1973), 'V Italii' (In Italy) (1985), 'Posviashchaetsia Dzirolamo Marchello' (Dedicated to Girolamo Marcello) (1988) and 'Lido' (Lido) (1989).

Watermark, although written in English, should not only be regarded as linked to Brodsky's own poetry on this topos, but also as a continuation of the larger tradition of Russian Venetian poetry going back to the nineteenth century. Another line of Brodsky's lyrics, his Christmas poems (to write a poem each Christmas was his ritual), largely converges after his emigration with his Venetian ones, such as 'Laguna' (describing the Pension Accademia, where he first stayed, as sailing towards Christmas with the entire universe). Christmas or New Year places the text under the sign of transformation and rebirth, which Brodsky accounts for in the following way:

> I simply think that water is the image of time, and every New Year's Eve, in somewhat pagan fashion, I try to find myself near water, preferably near a sea or an ocean, to watch the emergence of a new helping, a new cupful of time from it.
>
>   (Brodsky 2013: 43)

Saturated with quotes and auto-quotes, compositionally organized as a long poem, the text is not only about the city of Venice. As Brodsky's long-time friend, the poet and scholar Lev Loseff (1996), formulated it, the essay is a 'self-portrait in the mirror'. The text of *Watermark* corroborates this observation, describing the arrival in Venice as stepping into one's own self-portrait (Brodsky 2013: 7), or seeing oneself reflected in the waters of the lagoon (ibid.: 21). *Watermark* is, in that sense, two-dimensional: it is a piece of a poet's prose, dedicated to the encounter with the city of Venice, as well as a meta-text on the subject of the 'self' withstanding cultural transition, and, as is shown later, transforming the very notion of exile. The two dimensions of the text are encoded in the meaning of the titles, both English and Italian.

The dual title: *Fondamenta degli Incurabili* and *Watermark*

Both titles, *Watermark* and the earlier *Fondamenta degli Incurabili*, were chosen for their semantic potential, and their meanings converge. The title *Watermark* refers in the immediate sense to a feature of the Venetian landscape: it is a pile marking the water level by the coast of the lagoon. However, as the text is a sample of poet's prose (a phenomenon conceptualized in Roman Jakobson's famous article on Pasternak's prose (Jakobson 1979: 416–32)), this meaning is not fixed once and for all in the narrative, but is chosen precisely because of its potential for semantic expansion. A watermark is at the same time a sign in paper certifying the authenticity of a document, and in this sense it is connected with writing as it pertains to the meta-dimension of the text as a self-portrait. In this metaphorical sense, the 'watermark' stands for Brodsky's signature – it is a sign of his individuality as a poet who has completed a transition between cultures. Speaking about exile in his Nobel lecture two years earlier, Brodsky contrasted creative individualism with the oppressive and homogenizing power of the state, quoting an expression of his favourite nineteenth-century poet Evgenii Baratynskii – the 'uncommon visage':

> This flight is the flight in the direction of 'uncommon visage', in the direction of the numerator, in the direction of autonomy, in the direction of privacy.
>
> (Brodsky 1995: 47)

Understood as a signature, Brodsky's text represents his contribution to the tradition of Russian poetry dedicated to Venice that can be traced back to the eighteenth century and flourished in the nineteenth.[6] One can enumerate here a number of texts by Pushkin: among them are his famous digression addressed to the Adriatic Sea in *Eugene Onegin*, evoking Byron and expressing a longing for freedom; his free translation from Chénier's 'Près des bords où Venise est reine de la mer' ('Bliz mest, gde tsarstvuet Venetsia zlataia' – By the shores where the golden Venice reigns, 1827); his variation on Goethe's 'Kennst du das land' ('Kto znaet krai, gde nebo bleshchet' – Who knows the country where the sky is radiant, 1828); and his famous unfinished fragment about an old doge sailing with his young wife ('Noch' tikha, v nebesnom pole'

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6   The links between *Watermark* and Russian Venetian texts in the wide sense have been pointed at in a number of works (Losev 1996, Mednis 1999, Turoma 2010: 192–6). On the tradition of representing the Venetian topos in Russian literature see Mednis 1999. See also a recent anthology of Russian Venetian poetry edited by A. Sobolev and R. Timenchik (2019).

– The night is silent, in the field of the sky, 1827). The latter poem provoked a number of 'continuations' in poetry in the twentieth century, among them one by the poet and critic Vladislav Khodasevich, 'Romans' (Romance), 1924. The topos of Venice gradually becomes a poetic cliché, exploited in the genre of the romance, for example in 'Venetsianskaia noch' (The Venetian Night) by Mikhail Glinka with lyrics by Ivan Kozlov. In the second half of the nineteenth century Pushkin's contemporary and friend Piotr Viazemskii reintroduced the subject of Venice in two groups of poetic sketches from 1853 and 1863, written during his prolonged stays in Western Europe (Viazemskii 1887: 71–96, Viazemskii 1896: 21–37). Some are written in a playful and ironic tone, and describe nineteenth-century tourism as an invasion of locusts at Canale Grande (ibid. 1896: 28). Brodsky quotes Pushkin and talks about Viazemskii in his filmed interview entitled 'Vozvrashchenie' (A Return) (Iosif Brodskii 2010: IV), in conformity with the theme of return in *Watermark*. However, Brodsky's immediate allegiance is to the modernistic continuation of the canon, transforming the poetic clichés of the late nineteenth century. Akhmatova's words about Italy ('"Italy … is a dream that keeps returning for the rest of your life"' (Brodsky 2013: 121)) and Pasternak's image of Venice as a stone croissant (ibid.: 45) are quoted in *Watermark*. Venice stands for the Russian European dream, the Acmeists' 'longing for world culture', to use Mandelshtam's formula, quoted by Brodsky in both his Nobel lecture and the interview mentioned above. After over seventy years of interruption (Venice was inaccessible during the Soviet era), *Watermark* reintroduces the city as a poetic topos. A a number of poet-travellers in the early twentieth century had dedicated poetry to Venice, among them symbolists Innoketii Annenskii, Valerii Briusov, Aleksandr Blok, Maximilian Voloshin, Vjacheslav Ivanov and Mikhail Kuzmin, and in a later generation the Acmeists Gumilev, Mandelshtam and Akhmatova; in *Watermark*, Brodsky reclaims this interrupted European-oriented cosmopolitan legacy of Russian modernism. For that reason, Brodsky's arrival in Venice is presented as a return. The theme of homecoming is intrinsically associated with being one's authentic self, having an 'uncommon visage' – a subject treated by Brodsky in a succession of texts of that period, such as 'The Condition We Call Exile' (1987), 'Uncommon Visage' (the Nobel lecture in same year) and ultimately *Watermark*. Arrival and return are the two major nodes around which transcultural biographies are built (Wulff 2021). Homecoming is a recurrent pattern in transcultural writing, where it unites a native place of the past with a new one belonging to the present; *katabasis*

(going back to the native place as a descent into the past) is a chronotope shared by writers of different national origins (McConnell 2016: 225–37). However, in *Watermark* arrival and homecoming paradoxically coincide; arrival does not entail returning to his native Leningrad, which Brodsky never did, but to a place he regarded as the prototype of the visions conveyed by Westernized Russian culture: 'I kept returning myself to the dream, rather than the other way around' (Brodsky 2013: 121).

Returning to Venice as if it were his birthplace, i.e. Leningrad, also has implications for writing about Venice. A number of images featured in Brodsky's essay on Petersburg, 'A Guide to a Renamed City', are transferred to *Watermark*: among them water as a condensed form of time, the wind, the smell of weed, buildings compared to fragile china and the city as 'mirror for a lonely planet' (Brodsky 1986: 77, 89, 94, 90) have all travelled to Venice in *Watermark*.

The cultural homecoming is paradoxical in yet another respect: the 'heart of civilization' (Brodsky 2013: 12) is displayed as a peripheral region ('It felt like arriving in the provinces, in some unknown, insignificant spot – possibly one's own birthplace – after years of absence' (ibid.: 8)). In the provincial, peripheral, even 'wild' Venice (as in Saba's poem 'In fondo all'Adriatico selvaggio' – In the depth of the wild Adriatic, earlier translated and quoted by Brodsky), the cultural myth of the city is reshaped.[7] This image can be related to Brodsky's poetry, where the periphery of empire – a liminal topos, open to the borderless space of water – is a recurrent motif: 'Litovskii divertisment' (Lithuanian Divertissement) (1971) and 'Pis'ma k rimskomu drugu' (Letters to a Roman Friend) (1972). Similarly, the essay 'The Guide to a Renamed City' (Brodsky 1986) connects the rise of Russian literature to the outside position of St Petersburg in the Russian Empire. Provinciality, understood as being at the periphery and yet simultaneously at the 'heart of civilization', is a paradox that can be elucidated through reference to another essay in which the element of water plays a prominent part – Brodsky's 'The Sound of the Tide', dedicated to the poetry of Derek Walcott: 'Contrary to popular belief, the outskirts are not where the world ends – they are precisely where it unravels' (ibid.: 164). This interpretation of the world-creating capacity of provincial regions harks back to the description of Christianity as arising at the periphery of the Roman Empire and forever changing the world; it is transferred by Brodsky to the description of

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[7]   The topos of Venice is an example of 'significant geography', combining mythic, literary and
      biographical layers of narrative (Laachir, Marzagora and Orsini 2018: 303–7).

a rise of poetry in the Caribbean region.[8] However, the predilection for liminal topoi should not be read strictly in geographic terms: it is in keeping with the status of non-official culture, both marginal and at the same time central in the dynamics of the pre-*perestroika* period. The aesthetic choices here, including the geographic ones, are expressions of the non-conformist tastes and attitudes, the *habitus*, that developed in the post-Cold War period into a position of 'partisanship' opposing the cultural mainstream (Brodsky 2010: IV).

The Italian title, *Fondamenta degli Incurabili*, refers to a toponym: its exact form is 'Zattere agli Incurabili' (Embankment [literally rafts] at the [Hospital of the] Incurables) where incurable syphilis patients were kept from the early sixteenth century. As to its meaning, similarly to *Watermark* it should not be defined solely by the single episode where the toponym is mentioned, but broadly in the context of the entire work and against the background of the mythology of poetic creation.[9] Fondamenta degli Incurabili appears in the story of Susan Sontag's and Brodsky's visit to Ezra Pound's widow Olga Rudge, who tells them the same story over and over, trying to justify Ezra Pound's involvement with the Italian fascist party and refute his alleged antisemitism. This incorrigibility, or incapacity to change, metaphorically amplifies the meaning of the toponym in the vicinity of which the story takes place. Brodsky explains that his fascination with the name of the embankment has to do with its semantic aura, its capacity for metaphoric expansion, hinting at a potential plot. In other words, the title shifts from being about Ezra Pound and Olga Rudge and becomes a name for that which is unchangeable, the kernel of personality, which overlaps with the meaning of the 'watermark' as a sign of authenticity. Brodsky describes himself as incurable in a number of ways, including his physical condition at that time: he ironically designates himself as 'a cardiac cripple' (Brodsky 2013: 31). The first connotation of being incurable mentioned in the text, though, is his declared propensity for unrequited love ('hidden dramas and incongruities long since had become my forte' (ibid.: 5–6)), which is later reiterated in the episode with a weeping Auden abandoned by his lover. Another dimension has to do with writing, with the mythology of poetic creation, as reflected for example in the title of Pasternak's poem 'Vysokaia bolezn'' (The High Malady) (1923–1928). The gradual semantic expansion of Brodsky's title ultimately leads to the statement that 'metaphor is incurable' (Brodsky 2013: 77). The metaphorical dimensions

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[8]   Boris Pasternak (1959: 54) in *Doktor Zhivago* describes Christ as being both human and provincial.
[9]   There is a subtle yet significant shift from location to condition in Brodsky's title.

of both titles ultimately overlap; they both refer to the essence of personal and cultural identity, 'regardless of the nature of your malady', as stated by Brodsky (ibid.: 78).

Exchange rates and images of transition and transformation

The first lines of the essay about the poet's first arrival in Venice combine a poetic expression – 'many moons ago' – with a sharp prosaism, a mention of the exchange rate (one dollar to 870 lire), which serves as an initial chronological marker. The juxtaposition of high and low is characteristic of Brodsky's poetics; the low is presented and subsequently elevated to the level of the mythic or abstract, shifting to involve fundamental existential questions. The exchange rate is the first mention of transition as a transaction to appear in the text and is one of many, not unexpectedly as the text concerns transition between cultures. Trade and cultural interchange go hand in hand: in *Watermark* the mention of the exchange is subsequently amplified in the text. In the very first episode the currency exchange is immediately metaphorically equated with language communication, as a conversation in rudimentary Italian takes place ('My sole currency in their language, the term "espresso" was already spent' (Brodsky 2013: 4)). Money as a means of exchange is fluid and borderless, and it is compared to the element of water in *Watermark* as well as in a later Venetian text, the poem 'S natury' (From Nature) (1995), dedicated to Girolamo Marcello, where the wave licking the steps is compared to a blue banknote. Closely associated with the theme of Venetian trade is the motif of the city's riches, the material manifestation of civilization. The initial arrival by the waters of the canal is presented as a passage through the mythic treasures of Venice:

> The boat's slow progress through the night was like the passage of a coherent thought through the subconscious. On both sides, knee-deep in pitch-black water, stood the enormous carved chests of dark palazzi filled with unfathomable treasures.
>
> (Brodsky 2013: 12–13)

The treasure chests observed during the passage through the canals return in the description of the shops in the streets, which are like wardrobe racks: 'all the clothes are of dark peeling fabric, but the lining is ruby and shimmering gold' (ibid.: 104).

The metaphorically amplified exchange is accompanied by the theme of transition as movement in space. Apart from the 'primordial' experience of travelling by water (ibid.: 14), transition reappears in various shapes: it is a visit to an old palazzo, which felt 'like an underwater journey' for 'a school of fishes passing through a sunken galleon loaded with treasure' (ibid.: 51–2), or a walk through the tunnel left by a body while passing through thick fog (ibid.: 59), or wandering through the labyrinths of the city not knowing 'whether you are pursuing a goal or running from yourself' (ibid.: 85).

Transition in space is closely followed by the theme of transformation in time, in the form of a human being's primordial memory of being another chordate, a fish. All mythological hybridized monsters, dragons, Minotaurs, sphinxes, centaurs and chimaeras are, according to Brodsky, images of evolution, 'our self-portraits' (ibid.: 82); they are, in this sense, also related to the theme of metamorphosis and rebirth.

The metaphorical criss-crossing interchange takes place between the *terra firma* and the water, enacting the ancient emblematic union of elements, the firmament and the sea. The city is compared to a 'mesh caught in a frozen seaweed' (ibid.: 46), shoes in shop windows are scattered like 'all sorts of boats upon the *laguna*' (ibid.: 27–8), Murano lamps are likened to octopi (ibid.: 105), while gondolas are like the necks of violins (ibid.: 97) and barges, in turn, are like 'scattered old shoes' (ibid.: 80), the latter being an auto-quote from Brodsky's poem 'Lido'. The topos of Venice is the topos of fusion, at once periphery and centre, a place where the opposites of water and *terra firma*, or East and West, meet.

The riches of Venice: Artefacts as metaphors

The pile measuring the water level on the coast of the regularly flooded city and the toponym of the *Fondamenta degli Incurabili* are not the only details of the Venetian landscape subjected to metaphorical amplification. Connected to the theme of trade, the material riches of Venice, its treasures, stand for the abundant but fragile materiality of its civilization. These riches are products of local artisanship, including Murano glass, lace and mirrors as well as a variety of clothes on display in the shops, different kinds of fabric and marble and brick, the material of buildings. The dense concentration of artefacts is presented through lengthy enumerations:

That's why furs fly here, as do suede, silk, linen, wool, and every other kind of fabric.

                                                                    (Brodsky 2013: 26)

It's also the marble lace inlays, capitals, cornices, reliefs, and moldings, inhabited and uninhabited niches, saints, ain'ts, maidens, angels, cherubs, caryatids, pediments, balconies with their ample kicked-up calves, and windows themselves, Gothic and Moorish, that turn you vain.

                                                                    (Ibid.: 27)

Venetian products (the Murano glass of the lamps, mirrors in all their semantic functions, collections of clothes and art) are all on display. The world is turned inside out, the churches belonging to the external cityscape being compared to the tea service of the domestic interior:

On days like this, the city indeed, acquires a porcelain aspect, what with all its zinc-covered cupolas resembling tea-pots or upturned cups, and the tilted profiles of campaniles clinking like abandoned spoons and melting in the sky.

                                                                    (Ibid.: 29)

As a material expression of civilization, the artefacts 'tell more about ourselves than our confessions' (ibid.: 61). Particularly clothing, fabrics and textures are consistently and meticulously described, such as the London fog cloak and the Borsalino bag – items in the author's possession upon his arrival in the city. Materials such as marble and brick, as well as water, are not only seen but touched. The tactile sense, as the most intimate and immediate type of perception, is repeatedly conveyed, for example in a comparison of water to skin, and brick to an inflamed muscle or flesh ('an alternative order of flesh' (ibid.: 61)).

Fine lace, a famous product of Venice, appears first as metonymy, in relation to the beautiful Veneziana, who was tainted ('soiled') by a love affair Brodsky condemns as a breach of taste (ibid.: 11). Further on, the lace weaves together images belonging to land and water, connecting the images (reflections in the water) to their origins, the architecture of Venice.

The upright lace of Venetian façades is the best line time-alias-water has left on *terra firma* anywhere. Plus, there is no doubt a correspondence between – if not an outright dependence on – the rectangular nature of that lace's displays – i.e. local buildings – and the anarchy of water that spurns the notion of shape. It is as though space, cognizant here more than anyplace else of its inferiority to time, answers it with the only property time doesn't possess: with beauty. And

that's why water takes this answer, twists it, wallops and shreds it, but ultimately carries it by and large intact off into the Adriatic.

(Ibid.: 43–4)

The theme of weaving is further developed into a comparison of old women weaving lace to the Parcae, and of the city itself to Penelope, weaving and unravelling its own texture, while the threads of the 'incurable' metaphor (ibid.: 7) keep unfolding in the images of the text.

Aesthetic objects, parts of interiors on display, 'marble inlaid tables, porcelain figurines, sofas, chairs, the very parquet' are all bordering on non-being. The textures of draperies and lace are on the brink of materiality, dissolving into nothing, dust being 'the flesh of time' as the auto-quote from the poem 'Nature-morte' (1971) says in *Watermark* (ibid.: 56).

Venice does not only occupy a liminal position in space; it also exists on the brink of times. Three episodes disrupt the continuity of the text, introducing the theme of death. Apart from the fictional post-mortem encounter with Auden discussed earlier, the central chapter in the book, which lacks any relation to its topos and subject, describes a seemingly incoherent picture (one more photograph used in its extemporalizing capacity) of some prisoners in Lithuania at the moment before their execution during the Second World War. It is the moment when what is to come was 'death, not pain' (ibid.: 68). The third episode is a story of a visit to an old Venetian palace, of wandering through it as through layers of time before starting to lose oneself in the emptiness of a big gallery. The opulent material riches of Venice border on non-being. The artefacts are subject to decay and entropy, and are opposed to the regenerating fluidity of water that stands for time in its life-giving capacity, renewal and transformation.

The eel from the Baltic and the orata with eyes the colour of mustard and honey

The fish, an inhabitant of the water that keeps reappearing in Brodsky's text, is a multifaceted image. It is emblematic of Venice by virtue of the fish-like shape of the city's map;[10] it is also associated with the theme of evolution as the primordial existence of chordates. As a literary motif it is a product of cultural triangulation,

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[10] I thank my colleague Cecilia Schwartz, a specialist in Italian literature, for indicating to me this popular image.

as mentioned earlier. It can be traced simultaneously to a double intertext with roots in the poetic thesaurus of both Russia and Italy.

The eel from the Baltic Sea, which appears in the text a number of times, is an elaboration of Montale's poem 'L'Anguilla' (The Eel) (1948):[11]

> L'anguilla, la sirena
> dei mari freddi che lascia il Baltico
> per giungere ai nostri mari,
> ai nostri estuari, ai fiume
> …
> l'iride breve, gemella
> di quella che incastonano i tuoi cigli
> e fai brillare intatta in mezzo ai figli
> dell'uomo, immersi nel tuo fango, puoi tu
> non crederla sorella?

<div align="right">(Montale 1980: 234)</div>

(The eel, the siren / of the cold seas who leaves the Baltic / to reach our seas, / our estuaries, rivers … a brief rainbow, the twin / of the one framed by your eyelashes, / shining intact amidst sons / of men, immersed in your mud, / could you not believe her, sister? –Translated by the author.)

In the poem by Montale there is a chain of images: 'anguilla' ('eel') – 'sirena' ('siren') – 'gemella' ('twin') – 'sorella' ('sister'), governed by the grammatical feminine of 'anguilla'. In the text Brodsky refers to the 'protagonist' of Montale's poem as a clearly feminine being, a 'sirene': 'the Baltic, the home of that wandering siren from the Montale's poem' (Brodsky 2013: 6). Further on in the text the 'eel' who fled the Baltic refers to the author himself and is understood to be masculine, corresponding to the underlying masculine grammatical gender of the Russian word for 'eel' – *ugor*. The divergence of the grammatical genders in Russian and Italian generates a bifurcation of this image in the English text of *Watermark*: Brodsky keeps 'the eel' for himself and later introduces an '*orata*' as the feminine counterpart of the 'eel'.

The casting of the *orata* as a feminine character follows the feminine of the Russian for 'fish' (*ryba*). The *orata* fish is endowed with the eyes of a companion of Brodsky's mentioned a number of times in the text, which are the colour of 'mustard and honey'.

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[11] On Brodsky and Montale see Alessandro Niero (2000: 307–30).

> Should one ask a simple *orata* – not even a caught one, in a free state – what it thinks one looks like, it will reply, You are a monster. And the conviction in its voice will be oddly familiar, as though its eye is of the mustard-and-honey variety.
>
> (Ibid.: 84)

This image, the fish-eye, following Montale's mention of the iris of the eye ('l'iride breve') is fused in *Watermark* with the beginning of Mandelshtam's famous essay 'Vypad' (A Challenge) (Mandelshtam 1928: 14), where a different 'piscine' perspective is used to describe the distorted perception of an ungrateful reader incapable of appreciating contemporary poetry.

Montale was neither the only nor the first person to introduce this bold trans-gendering shift while personalizing the fish. It was done before him by Jacque Prévert (1992: 15) in his widely known 'La pêche à la baleine' (1946), famous as a song set to music by Joseph Kosma in 1949, where 'the beautiful animal' (both *bête* and *baleine* are feminine in French) with blue eyes metamorphosizes in a surrealist mode into a masculine figure (the father who fished it) having the same blue eyes. The whale becomes a speaking character in the story, and ultimately, having stabbed the father, walks out of the door.[12] The personalization of a fish was undertaken by Brodsky in his Russian-language 'Kolybel'naia Treskovogo mysa' (Lullaby of Cape Cod) (1975), where the cod appears at the door as a character of undefined sex. The tension between the character and the grammatical gender of the Russian for 'cod' (feminine *treska*, similarly to *ryba*) had to be resolved: the feminine is neutralized in the poem by a swift replacement of the feminine 'cod' (*treska*) with a generalized masculine 'passer-by' (*prokhozhii*), appearing at the threshold of the house.

In *Watermark* we see, however, a different procedure: Montale's 'anguilla', the eel, becomes a couple, a 'he' (the eel, a stand-in for the author himself) and a 'she', the *orata*, generated by language forces at play in a translingual text. Translation implicit in intertextuality is quite visible here.

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[12] There does not need to be an immediate genetic intertextual connection between Montale's and Prévert's texts, both being a belated continuation of surrealists' experiments with the metamorphosis of images, such as Max Ernst's 'L'évadé', representing a fish with one enlarged eye on a slightly human body.

A paradox of exile: Anonymity and self-portraits
in the Italian style

Like any other autobiographical text, *Watermark* is a story of becoming, where the self of the protagonist (his alienated self-image) is on the way from then to now.[13] A transcultural autobiography has, however, some specific features: the journey from one culture to another is frequently perceived as a transformation accompanied by the motif of self-alienation, equally and primarily characteristic of Brodsky's poetry of exile.[14] The continuity of self-perception being disrupted, mirrors do not reflect a recognizable image of oneself, but of an anonymous stranger:

> Inanimate by nature, hotel room mirrors are even further dulled by having seen so many. What they return to you is not your identity but your anonymity, especially in this city.

<div align="right">(Brodsky 2013: 22)</div>

The traveller becomes a trespasser: projecting oneself into a new setting is both dangerous and liberating at the same time, akin to the carnivalized loss of self:

> If you're lucky, you may find an apartment, which, naturally, comes with the owner's personal taste in paintings, chairs, curtains, with a vague sense of illegality to your face in his bathroom mirror – in short, with what you precisely wanted to shed: yourself.

<div align="right">(Ibid.: 23)</div>

Alienation goes hand in hand with anonymity. The latter is an ambiguous category; its meaning shifts depending upon the cultural context. In Russian post-modern literature it has different modes, encompassing Solzhenitsyn's *Arkhipelag GULAG* (*The Gulag Archipelago*), written between 1958 and 1968, where the theme is related to the nameless victims of the camps. Brodsky initially followed this line, treating anonymity as depersonalization in a totalitarian society; however, already in the essay entitled 'On Tyranny' (1980), he expands it to include the condition of the mass culture of the contemporary world: 'The idea of one's existential uniqueness gets replaced by that of anonymity' (Brodsky 1986: 115). As a response to depersonalization, Brodsky focuses on the private

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[13] Mikhail Bakhtin describes autobiography as a process of self-objectivization in an aesthetic form. In Brodsky's case, it becomes self-alienation (Bakhtin 1979: 132).

[14] On self-alienation and fragmentation of the self in exile see Valentina Polukhina (1991: 13–14).

and individual experience of art. At the same time, one more facet is added to the notion: anonymity is also conceived of as a form of transcultural experience. In an essay titled 'The Condition We Call Exile, or Acorns Aweigh', first written as a paper in 1987, the very notion of exile is subjected to reconsideration, as it is considered insufficient, describing only the fact of departure (Brodsky 1995: 31). The text is an apology for exile and presents its paradoxes, arguing that the evils of exile are necessary and even good. The loss of significance that comes with the loss of one's native linguistic environment and cultural milieu pushes one, according to this text, towards the fundamentals of the human condition, its metaphysics. The poet is alone with the language, which 'accelerates' (Brodsky's favourite term) the process of writing. As to the state of living and writing outside one's culture, this state 'lacks the name' (ibid.). This condition without a name leads to the conclusion that its real name is precisely anonymity. *Watermark* continues in its own way to elaborate on and modify this subject in a positive direction. 'Shedding oneself' is presented as an after-life or an Edenic experience, and allows the dissolution of the self into the city: 'The city is narcissistic enough to turn your mind into an amalgam, unburdening it of its depths' (Brodsky 2013: 22).

The theme of alienation goes back to Brodsky's earlier poetry, where there is a character called Nobody (Laguna).[15] In *Watermark* estrangement from oneself is transposed into a somewhat different key, appearing as a travesty: upon arrival in the city, the poet designated himself as a silhouette dressed in clothes of recognizable brands:

> In the unlikely event that someone's eye followed my white London Fog and dark brown Borsalino, they should have cut a familiar silhouette.
>
> (Ibid.: 4)

The loss of oneself in this context leads to carnivalization, traditionally associated with Venice. Dressing up, being on display, associates the text with traditional theatricality; at the same time, these phenomena are connected with the constant mentions of fabric standing for materiality ('in this city a man is more a silhouette than his unique features, and a silhouette can be improved' (ibid.: 27)). A costume is a material expression of aesthetic achievements of culture, as suggested in the chapter about the Veneziana in Leningrad: 'what she wore, transparent things included, belonged to civilization' (ibid.: 11).

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[15] Lev Loseff noted that Nobody in Brodsky's poetry is not just a pronoun but also a name (Polukhina 1991: 13).

Venice as a fitting-room implies not only self-adornment induced by the city; it also means trying on new roles, where the traveller assumes the role of a local. Autobiography expands into side-plots, fictional extensions of one's life. The invented self-representation is projected onto the new cultural setting as a fictionalized character, inspired by literature or film. In two instances these side-plots are filmic stylizations that go back to Leningrad times. One of them comes from the opening sequence of Visconti's *Death in Venice*, with Dirk Bogarde approaching the coast of Venice on board a steamer – a scene that made the author regret that he was not mortally ill (ibid.: 40). Another imaginary filmic self-portrait even gets a title, *Nozze di Seppia* (*Wedding in Sepia Tones*). Its plot has but one scene, depicting a couple's reunion: the hero is the author's stylized Italian alter-ego wearing 'a cloth cap, dark serge jacket, and a white shirt with an open collar, washed and ironed by the same strong, tanned hand' (ibid.: 65–6). The owner of the 'strong tanned hand' is identical to the owner of the eyes 'the colour of mustard and honey' (eyes with which even the *orata* fish is endowed). She is an Italian Slavist who would be reading Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* or, as another option appropriate for an Italian poet, Propertius' love elegies, *Monobiblos*.

Yet another imaginary plot is also indirectly related to a marriage in the Italian style. It is described in the subjunctive mood, as a fictionalized scenario:

> Later he [a local solicitor or pharmacist] might invite me over to his place for supper, and his pregnant wife, rising above the steaming pasta, would berate me volubly for my protracted bachelorhood.
>
> (Ibid.: 63)

Settings, presented through the enumeration of the details in an Italian household (and what they are made of), are similar in pattern to 'This is the house that Jack built.' These objects generate concise 'never-to-be' plots, in the form of imagined and at the same negated life scenarios:

> So I never slept, let alone sinned, in a cast-iron family bed with pristine, crisp linen, embroidered and richly fringed bedspread, cloudlike pillows, and small pearl-encrusted crucifix above the headboard. I never trained my vacant stare on an oleograph of the Madonna, or faded pictures of a father/brother/uncle/ son in bersagliere helmet … or porcelain or majolica jug atop a dark wood chest of drawers filled with local lace, sheets, towels, pillowcases, and underclothes washed and ironed on the kitchen table by a young, strong, tanned, almost swarthy arm, as a shoulder strap slips off it and silver beads of sweat sparkle on the forehead.
>
> (Ibid.: 64–5)

The story of transition into a new cultural sphere is not just about becoming, but also about imagining; it comes in a cloud of stylized, fictionalized plots, self-portraits in the Italian style, all being projections of earlier cultural (literary or filmic) experiences. Anonymity and invented auto-protagonists are counterparts, two sides of the same coin. Playing with roles, however, only stresses the issue of authenticity, which remains irredeemable and 'incurable', and is resolved in *Watermark* in terms of the paradox of an actor and his role.

In Henri de Régnier's old Venetian mirror: *The Encounter* and *Watermark*

One life scenario, 'a perfectly decadent dream' (ibid.: 41), dreamt in Leningrad and set up in Venice, was at least in part shaped by Brodsky's reading of the French symbolist poet and prose writer Henri de Régnier (1864–1936).

> And I vowed to myself that should I ever get out of my empire, should this eel ever escape the Baltic, the first thing I would do would be to come to Venice, rent a room on the ground-floor of some palazzo so that the waves raised by passing boats would splash against my window, write a couple of elegies while extinguishing my cigarettes on the damp stony floor, cough and drink and when the money got short, instead of boarding a train, buy myself a little Browning and blow my brains out on the spot, unable to die in Venice of natural causes.
>
> (Ibid.)

References to Régnier are scattered in Brodsky's text, and it is clear that Régnier's writing on Venice is an essential source and model for *Watermark*. It is at the same time a link binding together Brodsky's prose with the pan-European tradition of modernism, both Russian and French in this instance. The question remains, however: what was the source? Since there are a number of erroneous suggestions on this account among Brodsky scholars (provoked by Brodsky himself), this issue is dealt with below in detail. In his *Watermark*, Brodsky (ibid.: 36) mentions three of Régnier's 'moribund' books, which he got hold of published 'in translation' by Mikhail Kuzmin, an outstanding homosexual modernist poet. The books were procured by Brodsky's friend Gennadii Shmakov, a connoisseur of Kuzmin's life and work who belonged to the underground homosexual subculture of Leningrad in the 1960s. Although reading of Régnier is acknowledged by Brodsky as an influence in regard to his

essay, the number of books and their titles have remained uncertain.[16] Brodsky confesses to not remembering exactly either titles or plots, just certain images, the genre ('a cross between picaresque and detective novels' (ibid.: 37)), the sense of place ('twilit and dangerous' (ibid.)) and the rhythm of composition (a 'brisk pace' of short chapters (ibid.)). Being unable or unwilling to verify which novel it was (Gennadii Shmakov passed away in 1988, i.e. a year before publication of *Watermark*), he calls it in his mind *Provincial Entertainments* ('I could double-check, of course, but then the friend who lent them to me died a year ago; and I won't' (ibid.)).

Leaving things as they are, partly in homage to his deceased friend, led to a persistent aberration among Brodsky scholars, who, in spite of the author's warning, continued to see Régnier's *Provincial Entertainments* as Brodsky's inspiration.[17]

Venice was one of Régnier's favourite settings; a number of works translated into Russian are set either exclusively there ('La courte vie de Balthazar Aldromin, vénitien', *L'Entrevue*, 'Le Testament du Comte Arminati', 'Le Portrait de la comtesse Alvenigo', 'Regret', 'Au café Quadri') or in part, as in his novels *La Peur de l'amour*, *Le Passé vivant* and *Marceline, ou la punition fantastique* (the latter and *L'Entrevue* were parts of the volume of *Histoires incertaines* (1919) translated into Russian as *Zagadochnye istorii* (*Mysterious Stories*)).[18] *Le Divertissement provincial* (1925), (*Provincial Entertainments* mentioned by Brodsky) is definitely not the source, since its action never leaves France. Its plot carries the ruined protagonist, who has been betrayed by his mistress, from Paris to a small provincial town, where the devastated hero ultimately goes insane. It is possible, of course, that *Provincial Entertainments* could be one of the three novels. Confused with other texts, it could have even provided the plot, described by Brodsky (2013: 37) as 'love and betrayal'. While details of the plot were forgotten, the title was retained in the poet's memory because of its

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[16] Brodsky mentions four books and two novels set in Venice in winter in his interview with Solomon Volkov (2007: 379) and just two books in 'Spoils of War' (Brodsky 1995: 14).

[17] To give some examples, Silvia Panicieri (2016: 120) cites *Provincial Entertainments*; Valentina Polukhina (1997: 232) suggests Régnier's 'Cité des eaux' as a source, which is not a novel, as she indicates, but a collection of poems dedicated to Versaille and cannot be related to Venice. It is only Nina Mednis (2011) who briefly mentions Régnier's *Encounter* as a possible source of Brodsky's *Watermark*.

[18] Not all works by Régnier were translated into Russian, and some, like the collected sketches of *L'Altana, ou la vie vénitienne* (1988–1924), the collections of short stories of *Contes vénitiens* (1927) and *Le Voyage d'amour, ou Initiation vénitienne* (1930) reached Russia too late to become part of his collected work in the translation of Academia (1923–1927), so some of Régnier's later texts on Venice should be excluded as a possible source.

semantic aura, well in keeping with the motif of the margins of empire recurrent in Brodsky's own poetry as well as the 'wild Adriatic' from Saba's poem.

The most probable source for Brodsky's *Watermark* is the short novel *Vstrecha* (*Encounter*, the original title is *L'Entrevue*). Its title refers to an encounter of a young Parisian, recovering from a life crisis in Venice, with the phantom of the ancient owner of the eighteenth-century Palazzo Altinengo, where he is renting a floor (as Régnier's characters from Paris usually do, setting an example that Brodsky intended to follow). A sculpted portrait of a patrician that has 'escaped' from its place at the museum through black magic – and not without the assistance of a picaresque character called Prentinaglia – begins to inhabit a mirror in the rented palace. It is thus a mystery story set in Venice in winter, in an abandoned palazzo, with sumptuous and shabby interiors, fitting Brodsky's description. An accidental meeting with Prentinaglia takes place in Café Florian, establishing a pattern of coincidences and encounters to be deciphered. As the hero begins to lose his reflection in the mirror (a clear diabolical sign), the ghost acquires more and more substance. The encounter between the young man and the ghost culminates in a clash that destroys the entire building and leaves the young man injured. This struggle stands for an irreconcilable conflict arising from a confrontation between the aestheticized past and modernity, a recurrent pattern in a number of Régnier's novels. The trajectory of the story is traced by solitary walks of the protagonist through the city and his trips to the islands. Descriptions of the artefacts adorning the old palazzo and the islands where they are produced are abundant and detailed, in keeping with the aesthetics of artificiality espoused by French Decadence. A beautiful and decayed object is a symbol, an expression of the subjective, often eccentric will of its creator. At the centre of these artefacts adorning Régnier's novel is the mirror, which is compared to the deep waters where the transition to the other side takes place.

All these features fit into Brodsky's description of the text he had in mind, as 'the main events were taking place on the other side of the amalgam, within some abandoned palazzo' (ibid.). It is said of Régnier's novel that 'Its atmosphere was twilight and dangerous, its topography aggravated with mirrors' (ibid.). Brodsky mentions the length as typical of the 1920s ('Like many books of the twenties, it was fairly short – some two hundred pages, no more – and its pace was brisk' (ibid.). The length fits the description, as the text is about 120 pages in Russian translation, varying slightly between editions. Brodsky could have confused the time of the translation (1924) and the date the work was published (1919). As to the brisk pace of the chapters which Brodsky mentions, their length varies,

with some longer and some shorter; on the whole they do not keep pace with Brodsky's *Watermark*.[19]

The question about the third of the three books remains open; one possibility is that it could have been *Marceline, or an Extraordinary Punishment*, the third of the three novels. Also set in part in Venice, it is the story of a man driven to insanity by his marriage, from which he is rescued by the dolls of an ancient marionette theatre purchased in the city, which suddenly become animated. Both *Encounter* and *Marceline* were published under the common title *Mysterious Stories* in volume XVI in the Russian translation of the Academia edition.[20] The three novels procured by Shmakov could, in that case, be two books: *Provincial Entertainments* and *Mysterious Stories.*

It is no surprise that the story of the poet's visit to a Venetian palazzo in *Watermark*, in spite of its satirical overtones, contains an explicit reference to Régnier and closely follows *Encounter* ('I begin to understand Régnier' (ibid.: 55)). The host of the party, the new owner of the old palazzo, is treated rather mercilessly by Brodsky, being 'a bit of a playwright and a bit of a painter', dressed in a 'gray double-breasted suit of very good cut' (ibid.: 49). The walk through the room interiors on the upper floor (its most ancient part, as in Régnier's Palazzo Altinengo) represents losing oneself:

> Each room meant your further disappearance, the next degree of your nonexistence. This had to do with three things: drapery, mirrors and dust.
>
> (Ibid.: 53)

The end point of the passage is a confrontation with a mirror, an encounter with a non-being, since the mirror does not send back a reflection, being as black as Malevich's famous 'Black Square' (1915):

> I stood by the door leading into the next chamber, staring at a largish, three-by-four-foot gilded rectangle, and instead of myself I saw pitch-black nothing.
>
> (Ibid.: 55)

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[19] Another prototype that may have influenced both the style and composition of *Watermark* is a collection of thirteen short stories called 'Contes pour les treize'. It includes some of Régnier's poems in prose set in Venice, such as his renowned 'Au café Quadri'. The stories, translated by Olga Broshnikovskaia and Mikhail Kuzmin, were included in a volume of the Academia edition of Régnier's complete works entitled *Dymka vremeni* (approximately *Veil of Time*, the original title was *Couleur du temps*) (Renie 1927).

[20] *L'Entrevue* as a part of *Histoires incertaines* was translated for the Academia edition by the poet Vsevolod Rozhdestvenskii, who was associated with Acmeism in the 1920s, and Aleksandr Smirnov (Anri de Renie 1924).

In his passage dedicated to Régnier, Brodsky mentions at the same time the poet Mikhail Kuzmin, not just as the translator of Régnier but as a major attraction for him as a reader (Volkov 2007: 378). The juxtaposition and fusion of the two names, Régnier and Kuzmin, is significant here because of the unique role that Régnier played during the transformation of Russian symbolism into the later movement of Acmeism in the 1910s, and it would be insufficient to treat Régnier's work simply as a French source.

Régnier was introduced to Russian readers by the French-oriented Russian symbolists Maximilian Voloshin, Innokentii Annenskii and Valerii Briusov, who were all – with Mikhail Kuzmin – the first translators of Régnier's poetry. Introducing Régnier in his essays from 1910 to 1911, Voloshin praises his 'apollonian transparency' and later compares his style to transparent waters ('Anri de Renie', Voloshin 1988: 69, 616; 'Apollon i mysh', ibid.: 102). Kuzmin, who called for a return to clear and harmonious poetry and prose from the obscure style of the 'younger' generation of symbolists, elaborates the theme of transparency in his manifesto 'On the Beautiful Clarity. Notes on Prose', where he calls Régnier 'inimitable' and extols his prose as a model to be followed (Kuzmin 1910: 7). At the same time, separate publications of Régnier's prose in translation began to appear, among them an attempt by the Moscow publishing house Orion to publish his collected works in 1911. After the revolution Régnier's popularity continued, and a multivolume edition of his prose was ultimately undertaken in the 1920s by the editorial house Academia (1923–1927).[21] Translations of the Academia edition were made under the supervision (called 'general redaction') of Mikhail Kuzmin, another major symbolist poet Fiodor Sologub and the critic and translator Aleksandr Smirnov, who also authored a short biography of Régnier as an appendix to the publication (Smirnov 1926).

Works by Régnier were translated into Russian or given a preface – or both – by a number of Russian poets: apart from the already mentioned Voloshin, Briusov and Sologub, the former Acmeists Mikhail Lozinskii and Vsevolod Rozhdestvenskii contributed as translators. Mikhail Kuzmin himself translated four volumes of this edition: *Le Passé vivant*, *Amphisbène*, *Les Rencontres de Mr de Bréot*, *Le Bon plaisir* – none of which fits Brodsky's description.

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[21] Régnier's separate works appeared in other publishing houses, even in the popular editions in the late 1920s. 'Au café Quadri' ('V kafe Kvadri') was published with *L'Amour et le plaisir* (*Liubov' i naslazhdenie*) in the popular series 'Seiatel' (N33).

For Kuzmin's part, the major translation project of the 1920s originated in his earlier translation of Régnier's erotic poetry ('Sem' liubovnykh portretov' (The Seven Love Portraits) (1921), the original title was 'Le Miroir des heures'), as well as his own original work wherein he exploited the Venetian, and more broadly, the Italian theme. Venice is a topos of Kuzmin's poetic travelogue 'Glinianye golubki' (Clay Pigeons) (1914), mentioned by Brodsky in *Watermark*. A number of poems in 'Glinianye golubki' and one entire chapter of this collection – 'Snova Venetsia' (Venice Again) – are set in Venice. One should also mention here Kuzmin's play 'Venetsianskie bezumtsy' (The Venetian Madmen) (1915), written in Gozzi style, as well as his novel set partly in Italy, *Chudesnaia zhizn' Iosifa Balsamo, grafa Kaliostro* (*The Wondrous Life of Giuseppe Balsamo, the Count of Caliostro*) (1919).

The multivolume Academia edition created a platform for collaboration between remaining representatives of Russian modernism belonging to its different segments and stages of the pre-revolutionary literary scene. A number of artists with varying degrees of association with the World of Art movement either illustrated or designed covers of Régnier's editions in Russian: Dmitrii Bouchène, Nikolai Akimov and Dmitrii Mitrokhin (the latter two were the authors of the covers for the Academia volumes).[22] The aestheticized, nostalgic, *passéiste* universe of Régnier overlapped in time with that of the avant-garde and constructivism, and almost outlived it, lasting until Socialist realism was already in sight. It is a belated manifestation of modernist art, a publishing endeavour that harboured under its auspices a group of survivors from the pre-Soviet period of Russian culture.

The novels that Brodsky refers to most likely belong to the Academia edition. It was this cultural endeavour, a concrescence of Régnier and Kuzmin, a manifestation of the Russian-French modernism, that provided Brodsky with the images to which he would return decades later to recreate his version of the cumulative 'imaginary West' of the late 1960s in Leningrad.

One essential addition to Yurchak's very useful notion of the 'imaginary West' should be brought up in this context. The 'moribund' books are also relics, or 'trophies', as well as other artefacts in Brodsky's possession at that time: a set of old sepia postcards he tries 'to read', the old piece of tapestry retrieved by

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[22] Dmitrii Mitrokhin illustrated *The Seven Love Portraits* for the bibliophile edition by Petropolis (Renie 1921); a book comprising three stories for the Akvilon edition was illustrated by Dmitrii Bouchène (Renie 1922).

Brodsky's mother representing the Palazzo Ducale and a toy gondola acquired by his father. They not only point outward, towards the West, but equally back in time, representing a return to the earlier, modernist layer of the palimpsest of the Soviet culture. The retrieval of the culture of the pre-Soviet past, with its emphasis on the supremacy of aesthetics ('aesthetics is the mother of ethics', as Brodsky (1995: 49) stated in his Nobel lecture) and its cosmopolitan 'longing for world culture', to use Mandelshtam's famous formula, is what Brodsky considered the major cultural achievement of his generation:

> The fact that not everything got interrupted, at least not in Russia, can be credited in no small degree to my generation, and I am no less proud of belonging to it than I am of standing here today. And the fact that I am standing here is a recognition of the services that generation has rendered to culture; recalling a phrase from Mandelstam, I would add, to world culture. Looking back, I can say again that we were beginning in an empty – indeed, a terrifyingly wasted – place, and that, intuitively rather than consciously, we aspired precisely to the recreation of the effect of culture's continuity, to the reconstruction of its forms and tropes, toward filling its few surviving, and often totally compromised, forms, with our own new, or appearing to us as new, contemporary content.
>
> (Ibid.: 55)

The panaesthetic legacy of Russian modernism is reborn in the tense political climate of the 1960–1970s, when the focus on aesthetics becomes a common denominator of the entire generation of the non-official culture to which Brodsky belonged. It was best expressed as the famous motto of the dissident writer and critic Andrei Siniavskii during his political trial in 1966: 'My disagreement with the Soviet power is purely stylistic.'

Boris Pasternak's *Safe Conduct* and Brodsky's *Watermark*: Performativity of autobiography

One more precursor of *Watermark* within the Russian tradition is presented here: Boris Pasternak's famous autobiographical essay *Safe Conduct* (1930–1931), undoubtedly presents as a famous sample of poet's prose and a generic prototype of Brodsky's essay (Polukhina 2005). The second part of Pasternak's book is dedicated to his trip to Marburg and Venice as a student during the summer of 1912. Chronologically, the two texts mark the onset of the totalitarianism of the Soviet state and its dismantlement respectively: *Safe Conduct* was written

at the onset of the terror, and *Watermark* was completed two years before the USSR was dissolved in 1991. Both texts on Venice not only share the topos of Venice and a genre (autobiographical essays written by poets), but have a deeper affinity, as is shown below.

Pasternak is quoted twice in *Watermark* in connection with Venice: the first quote is the image from the opening stanza of his poem 'Venetsia' (Venice) (1913) comparing Venice with a 'swollen stone croissant' (Brodsky 2013: 45). The second is a paraphrase, a quote from the same poem appearing in a conversation with Brodsky's editor where he explains why he prefers the winter season for his trips: 'it's like Greta Garbo swimming' (ibid.: 101). This image is a rearrangement of the last line of Pasternak's poem comparing Venice to a Venetian girl who jumped from the embankments to swim.

Both titles, *Safe Conduct* and *Watermark*, refer to authenticity; in Pasternak's essay the title has a talismanic function, procuring him safe passage in the threatening atmosphere of the 1930s.[23] Both autobiographies are statements, verbal acts, and both have a performative, safeguarding function.[24] As to *Safe Conduct*, its catalyst was the arrest of Pasternak's acquaintance, the futurist poet Vladimir Sillov. Another crucial event was Mayakovsky's suicide in April 1930 (Aucouturier 1979: 345–6). Venice as depicted by Pasternak is a disguised portrait of the totalitarian state with an oppressive fleet, with ships spying through the windows and Venetian lions decorating boxes where written denunciations were put (Pasternak 1982: 248–9). As shown by Pasternak scholars, these allusions point to the political climate of Moscow (Aucouturier 1979, Fleishman 1980: 255–68); but there is another dimension which is no less important. Similarly to *Watermark*, *Safe Conduct* is a manifestation of fidelity to the European cultural roots of Pasternak's youth in the climate of growing isolationism and antagonism between the USSR and the West. The experience of Venice is one of interconnectedness, the tangible unity of the Russian and the Western European cultures (Pasternak 1982: 251). As in *Watermark*, the claimed affiliation of Russian art is twofold, pointing both to the West and to the earlier

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[23] On the function of *Safe Conduct* protecting him from both the threat of persecution and recognition by the state see Michel Aucouturier (1979: 334–7).

[24] According to J. L. Austin (1975: 12), not all utterances are statements; there is a category of performatives in which 'to *say* something is to *do* something'. Austin's foundational lectures published in 1962 were followed and further developed by a number of scholars, among them J. Searle (1969) in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* and P. Bourdieu (1991) in *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*. With regard to autobiography, Elisabeth Bruss (1974: 14–26) argues that it has a performative function, i.e. it should not necessarily be read as a descriptive utterance.

shared culture of modernism. *Safe Conduct* is dedicated to Rilke's memory, and its beginning goes back to the childhood memories of 1900, when Pasternak as a boy meets Rilke and Lou Andreas Salomé on their way to visit Tolstoy. A parallel to this dedication can be found in *Watermark* in the episode of catching a glimpse of Auden 'through the glass', as a posthumous salute to Auden. Both Rilke and Auden epitomize the European poetic tradition; they are chosen to preside as patrons over the passage to the European tradition of Europe-oriented Russian cosmopolitan authors. In both instances the dedications are posthumous, so the transition acquires metaphysical overtones as a transition to another world.

As their titles suggest, both essays have a performative meaning, i.e. self-protective and self-asserting; their challenges, however, are different. Those of *Watermark* are related not so much to the totalitarian state left behind as to the conditions of an exiled poet, described in the eponymous text as anonymity and loss of significance ('the reality of [an exiled writer] consists of … constantly fighting and conspiring to restore his significance, his poignant role, his authority' (Brodsky 1995: 26)). The answers to both challenges are nevertheless quite similar: both *Safe Conduct* and *Watermark* are intended to protect the right to one's individuality ('uncommon expression of the visage'), as well as to safeguard a place in contemporary culture, be it native or adopted.

Beyond exile

It has already been observed and commented upon that Brodsky persistently resisted the role of the exiled writer, or at least avoided the politicization of it (Polukhina 1991: 9–10). His long-time friend and translator George Kline even traced a chronology of the transformation of Brodsky's position in regard to exile in an article on the subject (Kline 1990: 56–7, 88). Brodsky's trajectory from his earlier poetry of the 1970s to *Watermark* shows his transition from exile to cosmopolitanism. First, the experience of exile is more existential than social, and in that sense universal, belonging to the 'incurable malady' of being a writer. Two features define his 'uncommon visage': Brodsky's non-conformism, inherited from the non-official culture that he describes as partisanship in the post-Cold War era, and his traditionalism. Being sceptical of the language of political power, Brodsky places himself at the confluence of two linguistic and cultural realms, the Russian and the anglophone. The dominant themes of the

earlier poetry of the 1970s – exile, nostalgia and separation – are inverted in *Watermark*: it is no longer a matter of loss but of retrieval and integration into the family of anglophone literature. The multiple returns that are described in this essay are not a homecoming to one's native place, not a *katabasis* but an ascent to the prototype of the cultural visions of Russian modernism in an endeavour to regain its pan-European grounds. Brodsky's brand of cosmopolitanism is of the West-oriented kind, inherent in the pre-revolutionary Russian cultural tradition.

Brodsky's autobiographical trajectory entails not only self-assertion and self-creation, but also brings about a significant shift in the Russian writer's mythology. While it was earlier epitomized in the Christ-like figure of Iurii Zhivago, a victim and observer of his times, it takes a new turn in 1980–1990s: the new cultural hero is one who, like Brodsky or Nabokov, leads Russian literature both out of its cultural isolation from the West and equally out of the marginalization and isolation of exile to the wide spaces of world literature, reclaiming its pre-Soviet roots. The boom that began with Brodsky's Nobel Prize was gaining strength in the 1990s, with the celebration of the end of Soviet isolationism, and is still ongoing, though it now takes a somewhat different form. Today, we see an attempt on the part of Russian cultural institutions to reclaim the great literary exiles such as Nabokov and Brodsky, to bring them back home symbolically in spite of their decisions and expressed wishes.

In *Watermark* the shift from exile to cosmopolitanism is fully achieved; the challenges of exile are overcome, not only in the process of radical change (switching from native Russian to English), but also through self-preservation understood in a double sense – as an affirmation of the validity of one's difference, one's 'uncommon visage' within one's adopted culture, and as an act of reconnection with the legacy of modernism after a half-century of disruption. Water, called by Brodsky (2013: 124) 'the genre of the world', knows no limits. This is what *Watermark* manifests; it 'performs' world literature, adding a new link to the Russian Venetian canon and bringing it out into the open, as its title, related to the element of water, promised.

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Part Two

Texts in worlds: Production and material practices

A homemade history: Documenting the Harlem Renaissance in Alexander Gumby's scrapbooks

Irina D. Rasmussen

'The promissory notes were everywhere.'

Hugh Kenner, *A Homemade World* (1975)

A significant part of L. S. Alexander Gumby's vast collection of handmade scrapbooks pertains to the movement in the African American creative arts in the early decades of the twentieth century, which became known as the Harlem Renaissance – a moniker that captures the African Americans' unprecedented cultural awakening and the role of the Harlem district of New York City as a symbolic capital of new artistic developments in America and worldwide.[1] Assembled with great care, Gumby's scrapbooks attend meticulously to the movement's progress at home and abroad, preserving every available record of its local, national and cross-continental reception. The entire collection is composed with scissors. But Gumby's agency as a documentarian of the movement yields its own narrative implications in the way the movement's history is refracted through the sentimental, intimate filter afforded by the scrapbook format. What emerges is a cross-over form of vernacular historiography whose uniqueness lies in how the collection's scope, design and circulation transform scrapbooking into a curatorial undertaking guided by conservationist, aesthetic and social aims. The focus of this chapter is on how Gumby's editorial practices, compositional methods and book-making techniques allow him to integrate public records with private memorabilia, and to endow his collection with the co-equal qualities of a historiographic archive and a curated exhibition.

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[1]   The collection was donated to Columbia University in 1951 and preserved institutionally in the Rare Book & Manuscript section at Butler Library, named *Alexander Gumby Collection of Negroiana* ([ca. 1800]–1981).

Channelling the ferment of Harlem as an artistic and cultural hub, the collection and activities of the Gumby Book Studio that housed it reflect how the collections constituted a text-based public – an open-ended, widely accessible public that organized itself through circulation of texts and exchange of books and ideas.[2] My analysis takes its cue from Gumby's forward-looking interpretation of the present, shaped by his sense of the past and his recognition of the future reader. The form-sensitive reading I develop here is attuned to Gumby's method of composition through layout and assemblage, and to his exploration of the capacity of vernacular historiography as form to bring out the social potency of imagination. I argue that the scrapbook historiography in Gumby's execution facilitates the emergence of a *public* for circulating discursive flows. These flows transform the collection and the Gumby Book Studio into a *provisional institution* for consolidating formally innovative developments in the arts. These functions of circulation and institutionalization suggest that Gumby's scrapbooks need to be understood as an open-ended and a future-oriented archive designed to disseminate new historical awareness and shape the reception of the Harlem Renaissance in the future.

While the Harlem Renaissance as a temporal and qualitative period-reference keeps shifting and expanding, the emergence of black modernism in America and the efforts to organize and define it as a movement with shared socially interventionist aims occurred simultaneously. The key contributors – artists, critics, publishers, activists and public intellectuals – acted in response to site-specific issues, but also reached out to wider geographical contexts in Europe, the anglophone world and across the American hemisphere. Black modernism's self-definition owed much to the same tactics of manifesto writing and other forms of public address as those deployed by their modernist counterparts' elsewhere, in Europe and across the continents. New poetic techniques allowed them to break away from stifling expressive forms, while publishing outlets, some newly set up to experiment with publication formats, facilitated this artistic ferment.

Collecting, editing, publishing and anthologizing were central to consolidating new developments in the arts. In critical accounts of African American modernism, several key events are considered to be the movement's milestones. Lined up chronologically, these events demonstrate how popular entertainment, literary and artistic production, and experimental publishing were closely

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[2] I use Michael Warner's (2005) definition of publics and counterpublics in his *Publics and Counterpublics* study.

intertwined. The 1921 opening of *Shuffle Along* – a musical revue with emerging stars of upmarket music hall entertainment such as Josephine Baker, Florence Mills and Adelaide Hall – was followed by the publication of James Weldon Johnson's anthology *The Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1922 and, a year later, Jean Toomer's *Cane* in 1923. The popularization of new musical, choreographic and poetic idioms in these works, all attuned to folk and street culture, spurred the search for fresh directions in the arts. A singular, well-documented event in the history of the Harlem Renaissance was the gathering of black literati at the Civic Club in Manhattan on 21 March 1924, aimed to help disseminate the work of black artists. Its principal organizer, the editor of *Opportunity* Charles S. Johnson, brought established publishers together with promising young African American writers to promote their debut. The young invitees, among them Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Bennett and Jessie Fauset, met with W. E. B. Du Bois, the founding editor of *The Crisis*, as well as the senior editors and heads of major publishing houses such as Harper & Brothers and Boni & Liveright. A year later, in 1925, the New Negro Renaissance was launched with the publication of a *Survey Geographic* special issue. The selection of essays, short stories and poems chosen by its invited editor, Alain Locke, was a public acknowledgement of a new era in black cultural expressions in America.[3]

The actual cultural scene was, of course, more crowded than an account given in a few bold strokes is able to recognize. The movement's dynamics owed much to countless smaller events and involved numerous agents. The production and dissemination of black modernism involved participants and scenes that are still waiting to be acknowledged and included in the historiography of 1920s Harlem. When Langston Hughes (1940: 178) wrote about Harlem from the viewpoint of the 1940s, he remarked that its literati sought to solve the race problem 'through Art plus Gladys Bentley'.[4] His seemingly acerbic remark in fact draws attention to how the Renaissance constituted itself as a particular *public*, to use Michael Warner's term, where discursive and artistic practices converged with the political project of black emancipation. Defined as such,

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[3] My summary of the constitutive events of the Renaissance is indebted to Cheryl A. Wall's (2016) introduction to the movement.

[4] Bentley was a talented piano player and blues singer who performed in men's clothing in gay speakeasies and clubs in Harlem; her voice was distinguished by 'characteristic interplay of a throaty alto with her improvisational trumpet-like notes that seemed to pop out of the top of her head' (Wilson 2010: 185).

not only did the Harlem Renaissance produce various 'modes of address, style, and spaces of circulation' (Warner 2005: 117), but it emerged from 'local acts of reading or scenes of speech' while reaching out to the 'general horizon of public opinion' (ibid.: 116). As Warner (ibid.: 16) explains his term, 'Publics are essentially intertextual, frameworks for understanding texts against an organized background of the circulation of other texts', not only by interweaving views and opinions to highlight public debate, but also by reflecting on the system behind circulation and production of knowledge. Vis-à-vis the silence about black experience in both the white press and the official annals of historiography, the artistic scenes and cultural platforms under the auspices of the Harlem Renaissance constituted themselves as distinctly African American to fill this void. The Renaissance-produced anthologies, journal issues, exhibitions and popular shows were collective undertakings, organized on a call-and-response model to be able to mediate black cultural achievements to diverse audiences.

Of further importance in Hughes's humorous remark is his blending of new art with Gladys Bentley, as her artistic career illuminates the countercultural aspect of the Renaissance. A lesbian club performer and a cross-dresser by necessity, to secure a job as a pianist within the male-dominated profession, Bentley began her career as a pianist in the late 1920s, 'playing the rent party circuit' (Wilson 2010: 155). 'Performing in her trademark white tuxedo', she made a name for herself by 'taking popular, mainstream songs and substituting the lyrics with her own off-color treatment' (ibid.). By the mid-1930s she was headlining at Harlem's Ubangi Club, described in the *New York Times* (1936: 11) as 'not only a fixture at' the club 'but a figure in the community'. Notorious for flirting with women in the audience, she drew large audiences partly because of the subversive appeal of her irreverent lyrics and partly because of her famed growling voice and daring piano compositions. In this context, Hughes's comment recognizes Bentley's success in creating her own cultural expression and a distinct social position for herself, which were both productive and disruptive. Bentley, the cultural phenomenon, suggests that the Harlem Renaissance encompassed not only publics but also the speech acts and positionality typical of *counterpublics*. Although a counterpublic is generally associated with an oppositional stance, foundational to its dynamics is not primarily its mode of protest but its capacity to 'mark itself off' against the 'cultural horizon' of the majority and challenge 'the hierarchy among media' (Warner 2005: 119). To view the Renaissance through the prism of its particular *publics* requires an account of how they constituted themselves in response to the movement's marginalization by cultural and state

politics. To widen this view further means considering how its *counterpublics* organized themselves in response to the hierarchies that defined expressive forms and controlled artistic production and circulation. These twin positionalities clearly affected the aesthetic and material practices central to the Renaissance practitioners' self-definition.

Alexander Gumby: A historiographer and book maker

In singling out Bentley, Hughes draws attention to an aesthetic practice and a subject position that enabled alternative agents within the Renaissance to make significant contributions. Alexander Gumby (1886–1961) was one such flamboyant personality in the midst of the Harlem artistic crowd, known as 'a bibliophile, amateur historian, social butterfly and proprietor of a well-known salon' – the Gumby Book Studio, on Fifth Avenue, 131st Street, in Harlem (Nugent 2002: 223). As an openly homosexual black man, Gumby, or the Count as he was known, channelled his desire to transcend the social limitations of his doubly-disadvantageous position into a 'fast life of the bohemian' (ibid.) through a life-long patronage of the arts, which he fulfilled by amassing a substantive collection of rare books and more than 300 hand-made, folio-size scrapbooks, each of about 100 pages, devoted to black history, culture and the arts. Both the rare books and the scrapbooks were on display in the Book Studio for its guests and visitors, with the scrapbooks incorporating news clippings, photographs, letters, theatre programmes, reviews and essays as well as whole issues or parts of literary journals. These records of black modernity are carefully assembled to give a sense of a collective undertaking and capture the impact of an unfolding cultural field.[5]

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[5] In her article 'Otherwise Lost or Forgotten: Collecting Black History in L. S. Alexander Gumby's "Negroana" Scrapbooks', Kristin Gilger (2015: 124, note 2) notes that while 'Gumby is generally acknowledged as an interesting personality within surveys of the period', 'his scrapbooks are not well studied'. Her bibliography references the 'Gumby Book Studio' entry in *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*, Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, eds (New York: Routledge, 2004): 1: 455–6; an entry on 'Gumby Book Studio Quarterly' in *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Literary Renaissance: The Essential Guide to the Lives and Works of the Harlem Renaissance Writers*, Lois Brown, ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2006): 207–8; and the entry 'Levi Sandy Alexander Gumby' in *Harlem Renaissance Lives: From the African American National Biography*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, eds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 230–2. In her discussion, Gilger (ibid.: 111) shows how Gumby's use of 'collage aesthetics' in his scrapbooks contributed to 'the making of African American modernity'.

The visual design of the collection projects quality and exhibition value, which made the scrapbooks well known in Harlem for their exquisite artisan design and the masterful and purposeful framing of the material. Gumby's approach to layout and composition bears all the hallmarks of curation, 'honor[ing] clippings through elaborate presentation' and displaying 'marvels of frame making, full of pockets and envelopes for a reader to explore' (Garvey 2012: 162).[6] Invitations to exhibit his scrapbooks during various black history weeks in Philadelphia, Boston and New York City recognized the collection's salient exhibition value. Carter G. Woodson, the editor of the *Journal of Negro History* and one of the founders of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, wrote a personal letter to Gumby on 4 January 1929 to invite him 'to the now well established annual observance of Negro History week', commending Gumby for his work to compensate for actions not taken in some areas of public life (CMI [abbreviation for custom-made acid-free clam-shell type] Box 41, 'Scrapbook 11: Book Reviews, Part II').[7] The opportunity to tour and exhibit his collection created a further incentive for Gumby to think of his scrapbooks as visual artefacts aimed at the general public.

The collection's archival qualities are salient not only in the materials' scope but also in Gumby's occasional instructions to his readers on how to handle them.[8] His ultimate vision was clearly for his scrapbooks to be perused and studied for research purposes. In the essay accompanying his donation of the collection to the Special Collection of Butler Library at Columbia University, Gumby (1952: 23) notes that his archive is intended 'for serious historical research' as well as advancing book-making craftsmanship.

The Gumby Book Studio clearly constituted a space where thought and practice informed each other, serving as a gathering point for its participants

[6] Ellen Gruber Garvey (2012: 163), a book historian, explains how Gumby 'pasted clippings onto special heavy brown paper, made frames for them of leather-grained bookbinder's tape, and wrote identifications for them on cards engraved "Gumby Scrap Book". He had some specially bound and stamped on the spine with titles in gold … Some volumes push assertion of his importance as a compiler past even the spine stamping and engraved cards. He sometimes included his own homoerotic Ex Libris bookplate, featuring three scantily clad men sporting with a book.'

[7] All references to the individual scrapbooks appear in the text indicated by their number in the catalogue of the Butler Library's *Alexander Gumby Collection of Negroiana*, MS#0527. The references include an archival-storage box number as well as the referenced scrapbook's title and number in the collection.

[8] In 'Scrapbook 21: Countee Cullen', a pocket for the November 1924 issue of *The Bookman* is superimposed on news and poetry clippings. The pocket's corner is marked with a hand-drawn arrow and note, 'Please buckle'. In another instance, an envelope with clippings of ads for runaway slaves carries a lengthy instruction: 'Notice: Handle with care in removing and returning to packet. Don't force—go slow' ('Scrapbook 89: The Negro in Bondage').

to address, connect and reach out to the general public. Compiled in part from the contributions of the Harlem collective and designed to invite broader public use, the scrapbook collection defined the rationale for the Studio's social mission to provide a platform for distinct 'acts of reading and scenes of speech' (Warner 2005: 116). More concretely, the Studio's social activities included poetry readings, musical events, art exhibitions and musical recitals for school students, tea parties for society debutantes and meetings of the Ladies Progressive Club and the black college students' fraternity the Scrollers' Club, to mention a few. The Studio's social standing clearly exceeded that of a traditional society salon or coterie to encompass a variety of discourse publics and textual practices.[9] While furnished originally for entertaining friends, it became a workspace 'in which to master the art of making scrapbooks' (Gumby 1952: 21). Hosting his friends

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[9] 'Scrapbook 36: The Gumby Studio, No. 2' contains posters, programmes and news items about events hosted by the Gumby Studio as well as requests from schools to host students' recitals, art balls and exhibitions, among other activities. Among the recorded events are musical recitals (by John Perry and Andrew Perkins in March 1928; by David R. Auld's violin students with Carmen Shepperd's piano students in May 1930), dramatic readings of poetry (by T. Thomas Fortune Fletcher and Richard Jefferson in December 1929; by Willis E. Branch in February 1930), an exhibition by the Art Students' Club (October 1929), Sunday afternoon teas hosted by young women's clubs of debutantes and a Musical Tea event (November 1929) organized by the young men's Scrollers' Club (the Delta chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi college fraternity for black students, whose objective was to stimulate fellowship among the pledges of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity and promote the intellectual, social and moral welfare of its members). In a thank-you letter to the Gumby Studio, the Scrollers' Club members write that they 'would be very pleased to know that you accept our whole learned thankfulness for your kind help in everything to make our affair more successful, and for permitting us the use of your energetic man – a man who looked out for, upheld, and kept the interest of his race and their doings where the whole world can see and read, at any time … The atmosphere of this unique studio was enjoyed by all our guests and friends. Not only were they pleased with our entertainment, but many of them who had visited your delightful studio for the first time, were surprised, even astonished, to know that in their race they had such a conscientious and diligent documentarian' ('Scrapbook 36'). Some records of the events demonstrate the historiographic potentialities of Gumby's collection. One record leads straight through to New York in the twenty-first century – a recent permanent exhibition, 'New York at Its Core', which opened in November 2016 at the Museum of the City of New York, contains a story about the 'Cotton Sculpture' dolls designed by Bermuda-born New Yorker Ruby Bailey (1912–2003). The twenty-nine fashion 'Manikins' in the collection 'are not only unique representations of animation and balance, but they provide compelling insights into her creative vision at a time when the "Black is Beautiful" ethos ignited her 1960s Harlem community'. (See Phyllis Magidson and Chris Piazza, 'Resuscitating Ruby's Dolls', 17 April 2017, in *Stories: Behind-the Scenes* catalogue, https://www.mcny.org/story/resuscitating-rubys-dolls.) However, the story of Ruby Bailey and her public discovery in 2004 begins in Gumby's scrapbooks. Gumby's record of the Art Students' Club art exhibition (October 1929) preserves the first public mention of Ruby Bailey's distinguished talent. A clipping from the *New York Amsterdam News* (26 November 1930) contains a review of the exhibition, 'Students' Exhibit Begins at Gumby's'. The reviewer, signed only as T. T. F., identifies among the 'bright spots in the exhibit … the pastels of Edna Rabouin, the pen-and-ink sketches of Bernie Robynson and the charcoal and pastel studies of Ruby Bailey … Miss Bailey's charcoal study of Mr. Gumby, director of the Gumby Studio, and her pastel, "Doris," are worthy of special notice and commendation' ('Scrapbook 36'). See also the story of the curation and restoration of Bailey's designs, https://www.nyxt.nyc/museum-city-ny/new-york-at-its-core-ruby-bailey.

in Harlem meant that 'friends in turn brought their friends who brought their friends, *regardless of race or color* – those who were seriously interested in arts and letters', making the Studio 'a rendezvous for intellectuals, musicians, and artists'; in fact, 'the first *unpremeditated interracial* movement in Harlem' (ibid.: 21–2, emphasis added). Gumby's hospitality and cultural activism increased the Studio's outreach. He became known for his habit of surprising his visitors by 'pull[ing] an enormous ledger-sized book from a shelf and [informing] you that it is devoted to *you* and *your* doings' (Aubrey Bowser, 'Book Review: A Negro Documentarian', *New York Amsterdam News*, 13 August 1930, in CMI Box 65: 'Scrapbook 35: The Gumby Studio, No. 1', emphasis added).

It is clear that Gumby's collecting practice and book-making techniques were guided by historiographic aims. While travelling across America and Canada to visit public libraries and study 'various methods of compiling and mounting scrapbook material', Gumby also scoured second-hand bookshops for rare books as well as old print materials to use as items for his scrapbooks (Gumby 1952: 21). His collection of rare books and old manuscripts included the original copy of Phyllis Wheatley's poems, the complete collections of Toussaint L'Ouverture and nineteenth-century editions commemorating Crispus Attucks and Frederick Douglass's writings, according to one reviewer. The volume he was most proud of was the original English publication of John Ogilby's *Africa*, from 1670, which he displayed for the benefit of students of history, who 'may delve into [its] musty yellow pages' to experience history (Nell Occomy, *New York Amsterdam News*, 13 April 1929, in 'Scrapbook 35').

The rare-book collection upholds Gumby's historiographic aim to record the first eruptions of black experience into European historical consciousness. Wheatley was the first published black poet, whose prominence is recorded in Arthur A. Schomburg's 1916 bibliographical checklist of black poetry in the United States and across the Americas, *American Negro Poetry*. Schomburg (1916) concludes the list of 236 titles with a ten-page bibliography of Wheatley's publications, stretching from 1770 to 1915. Toussaint L'Ouverture was also a first in being a black general and the leader of the Haitian anti-colonial revolution. Crispus Attucks was a black stevedore who became the first casualty in the Boston Massacre (1770), remembered as the first to die in the American Revolution. Memorialized in poetry, popular literature, historiography and painting, his fate made him into a political martyr for the Abolitionist movement and a figurehead for the American colonists' pursuit of independence. In the collection, Attucks's significance matches that of Frederick

Douglass, a writer who narrativized his experience of escaping slavery and, as a published author, strengthened the public impact of the Abolitionists' fight to end the Atlantic slave trade. Finally, John Ogilby's monumental *Africa* (1670) stands out by virtue of its age as the first guide to the African continent for an English-speaking readership. Ogilby's book was an early-modern translation of the first European writings about Africa collected in Olfert Dapper's Dutch publication, which is credited with introducing the continent's geography and topography to Europeans and providing descriptions of African societies and cultures. Dapper's seventeenth-century compilation of travellers' accounts and Ogilby's translation and reproduction of its maps and road atlases marked the beginning of the European representation of Africa. In sum, Gumby's collection of rare books reflects not only his sense of the importance of beginnings in historiography, but also his motivation to record the eruption of black modernity in his own time.

From commonplace books to scrapbooks: Mounting displays of knowledge

Historically, the scrapbook as an information-gathering practice and a book technology derives its identity from the early-modern practice of commonplace books. Commonplace books existed originally as manuscripts of handwritten quotations and, later, as compilations of printed cut-and-pasted citations. These formats included some form of commentary or annotation, leading compilers to develop, further down the line, elaborate systems of inserting slips or recycling textual samples by cutting and pasting them from disused published sources or manuscripts no longer in circulation (Blair 2010). These early-modern practices, Ann Blair explains, have stayed in use as compositional shortcuts, even as compilation practices acquired additional functions, for instance when:

> scholars and writers cut and pasted from their manuscript notes and drafts to compose publication and lectures. Some also cut passages from printed books to insert into their notes, letters, or compositions … In the nineteenth century, scrapbooks – and starting ca. 1900, clipping services – cut out passages from the ephemeral cheap print of newspapers and magazines. Until recently, cutting and pasting was not a metaphor for the process of selecting and reusing a passage but referred quite literally to a physical activity that parlayed the relative cheapness of print into avoiding the labor and inaccuracy of copying. William

> Smellie, who compiled the bulk of the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*
> (three volumes, 1768–7) … 'used to say jocularly, that he had made a Dictionary
> of Arts and Sciences with a *pair of scissors*, clipping out from various books a
> *quantum sufficit* of matter for the printer,' … [which] now echoes metaphorically
> the activities of writers who had glue and scissors in their tool kit alongside
> paper, pen, and ink.
>
> <div align="right">(Ibid.: 228)</div>

The history of composing with scissors, of recontextualizing print materials
for anthologizing or creating new narrative constellations, places Gumby's
scrapbook-making in the long tradition of knowledge compilations. In scope
and ambition it equals encyclopedias, dictionaries and reference books,
comparable to one of the earliest comprehensive compilations of knowledge,
namely the Swiss humanist scholar Theodor Zwinger's encyclopedia, *Theatrum
vitae humanae* ('The Life of Man' (1575)). Gumby's method of narrativization,
in contrast, draws on the approach of commonplace books where compiling is
driven by thematic concerns rather than authorial attribution. A famous case in
point is Francis Meres's *Pallas Tamia* (*Pallas Housewife: Wits Treasury* (1598)),
which was first to circulate some of Shakespeare's sonnets a decade before they
were printed, albeit in a different narrative context.

These forms of compilation evolved to manage and preserve vast quantities
of quotations, bibliographical references and other kinds of textual material.
Significantly, compilers did not simply recycle what they found, but actively
'selected, summarized, sorted, and presented textual material to facilitate its
use by others' (Blair 2010: 175). In other words, the forerunners of the modern
compilers 'were never simple copyists' (ibid.: 176). Instead, they 'transformed
the material as they disseminated it' by 'grouping the excerpts under headings
or topical chapters', by creating 'parallels between passages from different
authors and contexts and invit[ing] interpretations focused on thematic
parallels that might differ from the thrust of the passage in its original context'
(ibid.). Consistent with the early-modern compositional practices used in
commonplace books, Gumby adopts transposition as a way to achieve thematic
coherence and social purpose – a method that came to define the collection's
aesthetic distinctness and cultural specificity. To read Gumby's scrapbooks
means attending to how his historiographic undertaking transforms collecting
into an archival practice.

The dynamic and fluid structure of Gumby's collection might appear to be
in conflict with the qualities of permanence or finality we associate with an

archive.[10] In describing how the collection's structure came about, he emphasized that his primary concern was how to accommodate the collection's growth while juggling a 'vast amount of miscellaneous material'.[11] He decided to 'classify' it into groups, to enable him to interfile 'new material' and keep up with the unfolding art scene and his subjects as they developed over time (Gumby 1952: 20–1). A 'looseleaf method' of composition gave his collection a structure more fluid than the traditional form of the bound scrapbook, even though it involved a continuous painstaking process of 'remounting the material'. Moreover, the interfiling method and the loose-page format allowed Gumby, further down the line, to reconceive the collection's overall structure. His initial division of the African American material into 'master subjects', each chronologically arranged, had to be replaced with a further subdivision into chapters, which in turn became 'separate books' (ibid.: 21). The books, being unbound, could grow to encompass decades and the topics could be developed in any number of constellations. In the end, this structure offered an open-ended framing of the material, opening its records to revisions of time and the possibility of historical resonance with its future readers.

The particularity of black modernity in America becomes recoverable in the way the collection's form captures the dynamics and cultural architecture of the movement's self-definition. Given the complex class affiliations and class sympathies within the Renaissance, Gumby's aspiration to give his material a refined, bohemian frame reflects the conflicting impulses within the movement to reject class snobbery while subtly embracing bourgeois sensibilities. The scrapbooks' gilded titles and elaborate designs imbue the collection with the refined tenor of the bohemian class, projecting at the same time the kind of care and agency we associate with the creative effort of a speaking subject, whose creativity needs to be understood not merely as labour, to use Hannah Arendt's (1998) characterization, but as work and action. The apparent showiness of the design actively signals the scrapbooks' intended status of belonging to cultural heritage, challenging the lazy definition of black culture as popular entertainment and the notion that black culture lacks gentility and refinement.

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[10] In a review in the *New York Times*, Geaney Garrott, 'Negro History in Scrapbooks', 27 December 1927, notes that the variety of records and materials Gumby exhibits make 'the "book studio" resemble a miniature museum' ('Scrapbook 35').

[11] In the beginning, while living and studying in Delaware and Philadelphia, he amassed a 'collection of clippings' that was already 'overflowing' by the time he moved to New York and added to his collecting passion 'all the playbills, pictures, and clippings' about Broadway when he became an avid theatre-goer (Gumby 1952: 20).

Arendt's distinction between labour and work bears a further elaboration in relation to Gumby, in particular her definition of human creativity as action. Creativity, she argues, involves courage to disclose oneself as a subject, to 'distinguish [oneself] instead of being merely distinct' (ibid.: 176) and to speak up 'as a distinct and unique being among equals' (ibid.: 178). The aspiration to act as an autonomous individual, regardless how entangled we are in the 'already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions', requires addressing oneself to the general public, for action alone 'almost never achieves its purpose' (ibid.: 184). Only public utterance makes action real, because:

> it 'produces' stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things. These stories may then be recorded in documents and monuments, they may be visible in use objects or art works, they may be told and retold and worked into all kinds of material. They themselves, in their living reality … tell us more about their subjects, the 'hero' in the center of each story, than any product of human hands ever tells us about the master who produced it.
>
> (Ibid.)

In other words, to Arendt, subjects solidify their agency in words, stories and public address – the ways of raising one's voice to the level of public discourse.

Arendt's ascription of the reality-making potential of public speech draws attention to Gumby's scrapbooking as a textual space of action. The collection's social import lies not in overt political alignments but in understanding politics as a space of both collectivity and fierce contestation, emerging not only from 'the joy and the gratification that arise out of being in company with our peers, out of acting together and appearing in public, out of inserting ourselves into the world by word and deed', but equally from the sore struggle on 'a battlefield of partial, conflicting interests, where nothing is counted but pleasure and profit, partisanship, and the lust of domination' (Arendt 2005: 313). Gumby's assembling of his collection and the activities of the Book Studio encompass the pain and pleasure of contemporaneous politics, manifesting the 'embodied creativity' and 'world-making' potential of the textual public that the collection came to constitute (Warner 2002: 54) – self-organized in its constitution, dynamic in its participation and open-ended in its accretion, bound intimately to the cultural dynamics of Harlem as a capital of modern African American life.

By repurposing existing cultural forms, the collection itself became a cultural form of a distinct kind. In documenting collaborations among artists, publishers and public intellectuals, Gumby's collection shared the period's conviction about 'the social potential of new art' to reach out to broader audiences, the conviction that transformed the practice of collecting into a form of social action and political agency (Braddock 2012: 3). While art collecting became 'a means of addressing the work of art to the public, of modelling and creating the conditions of modernism's reception' (ibid.), Gumby's focus on documenting the reception of the Renaissance was another significant step towards delineating an emerging cultural field. Jeremy Braddock's study showed how the modernist collection worked as 'a *provisional institution*, a mode of public engagement figuring future – and often more democratic (although the meaning of this word would be contentious) – relationship between audience and artwork' (ibid.). Braddock's analysis can be extended to Gumby's collection to argue that it too possesses the transformational potency of interventionist forms of collecting, and that its underlying drive was not simply to '*identify* but perhaps more accurately to *interpellate* collective formations', which further affirms 'the aesthetic and social agency of the modernist cultural project' (ibid.: 16). Viewed as a provisional institution, Gumby's collection might seem to fall short of the work of anthology compilations, which were intended to formalize black art as a sociopolitical category, an aesthetic tradition and a cultural expression grounded in black experience. But, significantly, Gumby's scrapbook archive allows us to map collaborations behind the work of anthologizing as well as to trace records of the public sites of anthologies' reception and private sites of reading, and to place anthologies in the context of the actual networks and efforts that went into their making.[12]

On a rare occasion of Gumby stepping into the limelight, he includes a review of his work extolling the public and cultural agency of the documentarian. The reviewer commends the critical efforts of his fellow Harlemite collectors to document the Renaissance, emphasizing how the determination of 'the documentarian, whose patient and unselfish labors fertilize the soul from which grow the flowers of history and letters' in fact sustains the public work of every literary author (Aubrey Bowser, 'A Negro Documentarian', *New York*

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[12] As a provisional institution, Gumby's collection captures the variety of positions among the contributors and compilers of anthologies, reflecting how each was guided by a distinctive conception of black art and its production, form and purpose.

Amsterdam News, 13 August 1930; in 'Scrapbook 35'). In Harlem this work is done in the service of a new culture, preserving for the future the few existing and widely dispersed records of black history and black cultures across the globe. As Bowser puts it, 'Negro letters especially have suffered from the lack of adequate documentation':

> Much priceless information has been carelessly destroyed and much more is lying about in odd corners of the world, waiting to be found. But so much time and work must be expended to find it that it will never be unearthed unless someone can give his whole energy to the task. In recent years several gleaners, notably Arthur Schomburg, have gathered large collections of books and prints about the Negro; but *there are many scattered and fugitive things that cannot be found without a systematic and concentrated search*.
>
> <div align="right">(Ibid., emphasis added)</div>

Poignantly, he acclaims Gumby as the best manifestation of how such energy can acquire cultural force. Gumby is 'a man whose specialty is the gathering of these bits and putting them together'. He 'has toiled' for twenty-two years, 'patiently assembling clippings, prints, documents, books and letters, and preserving them in scrapbooks … producing a complete history of the Negro in scrapbook form'. Aspiration to strive for completeness reflects the collector's ambition and effort, while Gumby's sense of urgency also channels a shared cultural sense of the need to contextualize the current surge of black cultural achievements historically so as to secure formally their resonance with the future.

At the hub of the emergent African American art scene

Cosmopolitan longings

Gumby's practices of collecting, archiving and curating served to capture the movement temporally, as 'currently unfolding in a sphere of activity' (Warner 2002: 96). Reading closely a few particular pages from the scrapbook titled 'The Gumby Studio' helps demonstrate how the Studio and the archive performed three interconnected functions: constituting a discourse *public* to advance social change; serving as *a provisional institution* to highlight formal innovations across the arts; and providing access to a research *archive* to spread new historical awareness. Characteristically, 'The Gumby Studio' scrapbook connects the African American art scene to the art movements in the European metropolitan

centres, opening it to continental artistic flows. A pair of facing pages juxtapose two events: a dramatist's programme for setting up an experimental theatre in New York, inspired by his European sojourn, and a news item about an African American artist's return from Europe, pronouncing that the artist's expressionist style has been repatriated to its original source. Gumby's juxtaposition of these two events points to the ongoing transposition of the expressionist aesthetic to America.

The verso page carries a clipping with a published manifesto by David Sturgis, which announces his plan for the opening of the new Universal Theater in New York. Sturgis, clearly an aspiring theatre director and playwright, pronounces death to the old Broadway stage and the old Hollywood screen and declares the new Universal Theatre is to be 'the meeting place of the people' and 'the institution of the poet', because the 'rights of the poet are the rights of the people'; 'Everybody, everything, must be born again.' The manifesto also includes a plan for its future epically-named productions: '"Civilization," a smashing indictment of modern society; "Vengeance," which lays bare the sadism of the Puritan; "Hell and Damnation," a terrible exposure of the white man in the Orient; "Negro World," a tragedy of a beautiful soul in an ugly environment' ('Scrapbook 35').

The recto page features a series of news clippings about a promising young artist, William H. Johnson, and his return from a three-year painting tour in France, Germany and Italy. One news item, from September 1929, advertises the upcoming exhibition of three of Johnson's paintings in the Gumby Studio. Other items record the public reception of Johnson's return to New York, hailing his celebration of black experience in paint and his distinct Expressionist style as shaped by the urban settings of Harlem, its street musicians, cafés and street life. The overall collection of clippings documents the public valuation of Johnson's style in terms of its modernist qualities of directness, firmness, vigour and spontaneity. In Gumby's treatment, Sturgis and Johnson exemplify the transposition of European modernism to America, and to Harlem in particular, allowing him to map two broad directionalities in the arts of the period: Sturgis's radical avant-garde vision of a theatre for the people (possibly unrealized, as I found no further records of the plan coming to fruition), and Johnson's accomplished and publicly recognized refraction of the cosmopolitan style through African American vernacular expressions of modernity.

The subsequent page clusters continue to map the making of Harlem as a black cultural capital. A group of clippings cover a public spat between two writers and researchers, Arthur Schomburg and Frank Byrd, in the *Inter-State*

Tattler (29 August 1930) about the originality of two mid-nineteenth-century theatre playbills pertaining to the career of the famous African American tragedian Ira Aldridge (1807–1867): one playbill exhibited at the New York Public Library (135th Street branch), the other held in Gumby's collection. In his published reply, Gumby clarifies the misunderstanding about the playbills in his collection, affirming that the Studio possesses five original playbills, one of which is, indeed, a London playbill of Ira Aldridge as Othello, dated 1827. But Gumby also refocuses the debate to emphasize the importance of the history of black theatre and the significance of Schomburg's reference to the African Company's production of Shakespeare's plays at the old Mercer Street Theatre, New York City.[13]

Participating in the debate allows him to clarify what motivates his own collection. It is not pride over possessing a few rare fragments, which would be 'bigotry or dogmatic order', but a kind of 'self-encouragement and an urge to go on with the work of unearthing records of the doings of our forebears who were and still are truly great' (*Inter-State Tattler*, 5 September 1930; in 'Scrapbook 35'). Grace Lynn's review of Gumby's theatrical scrapbooks, which follows the cluster, echoes Gumby's intentions, recognizing the historiographic value of his theatre collection. 'If the student requires stage data [for the Broadway classics] from 1833 down to John Barrymore, Gumby has it', she writes, adding that one particularly rare playbill in Gumby's collection honours the pioneers of black theatre – a mid-nineteenth-century all-black-cast burlesque show, 'Laughable Extravaganza entitled Buffalo Gals, or Da Real Translanticum Etiopicum Serenadicums', dated from 1847 (*Theatre Guild Magazine*, December 1930; in 'Scrapbook 35').

Two following pages in Scrapbook 35 support Lynn's critical acclaim. The verso page exhibits an autographed portrait of Leigh Whipper, signed 'To Mr. Gumby from Leigh Whipper, Porgy Co.' (dated '1928'), which is juxtaposed, on the recto page, with two communications to Gumby from Whipper: the actor's postcard signed '*His Majesty's Theatre*, London' and his letter from London (dated '5/5/29'), both reporting *Porgy*'s success with British critics and viewers.

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[13] The African Company was the very first official all-black theatre troupe, led by Henry Brown, who founded the African Grove Theatre. The company opened its first season in 1821, six years before the abolition of slavery in New York state, with a production of *Richard III* at the Grove Theatre, which became known as the venue for the then-teenage Ira Aldridge's debut. Aldrige later became one of the company's leading performers before he departed for London.

Two histories coalesce in Whipper's memorabilia: the history of African Americans' union organizing and the groundbreaking Broadway success of DuBose Heyward and Dorothy Heyward's play *Porgy: A Play in Four Acts* (1927), which at the time toured successfully nationally and internationally.[14] Gumby records Whipper's success as the Crab Man in the original 1927 production of *Porgy*, whose eponymous character is a disabled black slum-dweller trying to rescue his friend Bess from cruel men. The 1927 all-African-American-cast production premiered at the Theatre Guild in New York City, running for fifty-five weeks until 1929, and then toured the United States and Canada twice. Whipper's postcard from His Majesty's Theatre and his letter to Gumby from London mark the production's international tour, when the play was performed in London for eleven consecutive weeks. After that momentous year of *Porgy*'s success, Leigh Whipper joined the Actors' Equity Association labour union as its first African American member, and went on to become one of the founders of the Negro Actors Guild of America in 1936. In Gumby's *Porgy* constellation, this history of unionizing emerges strongly as a future context. The overlapping geographical, temporal and cultural loops in Gumby's theatre constellation make *Porgy*'s popularity resonate with the historic significance of nineteenth-century African American theatre productions. His coverage offers a reflection on how the exponents of the black vernacular culture 'achieved international recognition as bearers of a distinctly' African American culture 'that was also modern [and] American' (Nowlin 2005: 319).

The role of art in defining black Manhattan as an emerging hub of black modernity is discussed with intensity in other clusters containing personal letters to Gumby. One letter from a Captain Jean Baptiste van Rossum Shiffer (dated from 1930) is paired with a Post-Impressionist painting that features a dancing black female form, curving upwards along the flowing pattern of a colourful collage in the background. The painting, 'Impressions of a Negro Spiritual Dance', is signed by 'J. B. V. R. S.' – presumably the letter writer, van Rossum Shiffer. In the letter, the aspiring artist lays out a plan for the first All-Black Academy of Fine Arts and Crafts – the idea that came to him after

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[14] The story of the play's Broadway production was remarkable on many levels. Several young writers, such as Bruce Nugent, Wallace Thurman and Dorothy West, were hired in the 1927 production, and some remained in 'the extended Broadway run' as well as in 'the subsequent tour of dozens of cities, culminating in a trip to England in the spring of 1929', closing 'late in January 1930, after a run of more than two years' (Wirth 2002: 15).

attending the Gumby Studio the day before. Eager to promote the 'young talents in Harlem' in their study and work, van Rossum Shiffer promises to devote himself 'free of charge' to the project, 'as often as [he] can – at least twice a week'. The details of his plan include obtaining 'the use of some Hall or School auditorium free of charge for our classes and with the aid of some of the folks that we are blessed with the necessary "coin of the psalms" to equip the Academy'. The young artist's fervent tone and the painting he gifted to Gumby speak volumes of the younger generation's talent, ambition and hope. Their enthusiasm led to the formation of the Harlem Artists Guilt in 1935 and the creation of the Harlem Community Art Center in 1937.[15] Van Rossum Shiffer's aspirations also pay off eventually, as six years later his name resurfaces as a professional illustrator for a published work.[16] Gumby's mementos capture the pull of the Harlem art scene and the energy its experimental ethos provided for the younger participants' creativity.

Scaling the literary scene

Apart from its extensive records on the cross-fertilization of ideas in the arts, the collection highlights the centrality of literature to the emerging modern culture. Gumby devotes a series of scrapbooks to book reviews of newly published works, and also compiles scrapbooks focused on individual writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar ('Scrapbook 26'), Frederick Douglass ('Scrapbook 24'), Wallace Thurman, Jean Toomer and Claude McKay ('Scrapbook 128'), Countee Cullen ('Scrapbook 21') and Langston Hughes ('Scrapbook 43'), to note a few. One particular record he preserves in his Studio guestbook ('Scrapbook 38') documents a singular literary event held at the Gumby Book Studio. A three-hour reception following the poet Countee Cullen's return from a two-year stay in Paris was organized to celebrate the release of Cullen's book of poetry, *The Black Christ and Other Poems* (1929), which he wrote on his European sojourn. A clipping from the *Amsterdam News* (17 September 1930) notes that Arthur Schomburg created a book of the guests' autographs to mark the event – presumably the actual booklet of autographs Gumby includes in his Studio's guest

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[15] The Art Center was organized under the leadership of Augusta Savage and Gwendolyn Bennett as a part of the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project.

[16] One of his first published projects was illustrating M. P. Munger and A. L. Elder, *The Book of Puppets: Stage Scenery, Puppets and Plays* (Boston, MA: Lothrop Lee and Shepard Books, 1936).

scrapbook.[17] The inserted booklet of autographs, within the overall coverage of the Cullen event and despite the minimalist format of a mini-guestbook, enables the reader to trace the rich history the Gumby archive attempts to document and the outreach of the Book Studio within and beyond Harlem. The uniqueness of the Cullen event record transforms the autographs into nodal points for the stories and histories in Gumby's overall coverage of the Harlem Renaissance. By offering a connection between the individual histories of the gathered audience and their artistic contributions, the guestbook record provides a carbon copy of the world that unfolds through Gumby's scrapbooking.

Most of the attendees' autographs in the guestbook are accompanied by an ink drawing indicating the signatory's artistic, political or intellectual streak. The news clippings about the event are pasted on adjacent pages to detail the full programme and complete list of participants. This format enables Gumby to pull together the resources of the visual and the discursive forms to capture in miniature the collection's twin qualities of exhibition and archive. His combination of the textual with the visual invites us to read the event spatially and temporally, mapping Harlem onto the rich network of the movement's local, national and international cultural alliances. By cross-referencing the attendees' contributions to the arts with the coverage of the art debates in topically adjacent scrapbooks, Gumby recreates, by textual and visual means, the practised space of the movement's self-definition.

While the autographs invoke the gathered artists' physical presence, the accompanying ink drawings signify their intellectual achievements, telling the story of their alliances and creative impact beyond the geographical location of Harlem. The line-up of autographs begins with Countee Cullen's signature next to a drawing of the Crucifixion, which features a muscular black male body slumped on a white cross (Figure 6.1).

The drawing encapsulates the thematic parallel in Cullen's volume between Christ's execution and the physical suffering and violence inflicted on African Americans by the climate of racial hatred in Jim Crow America. The volume's title poem, 'The Black Christ', moves agonistically through dramatic alternations in tone, from euphoric to apocalyptic, to capture the pressure of injustice on the speaker's faith. Sites, apparently disconnected, are evoked simultaneously. The

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[17] Possibly Schomburg's creation, the record of the event and the attendees' autographs appear in 'The Gumby Studio Guest Book: A Registry of Visitors – Friends, Patrons of the Arts, Celebrities to the Gumby Book Studio, Twenty-one-forty-four Fifth Avenue, New York City' (CMI Box 15, 'Scrapbook 38: Gumby Book Studio: Guest Book').
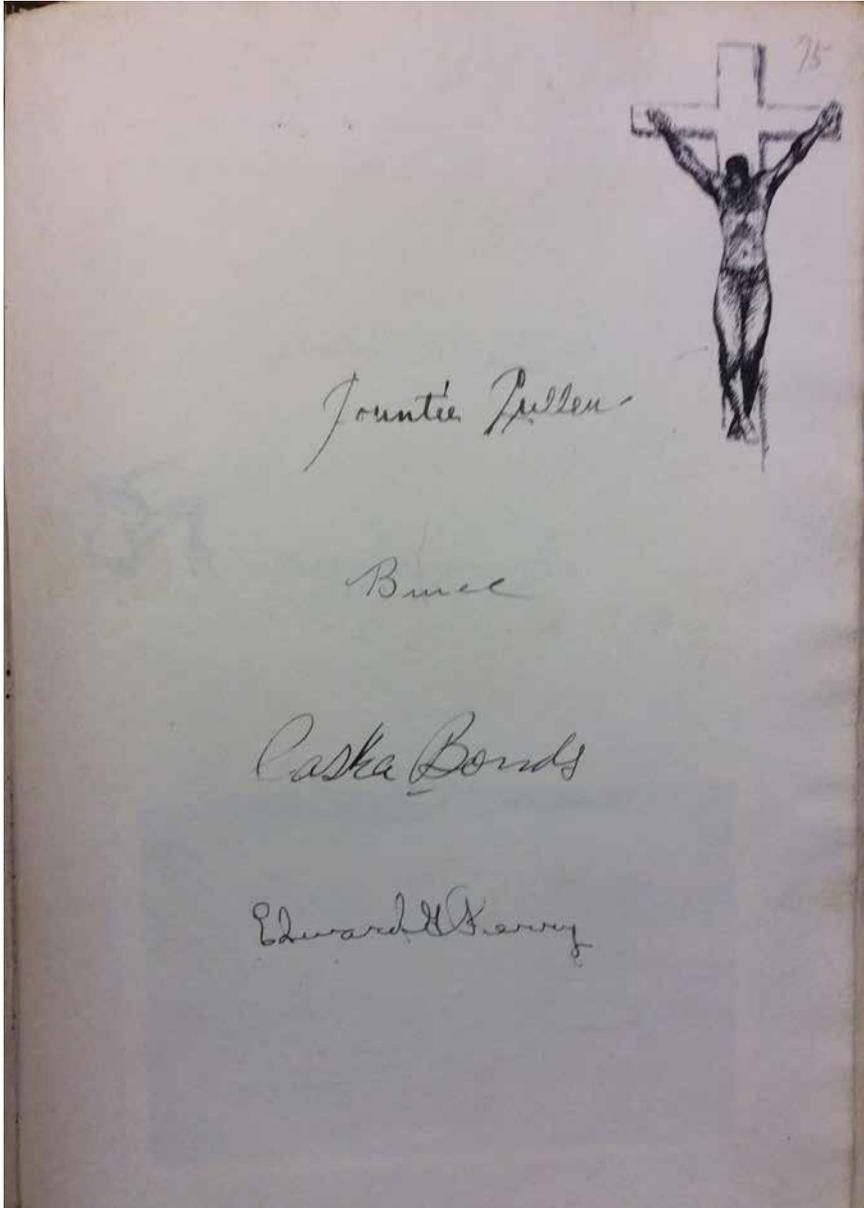
Figure 6.1 Gumby Book Studio guestbook: page signed by Countee Cullen, Richard Bruce Nugent, Caska Bonds and Edward Perry. Rare Book & Manuscript section, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

speaker's voice breaks up into discordant cadences, pitting glory against shame, exaltation against spiritual mire and the sense of empowerment against the urge to self-destruct. The tonal fractures capture the condition of wrestling with the impossible contradiction between faith and violence. In a final sardonically redemptive gesture, the poem rewrites the biblical narrative from the perspective of black experience, where humanity rises again through black stooping and heals collectively through black suffering:

> God's glory and my country's shame,
> And how one man who curse Christ's
>   name
> May never fully expiate
> That crime till at the Blessed Gate
> Of Heaven He meet and Pardon me
> Out of His love and charity,
> How God, who needs no man's applause,
> For love of my stark soul, of flaws
> Composed, seeing it slip, did stoop
> Down to the mire and pick me up,
> And in the hollow of His hand
> Enact again at my command
> The world's supremist tragedy,
> Until I die my burthen be;
> How Calvary in Palestine,
> Extending down to me and mine,
> Was but the first leaf in a line
> Of trees on which a Man should swing
> World without end, in suffering
> For all men's healing, let me sing.

(Cullen 1929: 69)

The vision of the body swinging from a tree encapsulates the despairing scene of the world being absolved, yet again, through suffering. By overlaying the scene of Christ's execution, salvation and final words of redemption with the burning scene of lynching, the poem stages the progress of a doubting soul through questioning its Christian faith towards the act of painful but inevitable sacrifice.

Cullen's guestbook record connects thematically to the drawing attached to Arna Bontempts's signature, which conjures up a similar poetic voice by featuring a grinning skull poised above a snow-clad mountain top and staring into eternity (Figure 6.2).
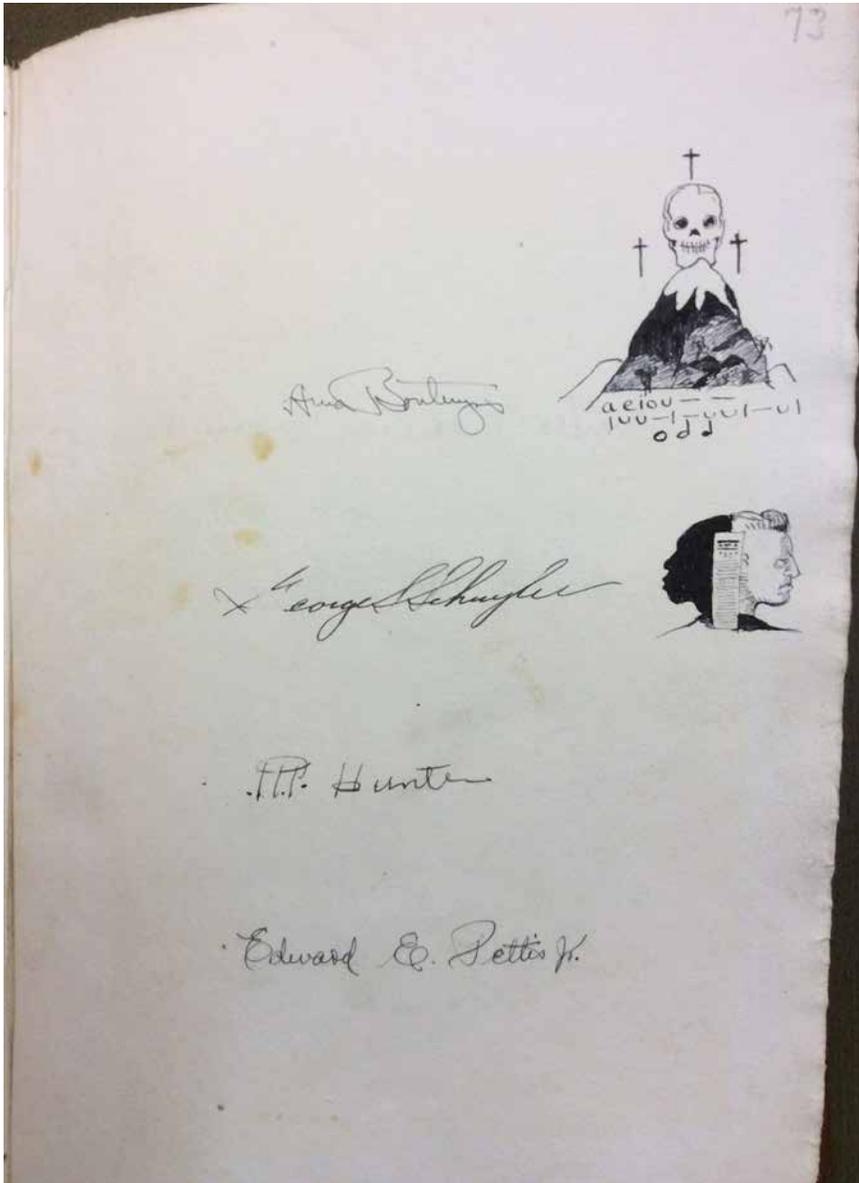
Figure 6.2 Gumby Book Studio guestbook: page signed by Arna Bontempts, George Schuyler, Maurice Hunter and Edward E. Pettis Jr. Rare Book & Manuscript section, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

The three crosses above the skull and the darkness enveloping the mountain slopes evoke twilight. At the mountain foot is a line of a vocal exercise – 'aeiou' – signifying the poet's voice warming up his vowels. Topically, the drawing references Bontemps's prize-winning poem 'Nocturn at Bethesda', which treats the stagnating biblical pool of Bethesda as a poetic figure for spiritual malaise and the disabling condition of body and soul that makes healing impossible:

> This pool that once the angels troubled does
>   not move.
> No angel stirs it now, no Saviour comes
> With healing in his hands to raise the sick
> And bid the lame man leap upon the ground.
>
> The golden days are gone. Why do we
>   Wait
> So long upon the marble steps blood
> Falling from [our] open wounds? And why
> Do our black faces search empty sky?
> Is there something we have forgotten?
>   some precious thing
> We have lost, wandering in strange lands?
> …
> An ancient terror takes my heart, the fear
> Of quiet waters and of falling twilights.
> There will be better days when I am gone
> And healing pools where I cannot be healed.
> Fragrant stars will gleam forever and ever
> Above the place where I lie desolate.
>
> Yet I hope, still I long to live;
> And if there be returning after death
> I shall come back. But it will not be here;
> If you want me you must search for me
> Across the shining dunes, perhaps I shall
> Be following a desert caravan.
>
> I may pass through centuries of death
> With quiet eyes but I'll remember still
> A jungle tree with burning scarlet birds.
> There is something I have forgotten, some
>   Precious thing.

I shall be seeking ornaments of ivory,
I shall be dying for a jungle fruit.

　　You do not hear, Bethesda.
Oh still green water in a stagnant pool
Love abandoned you and me alike.
There was a day you held a rich full moon
Upon your heart and listened to words.
Oh men now dead and saw the angels fly.

There is a simple story on your face;
Years have wrinkled you. I know, Bethesda!
You are sad. It is the same with me.

　　　　　　　(CMI Box 130: 'Scrapbook 101: Negro Poets. Part II')[18]

The biblical pool of Bethesda, where Jesus healed a paralysed man, refers to a place in Jerusalem whose name means 'house of mercy' in Hebrew. In the poem the tables are turned. The pool's water is now stagnant and green, stilled and wrinkled by centuries of death, incapable of stopping the poet's bleeding wounds. Like Cullen, Bontemps dramatizes the loss of faith and the failure of memory and imagination by the impact of fragmented lines, achieved through enjambments. The poem's jagged rhythms replicate the sound and pace of the fractured times, generating the sense of the poet's wounded agony and spiritual doubt, but also his memory's tenacious questioning.

Cullen's and Bontemps's literary careers intersected with the careers of other literary figures who attended the reception: fiction writers, poets, essayists and editors of both short-lived literary journals and well-established magazines and newspapers, both black and white. Some signed the guestbook, others did not, but their names are listed in Gumby's clippings of the news coverage. A younger generation of writers on the scene belonged to the Harlem avant-garde circle, known for their radical critique of the 'New Negro' movement and its emphasis on moral rectitude, hard work, self-control and respectability. Wallace Thurman, 'the enfant terrible of the Harlem Renaissance and the most unsparing critic of his contemporaries (and himself)' (James 2004: 32), was one of the conveners of this group. While his autograph is missing in the guestbook, his name is noted in the event's news coverage; given his cultural work and extensive literary ties with the invitees, his presence is salient to say the least.

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[18] 'Nocturne at Bethesda' won the first *Crisis* prize for poetry in 1926 and was published in the December 1926 issue of *The Crisis* magazine.

Thurman collaborated with Bontemps while both were working as reporter/ columnists in 1922 for a black-owned newspaper in California.[19] Before Thurman moved to Harlem he founded *Outlet*, the magazine that was meant to be a Californian equivalent of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's *The Crisis*. In Harlem he became the editor (1925–1926) of *The Messenger*, a black political and literary magazine dedicated to 'scientific' socialism,[20] where he published Langston Hughes's short stories. After a brief stint at the white-owned *World Tomorrow*, he helped found an African American 'art quarterly' (Nugent 2002: 2) – the literary magazine *Fire!! Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists* (1926), to promote the writing of Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, R. Bruce Nugent, Aaron Douglas and Gwendolyn B. Bennett, among others. In his editorial work and literary writing, Thurman was markedly resistant to reducing black art to propaganda in the name of racial uplift. His position expressed the younger generation's shared sensibility that art should be committed to individuality, everyday experiences and self-understanding of ordinary African Americans, whether culturally sophisticated or conservative, sexually liberated or depraved, carefree or oppressed.

Thurman's editorship (1928) of the magazine *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life* led to his collaboration with George Schuyler, another attendee who signed the guestbook – collaboration that further strengthened Thurman's anti-propagandistic approach to art. In Gumby's coverage of Thurman's literary career in 'Scrapbook 128', he records the reception of the first issue of *Harlem* and highlights the debates it provoked about new developments in the arts, placing reviews with words of high praise next to those of harsh criticism. One review by Aubrey Bowser from 1928 does both. He praises the magazine for continuing Alain Locke's 'New Negro' project and demonstrating 'a wealth of talent, of power and promise in our younger writers. It is a gallant attempt to create a Negro medium which shall exist for art and not be smothered under

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[19] For a more extensive discussion see A. B. Christa Schwartz's (2004) account of Thurman's careers in journalism and literature.

[20] Thurman and Bruce Nugent shared a flat in Harlem for two years, at 267 West 136th Street, and dubbed it 'Niggeratti Manor'. It became a gathering place for young artists. One room was painted in red and black – the colours of the cover of *Fire!!* – and adorned with homoerotic murals painted by Bruce Nugent. As Wirth (2002: 13) puts it: 'They called themselves "the Niggeratti" [Nugent's spelling] – an irreverent take-off on the pretentiously literate white audience for whose enlightenment the older impresarios (Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke) were showcasing African American talent.' Interestingly, Langston Hughes in his autobiography *The Big Sea* rewrites the label as 'Nigerati', a spelling that 'renders the irony more genteel'; Thurman and Nugent's 'spelling self-consciously emphasizes the "ratty" aspects of the group' (ibid.: 273, note 7).

a weight of propaganda.' Yet Bowser also finds the magazine lacking in the way it 'is addressed not to the great mass of the race but to a coterie. Its tone is sophisticated, intellectual; it leans too far towards decadence', while the average reader 'refuses to swear to King Dirt … [and] will never be convinced that dirt is more artistic than decency' (*New York Amsterdam News*, 28 November 1928; CMI Box 157: 'Scrapbook 128: Thurman, Wallace, Jean Toomer and Claude McKay').

Other clippings register the mixed reception of Thurman's novel, *The Blacker the Berry* (Macaulay 1929). A clipping of the publisher's promotion ad describes the novel as treating the Harlem scenes of notorious rent parties with 'wild hilarity and bitter tragedy'. A *New York Times* reviewer, in the adjacent clipping, criticizes the novel for imitating the genteel tradition of white literature, composing objectively from 'the vantage point of Emma Lou's "genteel" brain' but failing 'to dramatize how the world appears to her subjectively' ('Harlem Negros' in *New York Times* Book Review; 'Scrapbook 128'). Another essay by Bowser, titled 'Black Realism' (1929), reads Thurman's novel as a symptom of 'an age of pessimism in literature':

> The authors pass over thousands of Negros who are living bravely, if not happily, and select the sickliest characters they can find … Their books are peopled with cowards, toads, degenerates and plain fools, with hardly a manly or womanly fiber in them … *The Blacker the Berry*, by Wallace Thurman, is a realistic novel, whose general theme is that a black girl might as well have been strangled at birth … There are black girls, many of them, who have triumphantly weathered the storms that sank Emma Lou. We wish the author had chosen one of them.
>
> (*New York Amsterdam News*,
> 13 February 1929; 'Scrapbook 128')

What Bowser identifies as Thurman's decadent pessimism in fact expressed a strand in Renaissance writing that combined poetic sensibilities with satirical and profoundly disillusioned attitudes.

George Schuyler, Thurman's close associate in journalism and literary composition (they worked together for *The Messenger* and collaborated on *Harlem* magazine), shared this sensibility. Like Thurman, Schuyler, writing for both the black and the white press, became an important polemical voice in the media landscape, known for his critical outlook on religion, conventional morality and Prohibition and for his harsh diagnosis of rural America and the South. Like Thurman, Schuyler turned a critical eye to the essentialism of the Harlem Renaissance, mounting harsh criticisms against all forms of cultural

and racial nationalism, be it the racial separatism of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association or the authoritarianism of black leaders, black churches and black advancement organizations.

The growing influence of Schuyler's journalism shapes his record in Gumby's guestbook. To read it, it is necessary to understand the main targets of Schuyler's cultural critique. As he travelled widely in the South to observe and write reports about the relationship between the white and black communities, his critical voice was firmly grounded in social research. The observations he wrote for the Fabian socialist periodical *The Nation* later became his well-known essays 'The Negro-Art Hokum' (1926) and 'Blessed are the Sons of Ham' (1927). His opinion pieces came out regularly in a socially progressive black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, in his long-running 'Views and Reviews' column. Crossing ideological divides, Schuyler collaborated with the famous editor of the liberal-conservative *American Mercury*, H. L. Mencken. One of Schuyler's essays for the *Mercury*, in particular, garnered him wide attention in the national press. Commissioned by Mencken to show 'how the whites look to an intelligent Negro', Schuyler's essay 'Our White Folks' (1927) was reviewed across the country and praised in the black press for 'out-Menckening Mencken' and being a 'masterpiece of sarcasm and Negro psychology'.[21] In the essay, Schuyler (1927: 388) exposes the absurdity of Jim Crow segregation, considering that 'the two people are so intimately associated all day, not to mention at night', and attacks 'the obvious economic waste entailed' in 'a dual school system, Jim-crow railroad coaches and waiting rooms, separate cemeteries, and segregated parks, libraries and street cars' (ibid.: 388). In a classic dialectical move, he reverses the established epistemological hierarchy to argue that the intimate knowledge of the whites of an 'intelligent Aframerican' is rooted in his awareness of the unscientific basis of racial discrimination, the kind of nonsense 'that he cannot help classifying the bulk of Nordics with the inmates of an insane asylum' (ibid.). America in Schuyler's analysis emerges as an absurd dystopia where the African American 'is a sort of black Gulliver, chained by white Lilliputians, a prisoner in a jail of color prejudice, a babe in a forest of bigotry, but withal a fellow philosophical and cynical enough to laugh at himself and his predicament' (ibid.: 391). At the time of Gumby's reception, Schuyler was completing his first novel, *Black No More*, which came out a year later in 1931. Regarded as the first satirical novel

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[21] 'Out-Menckening Mencken', *New York Age*, 10 December 1927; Geraldyn Dismond, 'Our White Folks', *Inter-State Tattler* 25, 1927.

by an African American writer, the novel lampoons both the notion of racial difference and the liberal solutions to the perceived 'race problem', revealing how racialization and racial categories inadvertently validate the pseudo-theory of racial purity and its discursive assertions of the biological superiority of some and inferiority of others, while detracting from the reality of economic interests being the actual cause of social discord.

The ink drawing that accompanies Schuyler's signature in the guestbook features two aligned profiles of a white and a black face, conjoined and overlaid in the middle with the shape of Schuyler's 'Views and Reviews' news column in the *Courier* (see Figure 6.2). While the design, with its alignment between black and white profiles, manifests the underlying aspiration and the principle of Schuyler's journalism, the perfect arrangement of the outward-looking faces anticipates the publication of Schuyler's novel by projecting not only its major theme but also the main conclusion of his exploration of human nature – the politically powerful idea that human nature remains unchanged by skin colour.

The polemical force of this group of writers, as a literary and journalistic public, manifests itself in another signature and ink drawing. The drawing features the nib of a dip pen and accompanies the signature of a John Taylor. While his identity has been difficult to ascertain, the symbol of the writing pen makes it reasonable to assume that he belonged to the writers' group, making the drawing open telescopically to the discursive world of public journalism where Taylor is inscribed in Gumby's record as one of many.

A postcard from Langston Hughes provides a crowning literary record of the event (Figure 6.3). Featuring 'the Lincoln Memorial and Japanese Cherry Blossoms' in Washington, DC, the card is postmarked from Philadelphia and addressed to Gumby's secretary, Edward Kolchin: 'Sept. 12 Dear Mr. Kolchin, Very sorry I can't be present Saturday afternoon since I won't be in town. Thank you for asking me. Sincerely, Langston Hughes.' Hughes's literary connections with Cullen, Bontempt, Schuyler and Thurman, as well as his continued support for the Gumby circle's cultural work, add impelling political force to the placement of the postcard. Pasted in the scrapbook with the text and postage stamp facing up, the postcard triangulates Washington, Philadelphia and New York spatially, creating a visual counterpoint between the poet's handwriting, the invoked image of the national memorial and Hughes's reference to the Cullen event. It evokes both the poet's potent poetic voice and his ambitious political vision for Lincoln's America. In fact, around the same time Hughes wrote a
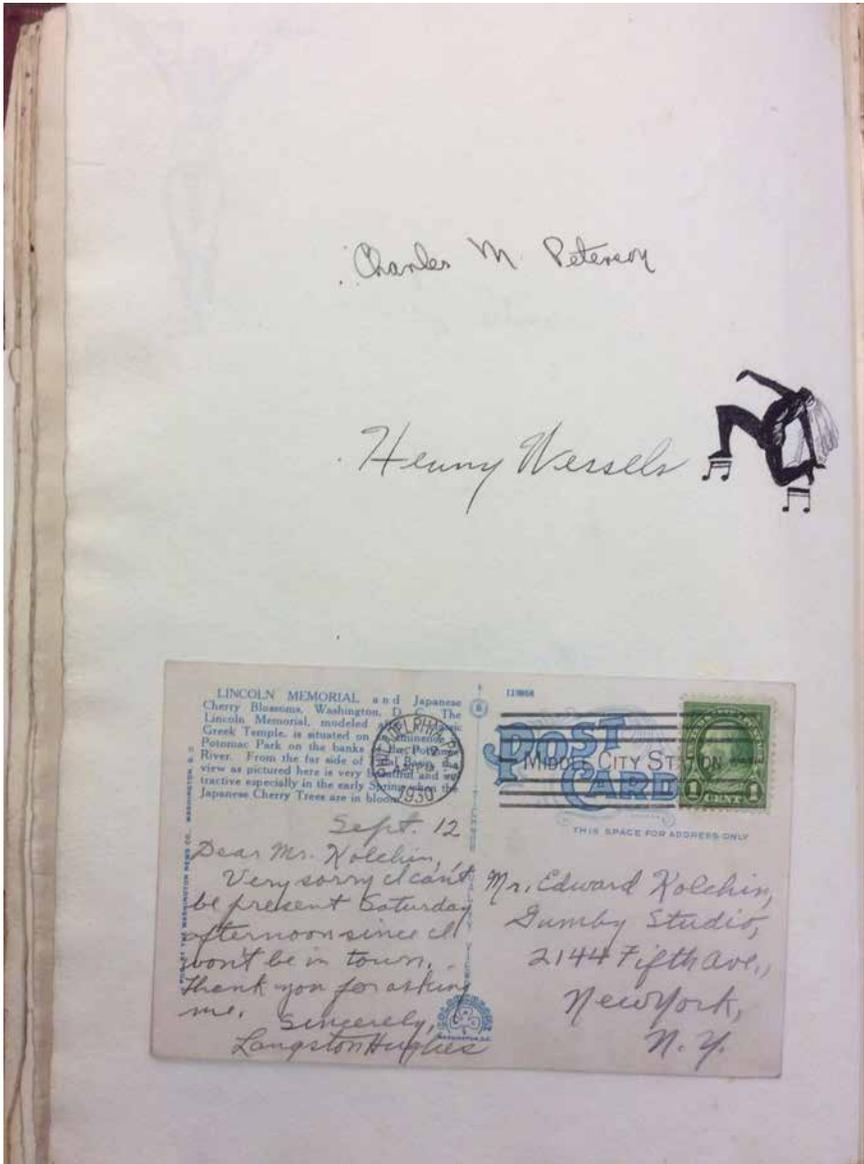
Figure 6.3 Gumby Book Studio guestbook: page shows Langston Hughes's postcard and signatures by Henry Wessels and Charles M. Peterson. Rare Book & Manuscript section, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

poem entitled 'Lincoln Monument: Washington', which was included in his 1932 anthology, *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*:

> Let's go see old Abe
> Sitting in the marble and the moonlight,
> Sitting lonely in the marble and the moonlight,
> Quiet for ten thousand centuries, old Abe.
> Quiet for a million, million years.
>
> Quiet –
>
> And yet a voice forever
> Against the
> Timeless walls
> Of time –
> Old Abe.

<div align="right">(Hughes 1994: 103)</div>

Generated by the anaphoric repetitions of 'sitting' and 'quiet' in the first stanza and the rhythmic groupings in the second of the 'time/timeless' alliteration and the assonance of 'and/against/Abe', the poem's rhythm compensates for the silence of Lincoln's monumental voice, making it perceptible in the poetic reverberations of the walls of time with the timeless dream of freedom. The irrepressible weight of this dream manifests itself in the creative energy of the poet's Harlem.

Art, music and entertainment in coalescence

Creative agency and play are seen in the ink drawings that accompany the names of two visual artists at the reception, Ronald Joseph and Haile Thurman Hendrix. Joseph's signature drawing presents a set of lithographic tools – a round stone (flatbed), overlaid with a roller (pressure bar), which carries a vertical inscription 'Ronald Joseph' with the first and the last names aligned horizontally (Figure 6.4).

The letters of the two names partially bleed into each other, generating an illusion of the rolling movement of the pressure bar. The twenty-year-old Joseph later made his mark as an artist with his striking experiments in lithography and his mastery of printmaking techniques. Gumby preserved an original charcoal sketch by Joseph, 'Sea Scene', gifted to him by the artist, next to a news review of the sketch that correctly predicted the young artist's creative potential (CMI Box 35: 'Scrapbook 5: Art'). Thurman Hendrix's signature ink drawing
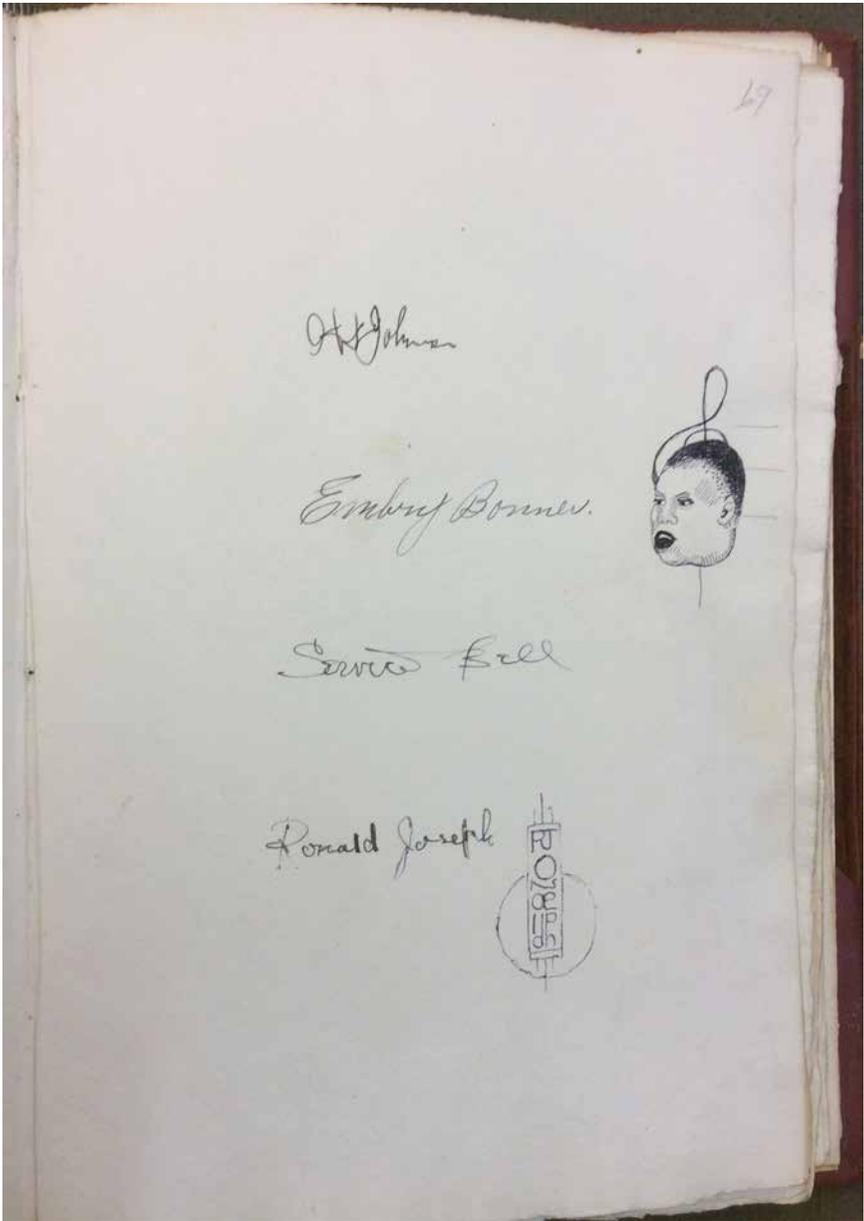
Figure 6.4 Gumby Book Studio guestbook: page signed by Ronald Joseph, Embry Bonner, Hall Jonson and William Service Bell. Rare Book & Manuscript section, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

features a cartoon of the artist's face, with his hair parted in the middle and the curved letter 'x' forming the thirty-three-year-old caricaturist's recognizable eyes, eyebrows, nose and moustache (Figure 6.5).
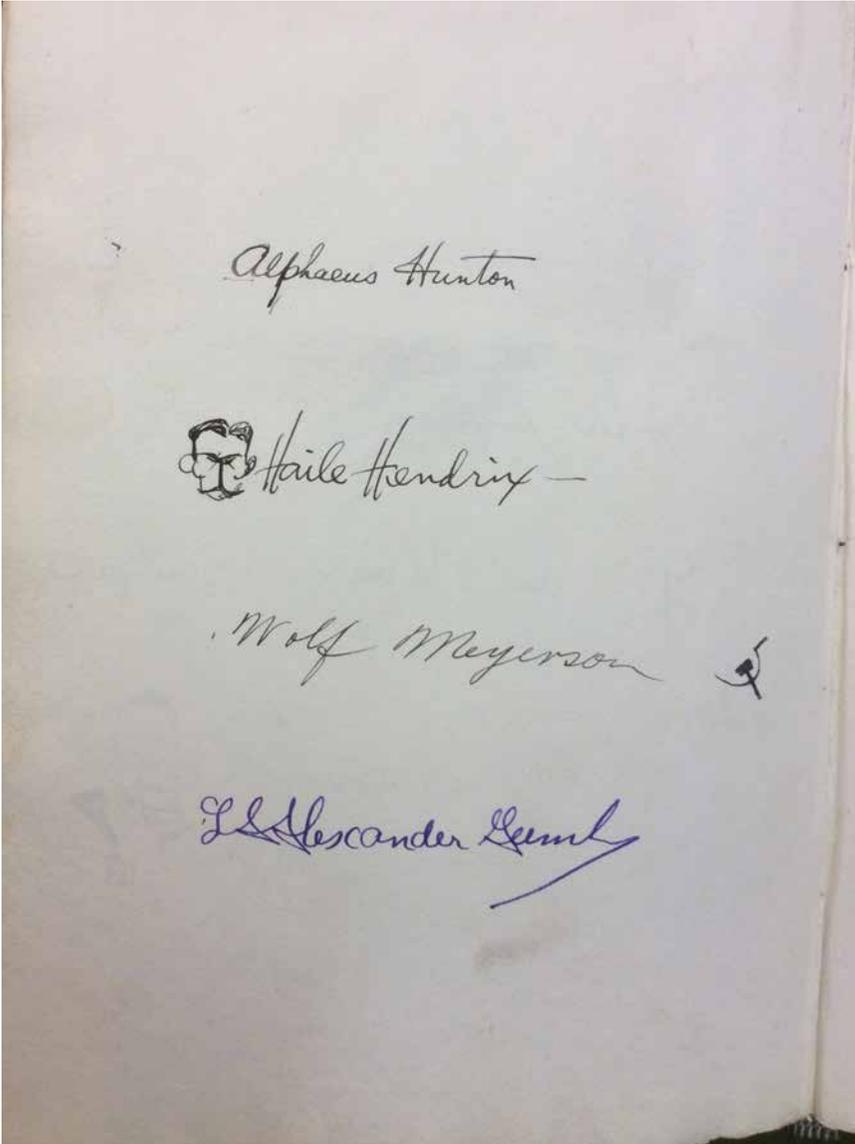
Figure 6.5 Gumby Book Studio guestbook: page signed by Haile Thurman Hendrix, L. S. Alexander Gumby, Wolf Meyerson and Alphaeus Hunton. Rare Book & Manuscript section, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

Joseph and Thurman Hendrix, a promising black artist and a white one, add youthful exuberance to the Cullen event and embody the sense of professional communion among the attendees – their coming together as a public to advance a non-racialized future for the arts.

In a similarly significant way, Gumby's arrangement of the signatures of the musicians attending the event tells the story of the changing fortunes of African American music and its growing local, national and international popularity. Embry Bonner's signature is accompanied by an ink drawing of his singing profile set on a background of a treble clef and musical notation (Figure 6.4). According to news coverage of the event,[22] Bonner, a professional singer, attended the reception with other well-known vocalists such as Caska Bonds (marked only with a signature, see Figure 6.1), Jules Bledsoe (listed in the news), Taylor Gordon (signature only) and Hall Johnson (signature only, see Figure 6.4), all of whom at the time of the event were struggling to establish themselves as solo artists in America. While Jules Bledsoe succeeded in making his career abroad, others stayed at home as active professionals, contributing to the cultural life of the local community.[23] Hall Johnson became known as a choir leader in Harlem, as did Caska Bonds. Bonds, who was a celebrated Harlem vocal coach, organized regular student recitals at Grace Congregational Church on 138th Street, called locally the Harlem Opera House. His national success took off when he was cast as Joe in *Showboat* (1924), instead of the originally slated Paul Robeson. At the time of the reception Bonds was tutoring Embry Bonner, who later performed in the 1934 premiere of *Four Saints*, an experimental opera written in 1927–1928 for an all-black cast by American composer Virgil Thomson, with a libretto by Gertrude Stein. It is tempting to read the composed look on Bonner's singing face in the drawing as a sign of African American vocalists opening new territories in music.

Taylor Gordon's musical career was undoubtedly breaking new ground. His opening night at the Garrick Theatre in New York in 1925 established his distinct operatic style as shaped by the vernacular musical idioms of African American spirituals, slave songs and sorrow songs. His performance was seen as a reinterpretation and redrawing of the conventions of European classical music:

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[22] Gumby pastes two news items after the signature roll, one from the *New York Amsterdam News* (17 September 1930) and one by Geraldyn Diamond in her 'Social Snapshots' column in the *Inter-State Tattler* (19 September 1930).

[23] Jules Bledsoe made his name in Europe, with support from his manager Sol Hurok and his aristocratic Dutch boyfriend, the diplomat Adriaan Friedrich Hyugens.

> For audiences used to hearing spirituals in European concert style, the lyrics
> carefully enunciated in standard English, the R's distinctly trilled, the consonants
> sharply clipped, the vowels carefully rounded and focused, Taylor's return to
> vernacular English, as well as his improvisational and disruptive singing style,
> was a radical departure, a fresh take on spirituals singing that bridged the gap
> between talented classical performers such as African American Roland Hayes
> and the original untrained voices that were the folk sources of music.
>
> (Johnson 2019: 4)

Gordon's popularity and critical acclaim marked the arrival of the African
American modernist style that combined classical sensibilities with vernacular
expressions to render the modern world in its harmonious and disruptive
manifestations.

The stylistic merger between popular expressive forms and established
artistic genres has to be seen as 'an important social index'[24] of the new styles
attracting and appealing to mass audiences. On the pages of the guestbook
the professional vocalists at the Cullen event mix with popular music revue
performers, composers, dancers and musical film actors. The careers of the
popular entertainers exemplify particularly well the growing permeability of
the divisions between popular and high cultural forms. In the guest scrapbook,
Luke Theodore Upshure's signature ink drawing vibrates with rhythmic waves
exuding from the tap-dancing of the musical notes on the piano keyboard
(Figure 6.6).

A musician and composer, trained at the Institute of Musical Art in
Morningside Heights (established in 1905), Upshure taught music and
performed as an entertainer at musical events, among them Gumby's reception
parties. In an invitation to his own house party, on 6 May 1934, Upshure writes
in a playful but edgy tone: 'Please, come rest, meditate, make merry a while
among friends in an atmosphere of tranquility far removed from the chaotic
muddled world with its ghastly hypocrisies and eternal stupidity. It is my desire
to give you a musical feast with wholesome music, just a sip of nectar before we

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[24] Walter Benjamin (2002: 116) discusses the emergence of film, its popular appeal and mass audiences'
'progressive reaction to a Chaplin film' as being 'characterized by an immediate, intimate fusion of
pleasure – pleasure in seeing and experiencing – with an attitude of expert appraisal … As is clearly
seen in the case of painting, the more reduced the social impact of an art form, the more widely
criticism and enjoyment of it diverge in the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, while
the truly new is criticized with aversion. Not so in the cinema'; the cinema, to Benjamin, exemplifies
the erosion of the separation between popular and highbrow culture, with the critical and uncritical
attitudes of the public tending to coincide.
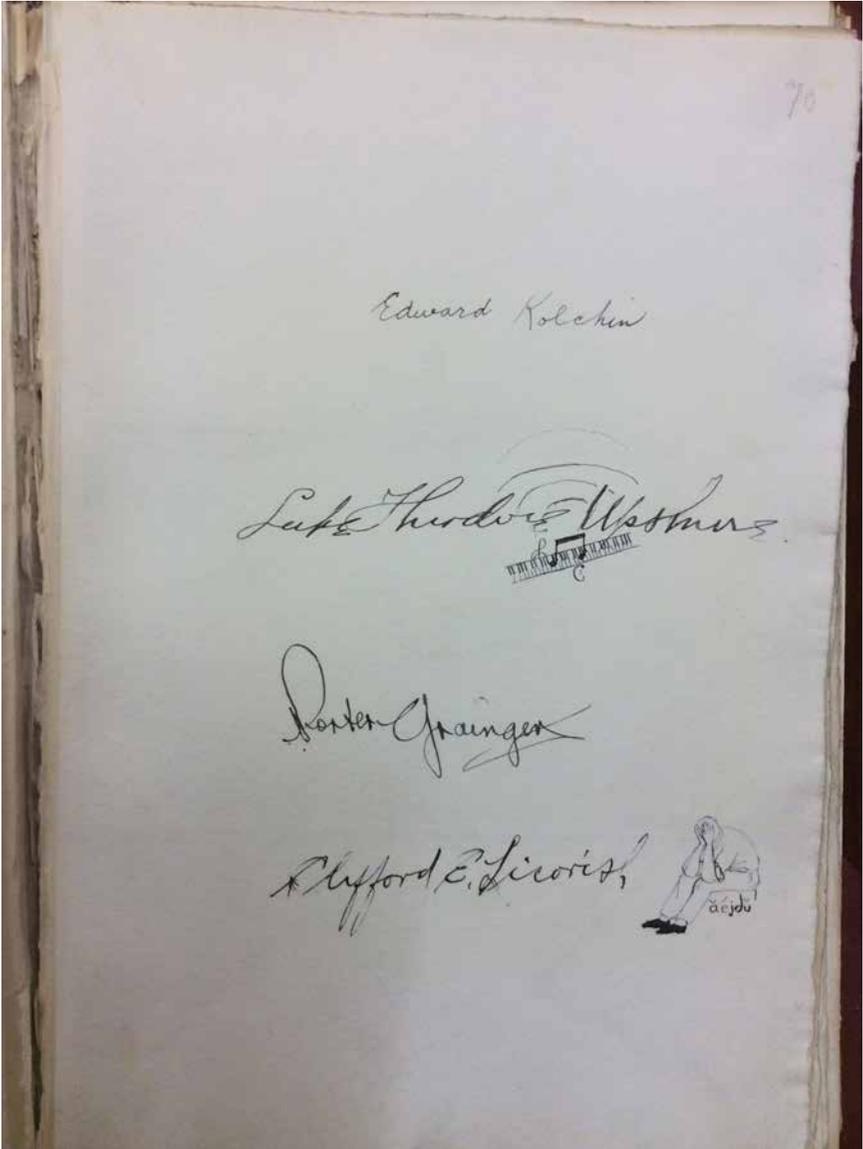
Figure 6.6 Gumby Book Studio guestbook: page signed by Luke Theodore Upshure, Porter Grainger, Clifford E. Licorish and Edward Kolchin. Rare Book & Manuscript section, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

are hurled back to the alcoves of the unknown.'[25] Music to Upshure was clearly not a means of escape or forgetfulness, but an antidote to the ills of the world – a shared sensibility among the Gumby Book Studio attendees.

   Somewhat in contrast to Upshure's upbeat visuals is an adjacent drawing attached to Clifford E. Licorish's signature – a crestfallen man, with his head buried in his palms, hunched on the vocal warm-up 'aeiou' line, signifying perhaps a blues singer, as Licorish's name appears on the page between Upshure and Porter Grainger's (Figure 6.6). Grainger, with only a signature, was a well-known Harlem songwriter and piano accompanist, but above all a music publisher. In 1926 he published a collection of blues songs, *How to Play and Sing Blues Like the Phonograph and Stage Artists*, shortly after a similar volume appeared authored by the father of blues, William Christopher Handy, *Blues: An Anthology*.[26] Gumby's Scrapbook 47, titled 'Jazz', recognizes Porter Grainger's and William Handy's contribution to music publishing, mapping the evolution of modern black music from the eruption of ragtime and blues on to the national stage to the impact of black music on classical music idioms. Gumby's trajectory of jazz begins with a series of articles about the remarkable career of James Reese Europe, known posthumously as 'the Martin Luther King of music'.[27] A review in the *Morning Telegraph* (12 November 1911) recognizes that ragtime's growing popularity owes to the 'out of ordinary' ability of James Reese Europe and his

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[25] Anne McVey, Upshure's wife, cites Upshure's invitation in her interview with Chela Blitt and Dennis J. Bernstein, 'Postscript: How One WIN Moment Changed Three Lives: Anne McVey Upshure's 94 Years of War Resistance', *WIN Magazine* (Spring 2015), https://www.warresisters.org/win/win-spring-2015/.

[26] See William Christopher Handy, *Blues: An Anthology* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926); Porter Grainger and Bob Ricketts, *How to Play and Sing Blues Like the Phonograph and Stage Artists* (New York: Jack Mills, 1926).

[27] The name was given to James Reese Europe (1881–1919) by Eubie Blake, the music score composer for *Shuffle Along* (1921), in recognition of Jim Europe's groundbreaking work for black musicians. Gumby preserves a review of Europe's career, which recounts his founding of the Clef Club in 1910, an organization that 'not only put together its own orchestra and chorus, but served as a union and contracting agency for black musicians'; and then his national success when 'On May 2, 1912, the Clef Club Symphony Orchestra put on "A Concert of Negro Music" in Carnegie Hall. The 125-man orchestra included a large contingent of banjos and mandolins and presented music by exclusively black composers. By this time, Europe believed that although black musicians respected white music of quality, they did not need to play or imitate it.' Among his other achievements, the reviewer, Irene Castle McLaughlin, a dancer who collaborated with Jim Europe as part of the famous dancing duo Vernon and Irene Castle, credits Europe with creating the turkey-trot and the fox-trot dances (see Irene Castle McLaughlin's review, 'Jim Europe – A Reminiscence', in 'Scrapbook 47'). During World War I, as the band master of the 369th Infantry Regiment, Europe formed and led the 'Harlem Hellfighters', credited with bringing jazz to Europe through their popularity in France. See 'James Reese Europe, 1881–1919', Library of Congress, Washington, DC, https://loc.gov/item/ihas.200038842.

Clef Club Symphony Orchestra, whose original compositions made their mark by reinterpreting 'marches and melodies of the Far Pacific and Cuban variety' for modern times.

From ragtime to blues, Gumby traces the history of the latter by covering Handy's career from the teens to the 1930s, reflecting Handy's efforts both to popularize the blues sound and to explore its complexity and sophistication. A cut-and-pasted review of Handy's successful tour in Georgia (*Pittsburg Courier*, 12 April 1918) describes how 'every dancer on the floor let loose a wicked foot and syncopated to a tune that belongs to the realms of musical art'. Another highlight from 1928 tells the story of the Handy Orchestra performing at Carnegie Hall, with Taylor Gordon's solos 'rewarded with storms of applause, rising to the point of approving yells and whistles' (Pitts Sanborn, 'Jazz and Jubilee Singers Take over Carnegie Hall', *New York Evening Post*, 28 April 1928; CMI Box 75: 'Scrapbook 47: Jazz. Part I'). A further feature article Gumby includes is an essay about Handy by Clifford McGuinness, 'Blazed a Path from Beale Street to Broadway', which commends the musician's groundbreaking efforts in the promotion of jazz symphony (1 March 1930, 'Illustrated Feature Section', in 'Scrapbook 47').

To substantiate Handy's contribution to establishing symphonic jazz as a distinctly modern music genre, Gumby includes a review of the Handy Orchestra's collaboration with George Antheil, a young exponent of avant-garde music, at a concert in Carnegie Hall in April 1927, praising Handy's orchestral performance 'in support of the world's most sensational composer direct from Paris'. Advertised as the American premiere of Antheil's technology-inspired composition *Ballet Méchanique*, the event was critically acclaimed for Handy's 'instinct for inner form' and Antheil's tribute to the 'Aframerican invention of polyphony'. Ultimately, the reviewer suggests placing Handy in the canon of 'the world's music', where blues 'have an importance for their rhythm and the things their tunes say' about 'the essentials of quick life and rich rhythms and the broad humanity of masses of people'. The reviewer refers to Handy's achievements as a stark reminder to the aesthetes who might be 'too prone to forget', having spent too much of 'their time in the cold regions of Kantian philosophy', that blues express the feel of the modern times and thus manifest their 'contemporaneousness' ('Scrapbook 47'). Symptomatically, all the reviewers in Gumby's assemblage avoid drawing clear distinctions between spirituals, ragtime, blues and jazz – a sign perhaps of the unsettling effect of black music on traditional genres and the growing rapprochement between entertainment and high musical culture.

Gumby celebrates the idea that jazz has developed into an epitome of modern American music as world music by carefully preserving a lengthy *Nation* review of a concert billed as 'An Experiment in Modern Music'. The concert's highlight – the premiere of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* – is praised as a formal merger of cosmopolitan and vernacular styles, 'a curious orgy of unrestrained laughter and tears, in which East and West met and merged'. Such a merger, the reviewer suggests, resulted in 'sustained, drawn-out Slavic effects in melodic passages of pure, Anglo-Saxon bathos. Perverted brasses and winds depicted, in subtle and intoxicating colors, humor of the slap-stick variety. Aphrodisiacal rhythms alternated with those of the ordinary dance' (Henrietta Straus, 'Jazz and *The Rhapsody in Blue*', *Nation*, 5 March 1924; 'Scrapbook 47').[28] To explain the strangeness of this musical composition, the reviewer points to Gershwin's unusual mixing of classical music with jazz – a technique that creates 'terrific rhythmical difficulty' and a capacity to produce the 'abandonment of all emotional reserve'. The review concludes on a baffled but encouraging note, announcing that jazz is a music in 'kinship with the world-thought of today'. It has grown up 'unheeded' in America, and now confronts its audience with the fact that 'its elements of the Russian, the Negro, and the native American' make it into 'that first distinctive musical phase of the melting-pot for which we have been waiting so long and which seems to have such endless possibilities'.

A sense of optimism about the ongoing transformation of the cultural scene is communicated in the ink drawing next to Roy de Coverley's signature. The Jamaican journalist, poet and entertainer appears as a tuxedo-dressed man, holding a mask to his face. The drawing captures Coverley's recognizable 'faun-like smile' and his attitude of a cheerful, bonhomie aesthete. In the history of Harlem theatre, Coverley appears among the ensemble cast in the opening production of William Jourdan Rapp and Wallace Thurman's *Harlem: An Episode of Life in New York's Black Belt* (staged by Chester Erskin) at the Apollo Theatre on 20 February 1929.[29] His dancing and choreographic gifts connect his signature, which appears on the Studio guestbook's first

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[28] The concert was performed by Paul Whiteman's Palais Royal Orchestra at New York City's Aeolian Hall on 12 February 1924.

[29] In Robert Schlick's interview with Roy de Coverley in 1931 he describes the poet as 'brown, slender, with luminous eyes, answering with a faun-like smile'. See 'The Poems of Roy de Coverley', *The Crisis*, December 1933, 291.

page, to the ink drawing that concludes the whole record of the Cullen event (see Figure 6.3). This last record belongs to Henry Wessels, a vaudeville and musical film actor, who is drawn as a naked black body roller-skating on two musical notes, his arms stretched out in a forward movement, his head tilted backwards, weighed down by a heavy Native American feathered headgear. Wessels's career in vaudeville entertainment led him to appear on screen in the 1932 production of an all-black-cast musical film, *Harlem is Heaven*. The film's 'world premier' was advertised at the Renaissance Theatre in New York, on Seventh Avenue at 137th Street – the first black-controlled cinema catering to African American audiences – featuring Bill Bojangles Robinson playing himself as the Acme Theatre's star performer and director of its dance productions, and Wessels portraying 'Chummy' Walker. Wessels's dancing pose in the guestbook and his participation in this emergent moment in the history of African American film capture the stylistic cross-overs between early musical film and vaudeville that shaped the earliest sound-film genre in the late 1920s.

As we see, every ink drawing and every signature in Gumby's guestbook tells a story and has a history. These stories run as threads through the whole scrapbook collection, intersecting with each other and reaching out of this textual world into a future time and a future world of its readers. In Gumby's execution, his Harlem Renaissance scrapbooks offer a gathering of published works, publicized actions and public speech acts – the efforts of art collectives mounted for sustaining black art and entertainment. And as we began with Langston Hughes's retrospective glance at the Harlem Renaissance, I end with another poetic riff Hughes made with the hindsight of the 1960s on the voices, discursive pathways, artistic shapes and heated debates that shaped the Renaissance – the very scene carefully crafted in Gumby's constellations:

> Harlem, like a Picasso painting in his cubistic period. Harlem – Southern Harlem – the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida – looking for the Promised Land – dressed in rhythmic words, painted in bright pictures, dancing to jazz – and ending up in the subway at morning rush time – headed downtown. West Indian Harlem – warm rambunctious sassy remembering Marcus Garvey, Haitian Harlem, Cuban Harlem, little pockets of tropical dreams in alien tongues. Magnet Harlem, pulling an Arthur Schomburg from Puerto Rico, pulling Arna Bontemps all the way from California, a Nora Holt from way out West, an E. Simms Campbell from St. Louis, likewise a Josephine Baker, a Charles

S. Johnson from Virginia, an A. Phillip Randolph from Florida, a Roy Wilkins from Minnesota, an Alta Douglas from Kansas. Melting pot Harlem – Harlem of honey and chocolate and caramel and rum and vinegar and lemon and lime and gall. Dusky dream Harlem rumbling into a nightmare tunnel where the subway from the Bronx keeps right on downtown, where the jazz is drained to Broadway whence Josephine [Baker] goes to Paris, Robeson to London, Jean Toomer to a Quaker Meeting House, Garvey to Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, and Wallace Thurman to his grave; but Duke Ellington to fame and fortune, Lena Horne to Broadway, and Buck Clayton to China.

(Quoted in Rhodes-Pitts 2011: 19)[30]

This chapter tries to show how these effects of the Harlem Renaissance are already present as past, present and future-oriented directionalities in Gumby's individual scrapbooks, and how they reverberate across the collection. By compiling and preserving records of black modernity, Gumby's collection registers the world-creating work of the Harlem publics as crucibles of black modernism and black political emancipation. By covering the temporal and geographic scope that spans the continents, the collection registers how the increasing circulation of new artistic production shaped and was shaped by a modern cosmopolitan outlook that was locally articulated, forward-looking and non-hierarchical. Gumby's collection channels the Harlem Renaissance idea of a modern world emerging from the lived experience of a people who are able to dream, imagine and work creatively towards an equitable future. The movement was popular, and its Gumby historiography was intended to be usable and useful. The result became a remarkable archive that attunes its readers to the reality of a world taking shape through creativity, action and public speech.

Acknowledgements

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[30] As Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts (2011: 18) poignantly puts it, Langston Hughes in 'a 1963 special Harlem issue of *Freedomways* magazine, mixes sentimentality with a dose of his typically biting wit'.

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The little magazine as a world-making form: Literary distance and political contestation in southern African journals

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In 1980 the academic journal *English in Africa* (*EiA*) devoted a special issue to English-language little magazines in South Africa. With contributions mainly from the editors of the magazines themselves, the issue was an early acknowledgement of the form's importance in nurturing a local literary culture. Produced in what was still the thick of apartheid, the essays in *EiA* not only presented an historical overview of the main literary publications, ranging from the avant-garde forerunner *Voorslag* (Durban, 1926–1927) to the recently launched *Staffrider* (Johannesburg, 1978–1994), but also covered different political facets, from the vaguely liberal *Contrast* (Cape Town, 1960–1989) to radical magazines such as *Donga* (Johannesburg, 1977–1978). These differences paled, however, in view of apartheid's machinery of power, which was a common adversary to all contributors at this time.

As a snapshot of South African literature, the *EiA* issue gives the impression of a functioning but embattled field. Even as they proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, many journals had altercations with state power. Issues of *The Purple Renoster* (Johannesburg, 1956–1972), *Staffrider*, *Donga* and other journals were banned, editors were harrassed by the Special Branch and authors were banned or forced into exile, or both. As Peter D. McDonald (2009: 17) has shown, moreover, apartheid censorship was itself implicated in defining the very terms of literary legitimacy in South Africa. The censors were not just against but also *for* literature, acting as state-appointed 'guardians of the literary' – which instead led, as we see later in this chapter, to resistant renegotiations of literary value. From a world literary perspective, the consequences of censorship in South Africa were particularly problematic: a writer who had been censored in

South Africa was, almost by default, conferred with an international badge of honour. At the same time, this mode of visibility could relegate the international reception of a literary work to the political domain. Nadine Gordimer's attacks on South African censorship and defences of writerly freedom operated within that ambivalent zone, on the one hand making censored writers internationally visible and, on the other, insisting that the principle of freedom of speech had nothing to with *literary* value. 'Literary worth', Gordimer (1988: 260) was at pains to emphasize, 'may be assessed only by critics and readers free to read the book.' This betrayed of course Gordimer's awareness that the international value of South African literature at the time was often counted in a currency of moral probity, distinct from the supposedly 'pure' currency of literary value.

How, then, did little magazines operate within this transnational exchange between (and doubling of) literary and political values? Produced locally, sometimes in such a low key that they could be described as 'amateur self-publication on an intimate scale' (Abrahams 1980: 33), little magazines *precede* not just international circulation but indeed book-format publication of (single-authored) works on a national level. For this reason, if only fleetingly, they had a stronger potential to produce unsanctioned textual events than more costly and internationally visible forms. State censorship in South Africa did what it could to curtail little magazines, but their very smallness made them a perplexing target. They generally had a minimal quantitative impact, making texts public to restricted readerships and for a limited stretch of time. Even *Contrast*, the most professionally managed of the South African journals, never reached a higher circulation than 1,500 (Cope 1980: 20). The intriguing exception here is *Staffrider*, whose circulation shot up to 10,000 at one point (Kirkwood 1988: 3), but this is wholly untypical. In these respects, as one would expect, southern African literary journals did not at any time in the twentieth century achieve truly popular recognition locally (the 1950s *Drum* in Johannesburg being an exception, insofar as it can be designated 'literary') or prominent recognition internationally.

Low publicity, however, goes together with a high degree of sociality: behind the making of little magazines we invariably find stories of people in interaction. *Staffrider*, for one, was prompted by the emergence of community-based writers' groups around the country (Kirkwood 1980: 21–5, Helgesson 2018), whereas more commonly *a* group – be it looser or tighter – will coalesce around a journal. Whatever the case, little magazines significantly weaken, from a methodological viewpoint, the analytical relevance of the individualist author function.

Instead, they are produced through collaboration (as well as disagreements), which testifies to the degree of social interaction needed to sustain literary cultures. However, if book publishers, in Bourdieu's (2008: 123; emphasis in original) France-centred account, are 'invested with the extraordinary power to ensure *publication*, to confer upon a text and its author a *public* existence (*Öffentlichkeit*) along with the fame and recognition that this entails', the makers of little magazines are at a looser, more amorphous end of publication, fame and recognition. In the words of Jack Cope (1980: 9), editor of *Contrast*, a magazine can be 'a kind of open school or laboratory'. As such a testing ground, or indeed playground, its stakes are nominally far lower than for publishing houses. In addition, Bulson (2017: 48) remarks that little magazines are not commercial ventures, nor are they necessarily reliant on a 'centralized power structure of editors, critics, and translators'. They can get by on modest funding, switch editors at a moment's notice, keep a flexible roster of contributors and publish texts without having to invest in their authors beyond that particular moment of publication – even though (and this is the all-important caveat) their potential long-term significance for the fostering of local literary culture can be completely out of proportion to the modesty of their outward appearance. By the same token, journals can fold after a few issues and still, retrospectively, be singled out as crystallizing pivotal moments in literary history. This is most obvious when facsimiles or compilations of the journals – as in the cases of *Voorslag*, *Caliban* (Maputo, 1971–1972) and *Charrua* (Maputo, 1984–1986) – are reissued long after the fact as monuments to this least monumental form of print literature. Finally, and very significantly for my argument, the often hyper-local nature of these journals belies the multiple ways in which they connect across geographies, literatures and languages, shaping malleable literary world maps that contribute to the contours and orientations of the local literary culture.

It is this last aspect that characterizes the mode of world-making investigated in this chapter. The local, one might say, is afforded a particular texture through intimations of what I call *literary distance*, whereby momentary constellations of 'other' literatures serve to position the journal in a world space (and a secular temporality) whose coordinates differ from the international order of state power. This distance, however, can only be grasped in relation to *literary proximity* – that is, what a journal defines, explicitly or implicitly, as *its own* literary domain. The main locus of such proximity is the original material presented in the magazine, but this is given density and meaning by way of contrasts that can be geographical, ideological, linguistic or aesthetic in nature.

In these respects, literary distance is related to Pascale Casanova's (2004) world republic of letters, which establishes a social space that is not (or not only) a mirror of the political world map. Yet the instantiation of distance in these journals is more flexible and idiosyncratic than her model apparently allows. Indeed, the point of the magazine format is rather that distance becomes *negotiable*, however fleetingly. By bringing the distant into the journal it is actively made proximate – as when René Char, Bertolt Brecht, Dante and Jean-Paul Sartre are quoted prominently in the first issue of the Maputo journal *Charrua* (June 1984). Such enfoldings of distant literature recalibrate, in turn, the very meaning of proximity. The national or colonial space may in this way recede into the background, or become relativized, when a journal engages other orders of belonging, such as an allegiance to the lyric as a genre, or to writers as a transnational professional category. This shows that distance–proximity relationships should not be thought of only in geographical or political terms but must also be imagined phenomenologically, as elusive experiential categories in which language and heteroglossia have pride of place. Varying degrees of comprehensibility, the contrasting affective charge of different languages, the splitting or gathering of constituencies of readers through multilingualism – all enter the mix, producing 'translingual events' (Helgesson and Kullberg 2018) with complex implications for how we read the cosmopolitan–vernacular making of literary time.

To approach these larger questions, I investigate a limited yet regionally comparative corpus: specific examples are culled from *Voorslag*, *The New African, The Purple Renoster*, *The Classic*, *Caliban* and *Charrua*. South African journals form the backbone of this account, but the two Mozambican examples (*Caliban* and *Charrua*) offer an instructive contrast. In terms of period, it should be noted that *Voorslag* precedes apartheid, and the Mozambican cases must be understood on their own historical terms. Although contextual knowledge is factored into my discussion, my main method consists in reading the journals themselves, both as designed material objects and as compilations of texts, from the viewpoint of a cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic.

Periodical research and world literature

This chapter's focus on little magazines has a context of its own. Periodical research has increased exponentially in recent decades, as observed by Latham and Scholes (2006) and confirmed by the emergence of an academic journal such as *Periodical*

Studies, founded in 2013. The ghosts of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound haunt this field both as practitioners and as the first theoreticians of little magazines (Eliot 1926, Pound 1930), which in Pound's understanding were 'a core about which / not a box inside which every item' was contained (quoted in White 2013: 2). Eric B. White's understanding of modernist periodicals as dialectically cosmopolitan and local vehicles for inaugurating 'new aesthetic principles' or holding 'existing ones in suspension before they were picked up and developed by the next generation' (ibid.) resonates strongly with my discussion in this chapter. If anything, these southern African periodicals repeatedly signpost affinities with magazines and literary groupings elsewhere. It can seem as though the little magazine functions as an anthropological constant across the world in the twentieth century, negotiating – as did Eliot (1926) – between the extremes of narrowness and broader appeal. However, the fractured political conditions in southern Africa also rerouted aesthetic endeavours in directions that cannot be accounted for in terms of North Atlantic modernism. The African dimension matters, in other words, and recent years have witnessed how early work by Lindfors (1996) has been further developed by, among many others, Switzer (1997), Gardiner (2004), Barber (2006), Mokoena (2009), Hofmeyr (2013), Sandwith (2014), Peterson, Hunter and Newell (2016), Bush (2016), Suhr-Sytsma (2017), Davis, Dick and LeRoux (2018) and Mkhize (2018). One reason for the post-millennial surge in interest in periodicals is archival: digitization has radically, if unevenly, enhanced access. In African and other post-colonial regions with lower volumes of book publication, it can be added that periodicals have been not just a central part of print culture, but sometimes almost *all* of print culture.

As in print culture generally, so in literature specifically: it is by way of magazines that print literatures in African contexts have prevailed, from the nineteenth century until the ongoing digital revolution, which once again has reshaped the conditions for literary practice on the African continent (as did the double incursion of print and colonialism in the nineteenth century). These post-millennial developments bracket the concerns of this chapter, which deals with pre-digital print journals, but not in a nostalgic register. The point, rather, is that the digital era has made us see print culture afresh, enabling a renewed understanding of literary history. Eric Bulson's (2017) study *Little Magazine, World Form* is exemplary in this regard, combining as it does an established Western narrative of the modernist little magazine – in which the *English Review*, the *Egoist*, *Criterion*, *Dial* and Jolas's *transition* have pride of place – with a wide-ranging account of post-colonial and exiled magazines across the world.

To trace salient aspects of the little-magazine format in twentieth-century southern Africa, this chapter proceeds in five movements. The first section presents some theoretical considerations concerning 'field' (Bourdieu), 'world' (Arendt, Cheah, Hayot) and 'the vernacular'. The second section discusses the pre-apartheid initiative, *Voorslag*. The third section looks at the fates of *The New African*, *The Classic* and, above all, *The Purple Renoster* under high apartheid. The fourth section discusses the lusophone colonial and post-colonial cases of *Caliban* and *Charrua*. The conclusion, finally, attempts to articulate some larger implications of these discussions for world literature methodologies.

Field, world, vernacular

Sociologically, the makers of little magazines are agents on the literary field, as defined by Bourdieu (2008). Editors act as gatekeepers, deciding what should be included between the covers of a journal. In this way they contribute to staking out the historically shifting boundaries of the literary in the much wider social terrain of texts and speech acts. Writers present their texts in a bid to occupy a position in the literary terrain. Journals are collectively shaped in such a way that their 'profile' places them at more or less distinct positions in the field – as radical, liberal, aestheticizing, political, academic, avant-garde and so on.

To these general considerations, however, we need to add aspects that are historically specific to southern Africa. The fields in question are institutionally weaker than in Bourdieu's France, which to some extent explains why little magazines have been so important. Even in well-resourced South Africa, there was in the twentieth century a reduced number of local publishing outlets and, at least until the 1970s, a dearth of local reception (except for the special case of Afrikaans). In addition, colonialism and apartheid had instituted racialized regimes of literacy and literature, which explains the fragmented literary history of the region – but also makes it important to measure the degree to which some journals overcome the split.

But are literary journals identifiable as a world form at all? As implied above, increasing amount of evidence speaks in favour of such a view. Over a stretch of maybe 150 years, the material properties and social preconditions of little magazines on different continents make them particularly suitable for comparative investigations, as work by Brooker and Thacker (2009), Bulson (2017), Chaudhuri (2013), Orsini (2019) and others shows. Contrary to the

challenging case of the novel (Moretti 2000), with its French and English pedigree, magazines have not been straitjacketed by any dominant generic norm. Rather, a defining feature of the 'periodical code' (Brooker and Thacker 2009: 5–9) is the ability of magazines to accommodate multiple and contingent constellations of texts in various genres.

But if we understand the intervention of journals through the terms mentioned previously – literary distance and proximity – this requires a clarification of their spatial implications. Bourdieu (2008) usefully distinguished between social and physical space: social space, which is never quite tangible or visible, is typically transferred to relations in physical space. Social space, however, can also *warp* physical space. It is not just possible but indeed commonplace to be physically proximate while socially distant, and vice versa (Reed-Danahay 2015). This is a central implication of Casanova's (2004) world republic of letters: mediated by print, the world republic is a highly differentiated social space that is relatively independent of physical location. Its 'capital' in her account, Paris, happens to be both physical and social, and the actual publication of literature requires material resources – the point, however, is that social (coded as aesthetic) proximity can be established even across extreme geographical distances.

An intriguing twist in Casanova's argument is that aesthetic proximity to the centre has a temporal aspect:

> The unification of literary space through competition presumes the existence of a common standard for measuring time, an absolute point of reference unconditionally recognized by all contestants … Events that 'leave a mark' on the literary world have a 'tempo' that is unique to this world and that is not – or is not necessarily – 'synchronous' with the measure of historical (which is to say political) time that is established as official and legitimate.
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> (Casanova 2004: 87–8)

In this way, the 'aesthetic distance of a work or corpus of works from the center may thus be measured by their temporal remove from the canons that, at the precise moment of estimation, define the literary present' (ibid.: 88). As this chapter demonstrates, overcoming such aesthetic distance has frequently been a concern of little magazines in southern Africa.

There are potential problems with the model, however. Jarad Zimbler (2009) has claimed that both Bourdieu and Casanova reduce the literary field to a strict opposition between autonomy and heteronomy – between the pure aesthetic space of the literary present and the 'external' forces of commercialism

(Bourdieu) or politics (Casanova). *Literary* legitimacy, by their definition, must have an aesthetic and not a political or commercial motivation. Conversely, legitimacy in the heteronomous pole is measured in sales or instrumental efficacy, and has nothing to do with form. In this regard, Casanova has simply magnified Bourdieu's nationally confined model to a world scale. Although this binarism should be read as an *outcome* of empirical investigation rather than an a priori *premise* of field analysis, I quite agree with Zimbler that the South African case presents us with 'a reality in which agonistic relations are often complex and multi-directional, rather than Manichean' (ibid.: 612). Making sense of such a situation may be helped, as Zimbler claims, by a minimal understanding of the field as 'a relatively discrete space, a social universe within a universe, marked by peculiar practices, techniques and products which are defined in relation to one another' (ibid.: 615). Identifying the boundaries of such fields is methodologically challenging, but the theoretical point is that Casanova's model can work in reverse. Literary fields might well recognize the 'time zone' of the world republic of letters, but as either a resource to be exploited for their own ends or a foil for the construction of divergent values, without aiming for recognition in the centre. Hence literary fields are capable of producing their own events and aesthetic tempos that may or may not, at different moments, be synchronized with Casanova's literary Greenwich Meridian.

Here we need to pause, however, and ask whether the field concept itself requires supplementation. A potential weakness with the concept is its recursive nature: it invites us to read literary practice as a feedback loop, always reproducing the logic of the field but lacking significance beyond the vested interests of its agents. The playful nature of little magazines would seem to suggest otherwise. The field, however, is anything *but* playful; Casanova (2005: 90) speaks, characteristically, of 'the long and merciless war of literature'. Play and experimentation indicate instead another and more tentative relationship to the world than that of social competition. There are losers in games and battles, but not in free play. Experiments may fail, but that need not be the same as losing. To draw on Gadamer's (2013: 107) famous discussion, play exists 'in a world determined by the seriousness of its purposes' but it 'fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play'. Significantly, therefore, '[s]omeone who doesn't take play seriously is a spoilsport' (ibid.). In the examples discussed below, proponents of a cultural and political status quo, sometimes in the guise of state agents, have acted as spoilsports – but the nature of the mediated game in

these little magazines has sometimes enabled the carvnivalesque incorporation of the spoilsports in play.

These remarks point towards the need to supplement 'field' with an attention to 'world'. If field analysis is all about how position-taking accumulates symbolic capital, 'world' directs our attention to the multiplicity of linguistic signification, play, material fabrication and collective as well as individual action. In Arendt's (1998: 52) understanding, as discussed in the introduction to this volume, the world is related 'to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together'. The world in this sense need not only be about accumulating capital but could equally be about 'incautious spending', a central notion in Rabindranath Tagore's ([1907] 2015: 282) understanding of world literature as steeped in the spirit of *ananda* (joy/delight). The little magazine, I argue, frequently bears the marks of such excess: ephemeral and constellational, its textual and visual content evinces a transversal tendency. Its 'aesthetic worlds', to use Hayot's (2012) term, interlace with other worlds which by definition will include the literary field without being reduced to it.

It is here, finally, that the vernacular enters the picture. A notoriously elusive term, the understanding in this chapter (and in the present volume more generally) is that the vernacular is a multivalent, relational concept. As such, it draws our attention to particular tensions in the construction of literary values, languages and worlds. A general observation is that all these journals avail themselves of vernacular relationalities – through demotic registers of language, local languages (Afrikaans, Shangaan, Shona), locally embedded words or a generic notion of 'the people' – in their projects of 'literarization' (Beecroft 2015: 11–12), but these become literarily meaningful (with varying degrees of success) only in contrast to some cosmopolitan 'other' that is coded precisely as *not* vernacular. As both Pollock (2006) and Beecroft (2015) make clear in their respective historical arguments, we should not expect to find any *unmediated* vernacularity in the domain of literary practice, only constructions and projections of the same, involving adaptations of cosmopolitan models. This is one crucial difference between a linguistic and a literary notion of the vernacular: being a peculiar, crafted use of language, literature's mode of public formation operates at a remove from direct verbal communication. This is all the more so if we restrict our definition of the literary to print literature. The vernacular, therefore, can be understood as a vanishing point around which little magazines often organize themselves, as I intend to show.

This 'fetish that rules the country … ': Shocking the settlers in *Voorslag*

In a letter to the editor, a certain Erich Mayer explained why he found the first issue of *Voorslag* (June 1926) disappointing. In his view, it tended to 'mislead and confuse the public opinion both here and abroad, the writers being neither too well acquainted with the true mentality, character and aims of their Dutch-speaking compatriots, nor with the true psychology of the black and coloured races of South Africa' (*Voorslag* July 1926: 67–8). It failed, above all, to express the 'virile spirit of our young South African culture' (ibid.: 67). The response of the editor, Roy Campbell, was cutting: 'God forbid that art should ever express the "soul" of such a small, rancidly-racial nation as ours. The soul of our nation is always being expressed in Eistedfodds, exhibitions of paintings by South African artists, and anthologies of bad poetry. If this is art, then the soul it expresses must be suffering from senile decrepitude' (*Voorslag* August 1926: 59).

Although Robin Hallett (1978: 29) could describe its brief appearance in 1926 as 'one of the few really exciting events in the history of South African literature', the afterlife of *Voorslag* in South Africa in the 2020s is hardly guaranteed. Produced by white male authors, it addressed an exclusively white readership in the Union. In other words, its intervention occurred entirely within the ambit of a politically dominant and constitutively racist settler minority. But an intervention it was: designed as a provocation – *voorslag* means 'whiplash' in Afrikaans – the journal managed, at least in its early issues, both to upset racist complacency and to bring fragments of European avant-gardist modernism to bear on a South African context.

The extravagant Roy Campbell (1901–1957), who later became a fascist fellow-traveller in Spain, was at the time a fêted young poet, recently returned from Britain, where his long poem *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924) had been met with enthusiasm in London's literary circles. In a mythologized moment he teamed up in the South African winter of 1926 – the same year that Eliot (1926) theorized the 'literary review' – with the even younger writers William Plomer (1903–1973) and Laurens van der Post (1906–1996) to produce *Voorslag*. Campbell hailed from Durban, a town which even in white South Africa at the time had a reputation for its reactionary and insular English colonial culture. Cooped up with his family and co-editors in a borrowed bungalow by the Natal coast, and having secured sufficient funds from acquaintances to launch *Voorslag*, Campbell's verbal missiles met their target with high precision. Before

they fizzled out, that is: conflicts with *Voorslag*'s sponsor, Lewis Reynolds, led to Campbell's resignation as editor after only two issues, and Plomer and Van der Post followed suit after issue three, which meant that the tone shifted in the remaining run of *Voorslag* (an additional eight issues).

As illustrated by Campbell's exchange with Mayer, Campbell and Plomer (Van der Post was less of an influence) attempted to rearticulate the cosmopolitan–vernacular terms in which the culture of the white, English-speaking elite viewed itself. If Mayer expressed the complacency of a local elite that took its British and 'racial' pedigree as proof of its cultural superiority, then Campbell's contributions to *Voorslag* inverted the very logic of (white) racial and national solidarity. They did so primarily by undermining the bedrock of this elite's racialized cosmopolitanism, namely its tight identification with the cultural prestige of Britain, coupled with a patriarchal claim to colonial 'virility' and 'youth' that old England lacked. The accumulated effect of Campbell's attacks was to play havoc with the clock of South African English culture. In this way he vernacularized – negatively – his own social group. His exposure to modernist currents of thought and art in Western Europe at the time – through Nietzsche, Freud, Frazer, T. S. Eliot and others – armed him with a conceptual repertoire previously unheard of in the English circles of South Africa. This is why, instead of youth, he finds a culture marked by 'senile decrepitude'. In his review of Plomer's novel *Turbott Wolfe* (1925), he laments that 'political, moral, and theological standpoints are still considered legitimate criteria in reviewing a work of art' (*Voorslag* June 1926: 39). The only proper response to *Turbott Wolfe* would be 'the production of another work of art as significant … and so far this country has produced nothing approaching it' (ibid.). In support of such aestheticism, under the pseudonym Lewis Marston, Campbell produces in the second issue a wholesale dismissal of Victorian and Georgian poetry as 'a form of confectionery' (*Voorslag* July 1926: 33) that has betrayed the 'genius of the English race' (ibid.: 32), which found full expression in the run of poets from Chaucer to Shelley. To remedy this 'Victorian débâcle', he writes, 'all English artists and writers who are doing anything worth while have their eyes on Europe' (ibid.: 34).

In the voice of Marston, Campbell speaks of the English as 'we'; in his own voice the 'we' (as in the response to Mayer) tends to refer, caustically, to his social group in South Africa, or to a generic civilizational 'we' whose reference can both expand and contract. The latter reaches its apotheosis in Campbell's essay 'Fetish Worship in South Africa' (*Voorslag* July 1926), which can be described as a South

African reinscription of some Nietzschean and Freudian figures of thought. In characteristic modernist fashion Campbell is full of contempt for 'mass consciousness'. Crowds, and hence 'the average respectable citizen', are governed by self-interest and 'primitive instincts' (ibid.: 5). Their own 'superstitions, taboos and witch-rituals' are used 'as standards by which to gauge the barbarity of others' (ibid.). In a striking formal manoeuvre, Campbell organizes much of the essay as a dialogue between Writer and Reader. This allows him to achieve an internal distance between what we read as his own voice and the conventional wisdom of the Reader. The latter's attachment to the notion of 'White South Africa' is abhorrent to the Writer. This is the South Africa that is ruled by the fetish of 'Colour-prejudice' (ibid.: 13) and the mania for racial labelling. Here the first-person plural suddenly returns: 'this mania forces us to tie tickets on to things before they exist. It is all the outcome of fear[,] the strongest of all mob emotions, and it forces us into all sorts of necessary tyrannies' (ibid.: 14). The notion of 'White South Africa', he adds, is 'just vague and mystical enough to appeal to sentimentalists: and sentimentality is the chief quality of the South African character' (ibid.).

The 'we's' referential slippage between an English/civilizational and a (white) South African community stakes out the operative poles in *Voorslag*'s cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic: in Campbell's understanding, the journal's brief is to redefine both registers of cultural belonging. What the white South Africans take to be English is misinformed and outdated, and what they value as South African is deplorable. Although of a strikingly different temperament, William Plomer contributed to this mode of immanent critique in the satirical poem 'The Strandloopers' by his alter ego Pamela Willmore. A defunct Afrikaans word for a group among the Khoisan (actually spelt 'strandlopers'), Plomer uses it to mock delusions of racial superiority as well as social Darwinist conceptions of progress: 'Strandloopers? … / They had no stays or stockings, spectacles or boots! / … No bioscopes or beer or guns or daily press! / … Had they no culture? We have quite a lot' (*Voorslag* June 1926: 53).

With Plomer's poem we also glimpse another function of vernacularity in *Voorslag*. The translingual use of Afrikaans in the poem's title is of a piece with the ambition to produce a bilingual magazine (and even trilingual – there were plans to introduce Zulu (Gardner and Chapman 1985: 1)). Throughout much of the twentieth century, Afrikaans would often be invoked in English-language literary circles as a touchstone of South African authenticity and hence a refuge from the dominant yet derivative nature of Britishness – as indeed the very

name 'voorslag' signals. Although only three articles in Afrikaans and two Afrikaans translations of Catullus would ever be published in the eleven issues of *Voorslag*, this underlines the *symbolic* importance of including the language in the otherwise anglophone journal. By constraining comprehensibility, the inclusion of Afrikaans drew a clear boundary between local and foreign readers – just as the use of *both* languages at this time singled out the local public as white.

The tone of earnest aspiration in Laurens van der Post's essay 'Kuns Ontwikkeling in Afrikaans' ('The cultivation of art in Afrikaans') contrasts quite jarringly with Campbell's bombastic pronouncements and Plomer's satire. Van der Post rehearses here the Afrikaner narrative of struggle for cultural and linguistic self-determination, with both Dutch and English as antagonists – and without any mention of African languages. His point is to support the ambition to produce 'art' ('kuns') and 'literary works' ('letterkundige werke') in Afrikaans, a language he claims is still in its infancy. 'It was only yesterday', he writes, 'that they [Afrikaans writers] learned to write in their own language and it is with great uncertainty that they search for a proper form' (*Voorslag* July 1926: 42).[1] As can be expected, the 'properness' of form is measured against 'foreign' standards: 'in comparison to the age-old works from overseas [van die Buiteland] our literary harvest is very mediocre' (ibid.: 43).[2] This presents us with an ideal–typical statement of Casanovian world literary rivalry, in which the uneven vernacular–cosmopolitan relationship is not just a geographical or linguistic matter, but also a temporal one – the accumulated status of the 'age-old works' cannot be matched by will alone. The desirability of writing in Afrikaans is nonetheless understood, along Herderian lines, as axiomatic in Van der Post's piece.

There seems, then, to be both an ironic and an earnest deployment of vernacularity in *Voorslag*. Campbell's Nietzschean frame of mind pushed him towards a notional separation between the two, violently dismissing the settler vernacular of English South Africans (which he knew intimately) in terms of 'mediocrity' and 'crowd consciousness', while gesturing towards authentically vernacular values located elsewhere, among 'natives' or indeed – in a joking register – in a 'Wildebeeste' (gnu) who is 'self-contained and sufficient …

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[1] 'Hulle taal het hulle eers gister leer skryf en met groot onsekerheid tas hulle rond vir 'n juister vorm.' My translation here and elsewhere, unless otherwise indicated.
[2] '… in vergelyking met die eeuoue werk van die Buiteland is ons letterkundige oes baie middelslag.'

never goes about trying to inflict his language, his point of view, or the law of his existence on anybody else' (ibid.: 12). Indeed, '[i]f you try to make him swot up English or Afrikaans he simply kicks up his heels and scampers off. Whenever he wants to say anything he says "Kngrarhr!"' (ibid.). The true vernacular, it seems, lies beyond the boundaries of human culture altogether, a thought which boomerangs to knock down the high pretensions of Campbell's elitist cosmopolitanism. The wildebeeste, presented first as 'a photograph of a gentleman who belongs to an old, a very old South African family' (ibid.), is successful as a gag, but transforms the vernacular – in primitivist fashion – into a pure abstraction even as it supposedly directs, by way of a non-human animal, the reader's desire towards vitalist Being in its raw form. This is a parody of primitivism, signalling its exhaustion at the very moment of its aesthetic adoption in South Africa. The joke's deft evasion of the vernacular as a concrete *human and African* world of language amounts to a significant failure to bridge the distant and proximate by aesthetic means – a failure that ultimately retraces the alienated condition of settler colonial culture, or its lack of world.

Little magazines under high apartheid and late colonialism

The brief moment of *Voorslag* inspired followers such as *The Touleier* (1930) and *Trek* (1939–1952). Although the latter covered a much broader range of cultural and political issues, and also cultivated a left-leaning ethos, it is notable that *Trek* memorialized *Voorslag* in 1951 (Routh 1951a, 1951b), thereby constructing a particular lineage of South African cultural magazines. Insofar as these journals attempted to synchronize the (white) cultural clock with Western Europe, however, this project floundered in the apartheid era. The 1980 *EiA* issue mentioned earlier appeared in the wake of decades of turmoil for South African literature. The effect of the Publications and Entertainments Act, passed by the South African parliament in 1963, in combination with the older Supression of Communism Act was brutal. Ushered in by the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, this era of police raids, bannings and banishment effectively gagged a large group of writers within the borders of South Africa and forced large numbers into exile. Under such adverse conditions, could literary journals matter at all? In a qualified sense, yes. Being sometimes infinitesimally small, yet always connected locally and internationally in ways that the state's repressive

apparatus struggled to fathom, journals became critical players in the adaptive continuation of literary practice. My three examples in this section are *The New African*, *The Classic* and *The Purple Renoster*, with an emphasis on the latter. They range from the slightly bigger and more diverse in content (*New African*) to the extremely small and literary (*Renoster*).

Censorship under apartheid is a story of a mentally divided Afrikaner establishment. On the one hand the proliferation of mass media was seen as a threat to its core values, a threat typically coded as 'pornography'. On the other hand this establishment – in the spirit of Van der Post's essay in *Voorslag* – was equally anxious to appear contemporaneous with the West. As McDonald (2009) shows, censorship became for a period the state's tool for promoting a normative version of literature, understood in formalist (New Critical) terms and seen as a sign of an advanced culture. Instead of the intended separation between literature and politics, however, this policy drew them together more tightly than ever: in as much as the state had a stake in the literary field, literary practitioners would increasingly, and often reluctantly, have a stake in the political field. The journals themselves provide a remarkable record of this unfolding, and deteriorating, state of affairs.

The March 1964 issue of *The New African* notes, on its first page, that its offices had been raided and emptied by the police. All the back issues, counting from 1962, were held in police custody at Caledon Square, Cape Town. 'We are unable to anticipate the charge that may be brought against us', the editors write, 'for the reason that we are aware of having broken no laws.' The May 1964 issue reports that the offices were raided once again, with the police confiscating more than 2,000 copies of the March issue. This time the security police claimed to be investigating charges of obscenity on account of the story 'The Fugitives' by Can Themba. 'It is not the normal function of the Security Police to investigate such charges', the editors drily note, and defiantly hope that their readers are 'inspired rather than deterred by the attention we are receiving'. It did not end there, however: after their escape from South Africa (Vigne and Currey 2014), the editors rebooted *The New African* in London.

The Classic, which was started by the ill-fated Nat Nakasa and whose first appearance coincided with the passing of the Publications and Entertainments Act, had the same source of funding as *The New African* (see below), but contrary to the latter's political outspokenness, *The Classic* was forcibly pushed into a political corner – and almost crushed – by government policies. The editorial in issue four, which appeared in 1965, mournfully notes:

Nat Nakasa [*The Classic*'s first editor] has left South Africa on an exit permit and cannot return for as long as present rules persist.

…

These have been terrible times, insane times, when the simplest human values have been confused, labelled and belittled, and many of those who have sought to propagate them banned and imprisoned. People of all races and convictions have suffered terror and violence from the outrage of ninety days to the madness of the station explosion.

These are tired days, wounded days, but those initial values, which presume for all men the freedom to love, live, search and aspire, must not be neglected; and it is of them, to the best of its ability, that *Classic* will attempt to speak.

(*The Classic* 1964)

The Classic survived, but only just: it would take until 1966 for issue five to appear – produced in memory of Nat Nakasa, who had committed suicide in New York, and also eulogizing the Afrikaans poet Ingrid Jonker, who had ended her life in the same month of July 1965.

In *The Purple Renoster*, finally, we also find editorials in issues five (1963) and six (1966) that comment directly on the state's disruption of the literary field. My central example is the 1966 issue, but let us first reflect on some differences between these three journals. As is well known today, both *The New African* and *The Classic* were supported by the Farfield Foundation, which was secretly channelling funds from the CIA (Saunders 1999). This ambiguous financial security enabled professional production and distribution, and hence a noticeable (if still marginal) presence in the public sphere. *The New African* mentions the substantial circulation figure of 2,000, which reflects its more political orientation as well as its continental (African) address. Subtitled *The Radical Review*, it had a socialist edge and was always topical and connected to Africa at large. Even so, literary material enjoyed prominence, and writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ama Ata Aidoo and Ayi Kwei Armah published some of their earliest pieces in the journal. *The Classic*'s profile was narrower: its brief was to publish poetry, stories and essays, but with a contemporary African connection. It undertook to translate work from both francophone and lusophone writers, cultivating in this way a broader African ethos on behalf of the South African literary field. *The Purple Renoster*, finally, was narrowest – and the most local – of all, in McDonald's (2009: 119) view 'the most typical "little magazine" of the apartheid era'. Having first appeared in 1956, it was almost entirely managed by its editor, the physically challenged Lionel Abrahams, and

had no mass impact whatsoever. Indeed, by Abrahams's own admission in 1966, its sporadic appearance meant that it could better be described as 'an irregular series of small anthologies' (*The Purple Renoster* 6, 1966: 6) than a periodical.

On a Bourdieusian field map, *The New African* would count as the most heteronomous, and *The Purple Renoster* as the most 'purely' literary – with *The Classic* between the two, but closer to the *Renoster*. Yet all three were affected by state legislation, and all three register this fact on their pages. Here we come up against the question of form, genre and rhetoric. What can a little magazine do when faced with state repression? And what happens to the specific values cultivated by its makers?

The Purple Renoster offers a remarkable vantage point from which to consider these questions. The name itself is a performance of vernacular inventiveness: *renoster* means 'rhinoceros' in Afrikaans, with purple thrown in as a surreal twist. In the words of Abrahams's inaugural editorial in 1956, the journal was dedicated to 'writing done in response to the need for self-expression – as distinct from that produced primarily to the requirements of journalism, academicism and crusaderism' (*The Purple Renoster* 1, 1956: 3). Indeed, that first editorial begins with some statements that manifest this turn away from purposefulness:

> The point about purple is its pointlessness. We never saw a purple renoster, we never hope to see one; we can tell you anyhow that we're jolly well going to be one. Not because we have any ideas about what purple is pertinent to. We freely admit, in fact, that so far as we can see, it is thoroughly impertinent. And from our point of view all contributors to 'The Purple Renoster' will be (to vary a phrase from one of them) Impertinent Writers.
>
> (Ibid.)

This gives some idea of the journal's spirit: a purposeful purposelessness, along the lines of Kantian aesthetics – but with humour. This is the domain of Gadamer's 'play'. It is hardly a coincidence that the words 'purple', 'purpose' and 'purposeless' are in such sonorous proximity.

So far, then, it would seem as though the *The Purp(ose)le(ss) Renoster* fits perfectly in the Bourdieusian–Casanovian schema. Abrahams is deliberately positioning himself and his journal along the autonomous side of the field, pursuing literature for its own sake and not in response to any external specification or demand, and certainly not for economic profit. Following Casanova's model, it would seem that *Renoster* attempts to synchronize itself with the world republic of letters. Physically distant from the 'capitals' of Paris, London and New York, Abrahams's journal makes a bid for proximity to the autonomous pole in the social space of world literature.

Such an analysis ignores, however, how the dynamics of the local literary field in South Africa reconfigured the logic of literary legitimacy. Issue six of *The Purple Renoster* appeared a full ten years after the first. On the back of this 1966 issue, there is an intriguing inscription:

> ONE HAS ONE'S DOUBTS
> ABOUT 50,000,000 FRENCH-
> MEN … BUT THE S. B. (*),
> THE P. C. B. (**) & THIRTY-
> NINE SUBSCRIBERS (***)
> CAN'T BE WRONG ………
> :: THE PURPLE RENOSTER::
> NEEDS LOOKING INTO

The asterisks are explained at the foot of the page: S. B. (Security Branch) means 'cops', P. C. B. (Publications Control Board) means 'censors' and the thirty-nine subscribers are defined as 'connoisseurs'. There is a drama going on here, with *The Purple Renoster* at its centre. Although cryptic, it speaks with uncanny precision to Casanova's much later model. The '50,000,000 FRENCHMEN' gestures self-ironically towards France and Paris as the world centre of culture – *as if* the *Renoster* belonged there as a matter of course. But the inscription tells us that the *real* significance of the *Renoster* – its legitimacy – is instead secured jointly by agents of the state plus the thirty-nine subscribers, the 'connoisseurs' who make up a strategic section of the local literary field.

The editorial clarifies matters. Presenting it as an 'Open letter to the Publications Control Board', Lionel Abrahams launches here a furious yet witty attack on the government. He begins, characteristically, by distancing himself from politics as such. Whatever the ideology, politicians make Abrahams 'itch, writhe and rattle with unbelief, fear, revulsion, the moment they militate and thus cease to be their tolerable philosophical selves' (*The Purple Renoster* 6, 1966: 3). The only politicians he can trust are those 'whose causes are lost' and 'instead of deceiving their followers and fellows, get deceived by them' (ibid.). This establishes precisely a *literary* distance from daily politics. And yet, Abrahams must admit, he himself has been launched into a 'ludicrous political "career"' by the Publications Control Board and the Security Branch.

What follows is an account of how his home had been raided by the police one July morning in 1964, in search of subversive and incriminating writings. A few months later he was again visited by police brandishing a copy of *The Purple Renoster* issue five, 'one of an unintentionally limited edition of *under 200*, then

some *fifteen months old*' (emphasis in original), as he poignantly adds. This time the journal was being confiscated because of a short story by Barney Simon, 'Dolores', which the PCB deemed to be pornographic. 'During this operation', Abrahams writes, 'I allowed myself to opine that [the policeman] and his colleagues were not confining themselves strictly to real matters of state security. But that outburst must be set down to political naivete' (*The Purple Renoster* 6, 1966: 4).

With *Renoster* issue five declared an 'undesirable publication', Abrahams is compelled to register his strong disagreement:

> [M]y contention is that the obscene elements of the narrative are artistically functional, and that the effective emotion is not salaciousness but agonised compassion for people caught in common traps between destructiveness and suffering. Only an unintelligent reading could fail to intergrate [*sic*] the elements to the humane, serious and poetic purpose.
>
> (*The Purple Renoster* 6, 1966: 4)

Exploiting the moment, Abrahams uses the editorial to object to the PCB's banning of Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* before going for the kill: for all their boorishness and repressiveness, the censors repeatedly affirm 'the power of our particular armament, WORDS'. In a 'verbal war' against a government that displays such a '*terror of words*' (emphasis in original), Abrahams affirms, '*The Purple Renoster* can play some tiny role. For it, the battle will consist in publishing what seems worthy to us, without prior reference to the possibility of your discredited proscriptions'. Hence, he concludes, if 'this conduct constitutes politics, then … my political career is not yet over' (ibid.: 5–6). The crowning joke that confirms this assumption can be seen in issue ten (1970): the contents page announces that the issue is 'Edited by Lionel Abrahams, with the Publications Control Board, the Minister of Justice, the police force and the legal profession'. By this time, Abrahams's own dedication to local literature had resulted in the publication of young poets such as Mongane Serote, Oswald Mtshali and Njabulo Ndebele, whose work radically vitalized South African literature in the years to come (see Davis 2016 on Mtshali). In relation to *The Purple Renoster* it is clear that Abrahams's negotiation of political pressures was more than merely belletristic. His editorials register not just a shift in his own literary habitus, but a wider transformation of literary legitimacy in South Africa. Part of this transformation consisted in attrition and diasporization through the 'restlessness' of apartheid (Bethlehem 2018), but another aspect was the recoding of literary value. Abrahams's 1966 editorial says, in effect, that the literary itself has become political. What he ironically calls his 'political career'

becomes in this respect fully consistent with his 'literary career' – he keeps on doing the same thing as before, it is just that the *state* has now forcibly defined it as political. But as his closing paragraphs warn, the state has thereby imposed itself upon a field of activity that it fails to understand.

Curious continuities: *Caliban* and *Charrua* in Mozambique

Geographically proximate to South Africa, Mozambique's social and cultural distance from its neighbour is often astoundingly great. Language is clearly a factor in maintaining this distance – especially in the literary domain. In a biographical note on the Mozambican novelist Ungulani ba ka Khosa, we read that in 1984 he joined 'a crazy, dreaming, schizofrenic group of youths who decided, in the midst of a drinking bout, to start the best literary journal in the world: *Charrua*' (Khosa 1990).[3] Predictably, this lusophone journal had no impact whatsoever in South Africa, but was decisive for the development of Mozambican literature. Eight issues appeared in Maputo between 1984 and 1986, before it was abruptly discontinued. When Ungulani's bio was published in 1990 (in an edition of his first novel, *Ualalapi*), *Charrua* had already made its mark.

   Mozambique in the mid-1980s was a post-colony in crisis: nothing in the daily lives of people could be taken for granted, neither bread nor cooking oil – and least of all the technical and material resources required to publish a literary journal. The immediate reasons behind this situation were multiple. One was the decision by the ruling party Frelimo, following the successful revolution and achievement of independence in Mozambique in 1975, to adopt an authoritarian Marxist-Leninist path of social transformation. The Soviet-style planned economy, including the collectivization of agriculture, was a dismal failure. Both agricultural and industrial production dropped by half between 1979 and 1982 (Marcum 2018: 175–6), resulting in a situation of scarcity that alienated large parts of the population from Frelimo. Another, later reason behind the crisis was destabilization by the South African-trained and -funded rebel group Renamo. In a harrowing hybrid of a civil war and a proxy war, fought partly on behalf of the apartheid government, Renamo brought Mozambique to its knees in the latter half of the 1980s (Vines 1991). When *Charrua* started publishing in 1984,

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[3] 'Em 1984 junta-se a uma malta maluca, sonhadora, esquizofrénica, que resolve, no meio duma bebedeira, fundar a melhor revista literária do mundo: *Charrua*' (Khosa 1990).

this conflict was beginning to affect the country badly, although Maputo would remain under Frelimo's control throughout the conflict.

In other words, *Charrua* appeared at a moment of embattled decolonization, in a country with very low – but rising – levels of alphabetic literacy, thinly spread competence in the national language (Portuguese) and a political system with limited tolerance of dissent. And yet its makers intended it to be 'the best literary journal in the world'. There seems to be a glaring misfit here between these historical circumstances, which all speak of adversity and a nationalistic post-revolutionary fervour, and the strong cosmopolitan attachment to literature expressed in that ambition.

An excerpt from the poem 'A arte de viver' ('The Art of Living') by Armando Artur, published in the third issue of *Charrua*, gives us one iteration of this attachment:

> I inhabit the halo of my verses
> where, tirelessly
> I rhyme words that lack rhyme
> and dry tears without weeping
>
> …
>
> here is the reason
> because I dream without sleeping
> because I fly without wings
> because I live without a life
>
> behind these verses I hide
> the treasure of my contrariety
> the mystery of my infirmity
> the fetish of my eternity

(*Charrua* 3, 1984: 31)[4]

4   'Habito no halo
    dos meus versos
    onde incansavelmente
    rimo palavras sem rima
    e seco lágrimas sem pranto

    …

    eis a razão
    porque sonho sem sono
    porque voo sem asas
    porque vivo sem vida

    no avesso destes versos, escondo
    o tesouro da minha contrariedade
    o mistério da minha enfermidade
    e o feitiço da minha eternidade'

For anyone trained in Western literary history, this is fully *recognizable* as a lyric poem. We are confronted here with the subdued voice of a speaker, the 'I', who expands on his or her subjectivity by way of paradox. Intensely self-reflexive, it stages the act of writing poetry as a metaphor for subjectivation. The poem shapes this metaphor through the familiar gesture of ineffability. It is grasping at a truth beyond the words themselves, in their negative spaces, 'behind these verses'. Read in this detached form, the poem gives us no clue as to where it is written – besides the obvious fact that it is written in Portuguese, which covers many potential locations. Determining *when* is slightly easier: the lack of regular rhyme, the anaphoric repetitions and the self-reflexive paradoxes signal lyric modernism of one kind or another.

Artur was not alone. Key figures in the *Charrua* group, notably Ungulani and the poet Eduardo White, gave the magazine a strong – if not consistent – modernist profile. *Charrua* became in this way the vehicle of a post-revolutionary literary generation whose core group consisted of no more than a dozen writers and intellectuals in their mid-twenties and early thirties. Few though they were, under the auspices of the official Mozambican Writers' Association, AEMO, they were given free rein to shape their journal. On one reading, then, *Charrua* presents us with a little-magazine scenario not unlike *Voorslag*'s: a *Sturm und Drang*, an up-and-coming generation of writers vying for recognition and using a journal as a springboard to enter the literary field. They succeeded to such an extent that their influence has been seen as an obstacle to later generations of writers (Manjate 2018). But the question remains: how do we make sense of *Charrua*'s modernist impulse from the inside out, as a distinct product of the city of Maputo in a critical phase of its history? Although its deployment of modernism and literary distance invites some comparison with *Voorslag* on a formal level, the historical position of *Charrua*'s makers is dramatically different to that of Campbell and Plomer. *Charrua* was a distinctly decolonizing endeavour, which challenges us, to borrow Simon Gikandi's (2011: 163) phrasing, to account for 'the literature of decolonization as a distinctive event in literary history'. Both terms, 'decolonization' and 'literary history', are important here, given that *Charrua*'s literary decolonization proceeeded on different premises than the state-driven decolonization of Frelimo. Indeed, to some extent it can be read alongside what Gikandi (ibid.: 165) calls 'narratives of delegitimation' which question the post-colonial nationalist project. Such a claim needs, however, *also* to acknowledge *Charrua*'s investment in the nation, which we can register in the title of the journal. The Portuguese word 'charrua' means 'plough'; this alludes to

the hoe, one of the three pictorial elements in the Mozambican flag, where, not so coincidentally, we also find an open book. At first blush, then, the journal's name explicitly endorsed Frelimo's national project. The introductory editorial plays around with this:

> No, dear reader.
>
> This 'Plough'/'Charrua' does not issue from the Ministry of Agriculture. 'Charrua' is a literary journal produced by the young writers of the Mozambican Writers' Association.
>
> But why in that case 'Plough'/'Charrua'? … The reason is that this plough-journal … intends, in the field of literature and culture more generally, to be a most valuable implement at the service of Mozambican literature and arts.
>
> …
>
> These youngsters, dear reader, understand that with this 'plough' they will not be sowing anything, since the seed was already cast in the soil a long time ago. What they will be doing, however, is to turn the soil, to scrape and rend it with the force of this 'Plough'/'Charrua' so the seed will germinate better.
>
> (*Charrua* 1, 1984: 3)[5]

The rhetorical strategy is clear: the editorial's *captatio benevolentiae* – its bonding with its public – consists in deferring both to the imperative of post-colonial nation-building and to the older generation of anti-colonialists. It even pays homage to 'the labourers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, soldiers and other workers in the vanguard' – one of the few times this vocabulary is used in the journal. By saying that the seed was sown a long time ago, the editorial stresses continuity, not rupture. Hence the journal is presented as sharing a common purpose with Frelimo's state-driven decolonization, and the theme of nation-building recurs in later issues. Number five/six (1985) celebrates the tenth anniversary of independence, and there are occasional poems and stories that speak the language of anti-imperialist struggle and socialist internationalism. But the name *Charrua* could also be read as a purely literary choice: although the hoe represented in the flag is normally called *enxada*, *charrua* is more forceful and sonorous. This attentiveness to the poetic function, which recalls the

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5   'Não leitor amigo. Esta "Charrua" não é do Ministério da Agricultura. A "Charrua" é uma revista literária dos jovens escritores da Associação dos Escritores Moçambicanos. Mas, então, porquê "Charrua"? … É que esta charrua-revista … pretende ser, no campo da literatura e da cultura em geral, uma preciosíssima alfaia ao serviço das artes e das letras moçambicanas. … Estes jovens, caro leitor, entendem que, com esta "charrua", não vão semear nada, pois, a semente há muito foi lançada à terra. Pretendem, isso sim, revolver a terra, rasgá-la com a força desta "Charrua" para que a semente germine melhor.'

inward, self-reflexive turn we saw in Artur's poem, speaks to *Charrua*'s frequent valorization of literature as a world of its own and of writing as a desire and a craft (as well as the writing of desire – erotic themes are prominent).

The attachment to literature for its own sake is a constant feature of all eight issues. Examples are poetry by Fernando Pessoa, Aimé Césaire, Manuel Alegre and Vinicius de Moraes; the previously mentioned quotations from Char, Sartre, Dante and Brecht; presentations of Angolan writers Luandino Vieira and Pepetela; Ungulani ba ka Khosa's long essay on Ernest Hemingway in the third issue; various discussions of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nikolai Gogol, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Federico García Lorca and Nazim Hikmet; and trenchant presentations of Mozambican writers such as José Craveirinha, Rui Knopfli, Noémia de Sousa, Orlando Mendes and Rui Nogar. Tellingly, *Charrua*'s section for literary criticism, 'Reticências', is launched in the first issue with an essay by Khosa called 'Writing, this virus!' ('A escrita, esse vírus!') and introduced with a quotation from Roland Barthes's *Critique et vérité*:

> To go from reading to criticism is to change desires, it is no longer to desire the work but to desire one's own language. But by that very process it is to send the work back to the desire to write from which it arose. And so discourse circulates around the book: *reading, writing*: all literature goes from one desire to another.
>
> (Barthes 2007: 40, emphasis in original)[6]

This celebration of textuality as a self-generating machinery of desire serves to support the cultivation of Mozambican literary criticism ('the only criticism in the country that has found its form is sports writing' (*Charrua* 1, 1984: 11)). It mirrors the meta-lyrical aesthetic of Artur's poem discussed above, which posits a subjectivity as being produced by the two sides of the verses.

To understand the conditions of possibility for this modernist tendency in post-revolutionary Mozambique, it may help to consider a precursor to *Charrua*: Rui Knopfli and Antonio Quadros's *Caliban*, four issues of which appeared in 1971 and 1972. In some respects, *Caliban* could be described as a lusophone revival of *Voorslag*. Just as Campbell reviewed T. S. Eliot's *The Waste-Land* in the first 1926 issue of *Voorslag*, the first issue of *Caliban* opened with a brief essay on Eliot by Eugénio Lisboa, followed by Rui Knopfli's Portuguese translation

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6   In the unattributed Portuguese translation as it appears in *Charrua*: 'Passar da leitura à crítica é deixar de desejar a obra para a própria linguagem. Mas, pelo mesmo acto, é também remeter a obra para o desejo da escrita, que a gerou. Assim gira a fala em termos do livro: Ler, escrever, de um desejo para o outro caminha a leitura' (*Charrua* 1, 1984: 11).

of *Ash Wednesday*. Without any editorial paratext, and with content consisting almost entirely of poetry, *Caliban* styles itself as a quintessentially modernist little magazine: a journal and a poetic–artistic performance at one and the same time. Russell Hamilton's (1975: 228) early assessment of it as 'a cosmopolitan Mozambican magazine' in which the majority of contributions should be considered as 'Euro-African' rather than African remains valid. Yet for all that, the historical preconditions enabling *Caliban*'s attempt at relocating modernism in 1971 were radically different from *Voorslag*'s English settler context in 1920s Natal. Decolonization had swept across Africa; Mozambique was embroiled in a war of liberation that soon enough, in 1974, precipitated a coup in Portugal and the subsequent independence in Mozambique in 1975. Hamilton (1975: 227) perceptively recognizes that *Caliban*, as indicated in the title, is grappling with 'the problem of an African poetry in European expression'. Its relocation of Euro-modernist linguistic reflexivity reveals in this way – and nowhere more clearly than in the poems by José Craveirinha in issues one and three/four – a spuriously 'universal' theme to be an historically entangled one.

For all its 'cosmopolitan flavor' and occasional tendency to reduce Africa to a 'decorative' element (ibid.: 224), *Caliban* did not come from nowhere. Indeed, its cosmopolitan orientation was an integral part of the local literary scene. As both Hamilton's and other accounts have shown (Helgesson 2009), late-colonial Lourenço Marques (as Maputo was called then) developed, from the 1940s onwards, a small but vibrant literary culture that enabled the emergence of subsequently canonized writers such as Luís Bernardo Honwana, and the above-mentioned De Sousa, Craveirinha and Knopfli. Even in *Caliban*, with its privileging of the lyric voice and lack of paratextual commentary, this lineage is acknowledged in Knopfli's homage in issue two to the poet Fonseca Amaral, 'Notas para a recordação do meu mestre Fonseca Amaral', where he describes his mentor as a catalysing presence in the post-1945 milieu. Knopfli's list of cultural practitioners whose progress in 'the adventure of creativity' Amaral had supported include De Sousa, Craveirinha and Rui Guerra (by then a well-known film director in Brazil), as well as himself (*Caliban* 2, 1970).

Caliban's cosmopolitan–vernacular constellation of poets and poetry reverberates in this way with *Charrua*'s poetics a dozen years later. The essays in *Charrua* devoted to Orlando Mendes (*Charrua* 4, 1984), Craveirinha (ibid.), and Knopfli (*Charrua* 5–6, 1985), and indeed Fátima Mendonça's survey of literature since independence (*Charrua* 7, 1985), all establish subterranean links with *Caliban* and the longer literary history of Maputo. Not only had

Caliban published work by Mendes, Craveirinha and Knopfli, but Mendonça's mention of Mutimati Bernabé's *Eu, o povo* ('I, the people') bridges the late-colonial, anti-colonial and post-colonial phases of Mozambican poetry: Mutimati Bernabé was the pseudonym of the Portuguese painter and poet António Quadros (1933–1994; not to be confused with the philosopher António Quadros, 1923–1993), who lived for many years in Mozambique. It was with Quadros that Knopfli started *Caliban*, and Quadros also featured in *Caliban* under the pseudonym Frey Iohannes Garabatus. Quadros's practice is reminiscent of Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms, and it is striking how his two personages are positioned at different ends of the colonial endeavour, with Garabatus parodying the diction of the sixteenth-century imperial apologist Camões and Mutimati Bernabé presented as a poet emerging from the depths of the Mozambican populace.

But if we acknowledge these local continuities and resonances as an enabling condition for *Charrua*, it is equally important to recognize that *Charrua* was both more cosmopolitan and more vernacular than *Caliban*. The constellation of writers published and mentioned in its pages requires a wide range of descriptors: modernist, realist, European, African, Western, lusophone, Latin American, national, anti-colonial, post-colonial, to some extent socialist. Its poetry and prose, on the other hand, tends to draw more directly on Mozambican – indeed, African – lexicons and locations than anything in *Caliban*. 'Writing back' to the former imperial centre is in this regard mostly a non-issue in *Charrua*. The magazine instead lays out the coordinates of a literary world on its own terms. By weaving the work of Mozambican writers into the weft of literatures from elsewhere, it achieves a distinct, momentary amalgam of literary distance and proximity on behalf of a Mozambican imaginary. Its 'autonomy' consists in the freedom to elect affinities within the discourse network of printed literature. The condition is of course that this occurs in Portuguese as the vehicular language, but Portuguese serves also as a meeting point for multiple Mozambican languages – which figure intermittently on the pages – and the multilingual constellation of distant writing. This is *Charrua*'s distinct 'translingual event' (Helgesson and Kullberg 2018).

The combination of distant and proximate literature is matched by the ardent desire of the *Charrua* writers themselves to make their mark in this world. After painting a depressing picture of the individual fates of Gogol, Hemingway, Lorca, Mayakovsky, Hikmet and others in the essay 'Writing, this virus!', Ungulani inscribes himself in this community of the damned:

It is with some trepidation I contemplate this wave of young people – among whom I include myself – that have been attacked by the virus of writing. Sometimes I ask myself if this virus will persist or disappear … I want to be a writer. It is a desire. It is a challenge. And if I can't be a writer? Should I commit suicide? Become a bureaucrat, enter the mechanical hum-drum of daily work.

(*Charrua* 1, 1984: 12)[7]

Ungulani did become a writer and his novel *Ualalapi* (1987) is a modern classic. It is really here, in this novel's amalgamation of the verbal force of modernist disillusionment and distinctly Mozambican histories of the arrogance of power, that his aesthetic aspirations in *Charrua* are realized. But ironically, Ungulani also became a bureaucrat (at the national book and record institute). This says something about the precarious nature of *Charrua*'s attachment to the figure of the wayward, independent artist. I read therefore young Ungulani's self-doubt as not merely subjective but also symptomatic (and prescient): a tell-tale sign of the fragility of both *Charrua*'s literary decolonization and the state-driven decolonization of Frelimo.

As 'a distinctive event in literary history', to rehearse Gikandi's (2011: 163) phrase, the eight issues of *Charrua* were a pivotal moment in the search for literary form in post-colonial Mozambique. This decisiveness is confirmed by the republication of the eight issues a few years ago. The freedom exercised to imagine literature anew was obviously facilitated by national liberation in 1975. But the *Charrua* writers also cultivated a Maputo-based *longue durée* of literature which harked back to the mid-twentieth century. The issues repeatedly activated the memory of previous Maputo journals and earlier writers whose literary orientation had been strikingly cosmopolitan. And now, in turn, *Charrua* has entered this *longue durée*, with at least four of its writers having become canonical names in Mozambican literature: Ungulani, Artur, Eduardo White and Nelson Saúte.

According to Artur (2021), *Charrua* died a natural death in 1986: 'The journal ended when each of us found that we had strong enough legs to stand on our own, that is, when we were sufficiently emancipated to publish works of

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7 'Há um certo temor que me avassala ao ver esta vaga de jovens – em que eu me insiro – a ser atacada pelos vírus da escrita. Por vezes interrogo-me se essa vírus perdurará ou soçabrará … Quero ser escritor. É um desejo. É um desafio. E se não for escritor? Suicidar-me-ei? Tornar-me-ei num burocrata, assumindo essa mecânica diária de trabalho … '

our own.'[8] It had served its purpose to create a world in which its writers could dwell. But in a dialectical spirit, this also needs to be recognized as an imperfect moment: in gender terms, *Charrua*'s version of autonomy was seriously flawed. The journal was a male affair (almost the only exceptions were poems by Clotilde Silva in issues seven and eight, plus Fátima Mendonça's essay); its erotic texts were male-focalized; its affiliative impulse was homosocial. This is particularly ironic considering its name: in Mozambique, it is women who have traditionally done most of the agricultural work. In that respect, and also generally with regard to the limited reach of print literature in Mozambique, it spoke eloquently *in* the nation, but could never quite speak *for* the nation.

Concluding discussion

If, with Ezra Pound, we take the form of the little magazine to constitute a 'core' rather than a 'container' of literary renewal, what conclusions can be drawn from these southern African cases as regards their world-making capacity? They share, to begin with, a certain anarchic potential, often deploying satirical and ironic modes. This enables them to summon a public and a counterpublic at one and the same time. If one agrees that *Voorslag*, *The Purple Renoster*, *Caliban* and *Charrua* all engage literature as a public value, their different instantiations of literary distance tend to scramble sanctioned conceptions of literature in their particular historical context. Their long-term efficacy – which contradicts their ephemeral appearance – has something to do with how literature, through its specific attention to language as play, tinkers with the inner workings of the creation of publics. Lionel Abrahams was right to say that the apartheid state was out of its depth when it challenged the protean domain of literature – the complexities of its censorship regime notwithstanding. Warner's (2002: 51) point that 'there could be an infinite number of publics within the social totality' is the authoritarian ruler's nightmare but the enabling condition of literature. Warner again:

> Public discourse, in the nature of its address, abandons the security of its positive, given audience. It promises to address anybody. It commits itself in principle to

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[8] 'A revista terminou quando achamos que cada um de nos tinha pernas para andar sozinho, isto é, quando nós achamos emancipados no sentido da publicação individual das obras.' Personal communication, 17 March 2021.

the possible participation of any stranger. It therefore puts at risk the concrete world that is its given condition of possibility. This is its fruitful perversity.

(Ibid.: 81)

In the examples studied in this chapter, the tension between the constraints of a lived world and the apparently open address of literature across time and space is extreme but differently structured in each journal. Armed with fresh readings from Europe, Campbell attempted in *Voorslag* to reconfigure a specific white anglo public in South Africa. In a more understated register, Abrahams cultivated a locally based literary micro-public – and was thrown into a contest with state power. This happened not by design but by default, since the 'fruitful perversity' of the literary address in *The Purple Renoster* was read literally as perverse by the state. Abrahams managed, however, to reintegrate this legal challenge and personal threat with flair as an element of the journal's address. In the passing of the literary torch from *Caliban* to *Charrua* in Maputo, finally, we encounter the local articulation of modernist poetics from two almost diametrically opposed historical vantage points. If for Knopfli and Quadros the main constraint was their positioning as dissident white *colons* during the mounting crisis of Portuguese colonialism, for the contributors to *Charrua* it was the rapid deterioration of the promise that the revolution had held for them. The peculiar transtemporal address of literature as play had different implications in both cases, although the modernist repertoires activated by the journals overlapped. *Charrua* incorporated and recoded, one might say, the cosmopolitan impetus of *Caliban*.

But the constraints of literary address itself, as actualized through specific translingual events, must also be acknowledged – and here we can register a severe limitation in Warner's model, which treats language transparently. Although the anglophone South African journals ventured, in 'white South African' fashion, into Afrikaans territory, other African languages were absent from their pages. Vernacularity was in this way restricted to the white domain, as exemplified by Laurens van der Post's Afrikaans essay. The aborted plan to make *Voorslag* trilingual by including Zulu remains an unexplored enigma, but might have resulted in a far more experimental journal. As for the parallel trajectories of English and Portuguese, they demonstrate the potential for linguistically discrete cosmopolitanisms to be articulated in the same region while excluding other African languages. *Charrua*, with its occasional code-switching and inclusion of various Mozambican languages, is the only limited exception among the cases

discussed here; others would be *Two Tone* in Zimbabwe, which published poetry in Shona, and *Staffrider*, which was more translingual in its practices.

The overdetermined predominance of English, Portuguese and to some extent Afrikaans rehearses the colonial framing of the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic in southern African literatures. Yet as the form of the little magazine demonstrated for a period, this framing has been susceptible to repeated adjustments. Or, to use another vocabulary, writers and editors succeeded in changing the structure of the region's literary fields through momentary crystallizations of their efforts in the material form of the journal. This is one point from which to develop a more comprehensive comparative account of little magazines as a world-making form.

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Worlds in a tangle: The promotion of writing in India between the vernacular and the global

Per Ståhlberg

Koshy's Parade Café is a rare institution in the south Indian City of Bengaluru. It is located at the intersection of Saint Marks Road and Church Street, in a part of town where most roads still have colonial names. With its wood-panelled walls, sparsely decorated with old black-and-white photographs, Koshy's has an atmosphere of bygone days. This is a place where a guest can sit undisturbed with only a cup of coffee and escape the hectic life of urban India. One weekend in late February I dropped by after a long, hot day at the *Times of India* Literary Festival, organized in Bengaluru. I needed a quiet place where I could prepare for an upcoming meeting with a local author. It was not by chance that I ended up in Koshy's. The author I was about to meet had written a celebrated novel in which an establishment called 'Coffee House' figures prominently: a place which has not changed its name for a hundred years, and where the protagonist spends many hours. From a book review in a South Indian daily I had learned that Coffee House was most likely modelled on Koshy's Parade Café. When I sat down at my table waiting, things did indeed appear very much as in the literary version. Even the unobtrusive waiter had the same name as the one in the novel, displayed on a tag on his shirt. It was Vincent!

When I read the book, I found it somewhat peculiar that this place seemed to have a double significance throughout the narrative. In Coffee House the protagonist regularly escapes the narrow, suffocating world of his own family life, but it is also a textual location in which I, as the reader of the novel, feel comfortable. Coffee House represents that kind of place one often searches for when visiting a bustling city for the first time and looking for something to eat or drink; an eatery with a flavour of local authenticity – but in a familiar way that makes you feel at ease.

Another thing was odd, too. Except for the protagonist's home, Coffee House is the only location of any major importance in that novel. There are no imaginative descriptions of other sites or situations referring to the city in which the story takes place. Bengaluru is, however, fairly well known around the world as the Indian capital of information technology – though more often by its former colonial name, Bangalore. It was here, at a downtown golf course with a view from the first tee of the office buildings of Microsoft and IBM, that a *New York Times* columnist got the inspiration for a book about globalization in the twenty-first century, in which he claimed that the world was now 'flat' (Friedman 2005). From my table at Koshy's, I saw nothing reminiscent of a flat world. Neither did the novel I had read narrate a cosmopolitan hi-tech India; it closely revolved around a middle-class Bengaluru family, with very few details that related the story to the outer world in any specific scale or period of time. Still, this novel had a publishing career that could very well illuminate Franco Moretti's (2013: 45) claim that 'literature around us is now unmistakably a planetary system'. A confusing tangle of 'worlds' – local and planetary, real and literary, familiar and unfamiliar, contemporary and bygone – frame this chapter.

The next Indian novel

Since Salman Rushdie's breakthrough with *Midnight's Children* in 1981, fiction writers of Indian origin have been conspicuously present in the global arena of literature. Authors and titles appearing regularly on lists of essential reading from India are, apart from Rushdie, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993), Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* ([1996] 1995), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Kirin Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008). What all these writers, as well as a number of other globally successful India-born authors – Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Pankaj Mishra, Vikram Chandra – have in common is that they write in English (several of them are also expatriate Indians) and not in any of the other twenty-two official languages spoken (and increasingly also read and written) by the overwhelming majority of Indian citizens.[1] This is of course a fact that over the years has aroused debate (I return to the subject later) but also a widely

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[1] English is also an official Indian language.

spread expectation that *the next* Indian success novel will be a translation from a language such as Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam or perhaps Hindi. What could there be beyond the Indian English novel, waiting to be discovered by international publishers, critics and readers?

Thus, in a manner of speaking, Vivek Shanbhag's *Ghachar Ghochar* – the novel alluded to in the vignette above – had been anticipated. Written in the South Indian language of Kannada and first published in 2013 by Akshara Prakashana, it was translated into English two years later and published by the Indian subsidiary of HarperCollins. Domestically it was marketed under the imprint Harper Perennial, which is devoted to translations into English of writings from various languages on the Indian subcontinent. The translation was fairly well received by Indian reviewers, and in 2017 it was also published in the UK (by Faber and Faber) and in the US (by Penguin). Soon it began to travel further, as it appeared in an increasing number of editions and translations. Review after review praised the novel, and much of this enthusiasm seemed to arise precisely from the fact that the book was not originally written in English. The reviewer in *The Guardian* claimed that this book 'shows what we've been missing, and it proves the necessity of translations for a dynamic literary culture' (Smith 2017). In *The New York Times*, *Ghachar Ghochar* was heralded as 'the finest Indian novel in a decade, notable for a book in bhasha, one of India's vernacular languages' (Sehgal 2017). When the book was published in Swedish, critics were keen to note that this was an international breakthrough for literature originally written in an Indian language (Andersson 2019, Olsson 2019). Few readers could miss the point, which was furthermore emphasized by the fact that the original title of the novel was kept in all translations. There was some wittiness in this halo of authenticity: the expression 'ghachar ghochar' is a literary invention and has no meaning in the Kannada language. In the world of the novel, though, it has the meaning of something being messed up – in a tangle.

Numerous reviewers around the world framed the book as the new 'Great Indian Novel' and mentioned the author alongside such authors as Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy – Shanbhag is sometimes even called an Indian Chekhov. This does not pass unnoticed in India. Boosted by its international success, *Ghachar Ghochar* was successively translated into several other Indian languages and published by regional publishers. Vivek Shanbhag became a celebrity, personifying a new generation of regional Indian writers expected by many in the Indian book industry to be on the rise. He appeared on the leading stage of Indian literature, the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), several years in

a row, and also at a number of other literary events around India and across the world. When I finally met him in Bengaluru he had just participated in a panel on 'Fiction in Indian Languages: Narratives Across Regions' at the local literature festival.

One may ask why this particular book came to fulfil the expectations of an Indian-language novel and enter the circuit of 'world literature'. Is it some literary quality of the book that made its destiny, or is it perhaps the market skills of those actors and organizations involved in creating and promoting the novel? It is never obvious if one could find an answer to this question in the book itself or in the outside world (see Hofmeyr 2004). Perhaps it is even a pointless question to ask? It may be more reasonable to ask how it all happened. This is an empirical question that is approached quite often as we follow the career of *Ghachar Ghochar* throughout this chapter. My general query, though, is somewhat larger.

The vernacular domain

What initially provoked my curiosity was neither this specific book nor the anticipation of new Indian writing among literature reviewers in the US and Europe. I mentioned that Vivek Shanbhag on several occasions had participated in the JLF, the mega-event that attracts hundreds of thousands of people to the capital of Rajasthan in late January each year. Incidentally, for a couple of those years (2017–2018) I had also attended the festival (Ståhlberg 2019). What had caught my attention was an apparent paradox concerning this event. The JLF is not just the largest Indian literary festival, it is also promoted as an arena for 'world literature', visited by authors and audiences from all over the globe, and is claimed to be the largest free literary festival in the world. Most panels are convened in English and much attention is paid to the invited international celebrities. Still, in this setting literature in regional languages seemed to be of utmost concern. In the programme, on the stages and in my conversations with publishers, authors and literary critics there was a relentless preoccupation with fiction in Indian languages and by writers from regions outside the metropolitan cities. What was this all about?

I felt confused. It seemed that this concern with regional literature was moving between contexts: sometimes it was discussed in terms of literary quality ('regional writing is more authentic'), at other times it was in terms of commerce

('there is a huge untapped market in the regions') and often it was discussed as a politically topical issue ('regional writers are discriminated against'). But one thing was clear: almost everyone was expecting a coming 'boom' of writing from the regions in languages other than English. As a case in point, one book was repeatedly referred to as the most phenomenal success in recent years: Vivek Shanbhag's *Ghachar Ghochar*.

Consequently, with this novel as a recurrent reference point, I try here to understand the preoccupation with what we may call 'vernacular writing' (I soon qualify this concept) within the worlds of Indian literature. As hinted at above, I believe there are more dimensions to this phenomenon than just a cultural demand for more – and more authentic – Indian writers to celebrate on prestigious literary stages. How then should *Ghachar Ghochar* be contextualized within the cultural and commercial market of literature, as well as within a current and historical debate around language and politics? I approach this question with a particular interest in 'vernacularity' as a concern for scholarship on world literature. In view of this volume's focus on 'the vernacular', the aim of this chapter is to challenge the binary of the vernacular and the cosmopolitan by looking at the worlds of Indian literature, which are largely structured on three levels: regional, national and international (Orsini 2002). These three levels have historically been rather insulated from each other and few books have moved between markets. Those books that do move usually do so from the international levels and downwards. Typically, authors of Indian origin must first be consecrated in 'the West' before their works are circulated within India (Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga are some well-known examples). In recent decades, however, these three levels of the Indian book worlds have become increasingly intertwined. The example of *Ghachar Ghochar* is illuminating. The novel circulates at all three levels in separate editions, but these levels are closely related. The circulation of this book on the international scale is conditioned by its previous translation from Kannada into English for a pan-Indian market, while its circulation regionally (translated into more Indian languages) is spurred by its global fame. It is not possible to reduce this structure to a binary system (the local versus the global) in which a vernacular–cosmopolitan dynamic is conveniently played out. So, in this three-level structure, what does 'the vernacular' mean?

The concept 'vernacular' needs to be used with some caution. Often it is an unproblematic term, in the sense that we can define what we mean, and it is unlikely that a scholarly definition will be confused with the widespread

colloquial use of the word (in contrast, for example, to the problematic concept of 'world literature'). However, in India the word 'vernacular' has a particular history. It was used in a number of government laws that controlled and censured Indian-language newspapers from the nineteenth century, the so-called 'Vernacular Press Act' (Nataranjan 1955: 81–92), and has entered the Indian history of British colonialism taught in schoolbooks throughout the country. Thus it connotes oppression, even though the word to some extent is also used in academic and semi-official language to distinguish between English- and Indian-language media. It is not an uncontroversial word, specifically not in the field of literature. The vernacular is, as Shaden Tageldin (2018: 115) noted, 'terminological quicksand'.

I was soon reminded of this problem when I started to contact people who had been involved professionally with *Ghachar Ghochar*. Before I went to visit Vivek Shanbhag in Bengaluru, I met with his literary agent, Shruti Debi, at a south Delhi café. She had been a key person in creating the international success of *Ghachar Ghochar*, and was of course very engaged in the 'boom' of Indian-language writing. But she was hesitant about the correct term. When speaking about her work, she suddenly stopped after having uttered the word 'vernacular' and tried to find a more appropriate term. 'I don't think it is right to say vernacular', she explained. 'In India now, you are not allowed to say that anymore, it has become non-PC [not politically correct].' Her point was that by referring to a language (and its literature) as 'vernacular' would be to suggest that it is inferior to English.

But the controversy is not only confined to the conflict between English and all other Indian languages. This was made clear to me by the South Indian publisher Kannan Sundaram of Kalachuvadu Publishing House, responsible for the Tamil translation of *Ghachar Ghochar*. When I contacted him, I introduced myself as a scholar interested in 'regional/vernacular authors who have recently been recognized nationally and internationally through translations'. In response, he began immediately to explain the issue further, pointing out that 'regional language', too, is a problematic term:

> I prefer not to use regional/vernacular since they place English and Hindi as national languages and the other languages as confined to regions. This is inaccurate. Hindi is spoken in a larger region of India and not around the country while English is spoken in limited urban pockets and not throughout the country … Tamil in fact is an international language. It is one of the languages of the state in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia. It is spoken by a significant

number of people across Europe, North America and Australia. For example, it is one of the languages of the city of Toronto.

<div align="right">(Sundaram 2019)</div>

Tamil belongs, like Kannada, to the Dravidian family of languages (spoken mostly in South India), which are completely different from Indo-European languages, such as Hindi, spoken in the north. Thus from a South Indian perspective both Hindi and English are languages of domination, and it is therefore insulting when Tamil (or other South Indian languages) are denoted as 'regional' or 'vernacular'.

The most common and probably least controversial emic (indigenous) term is *bhasha*. It means simply 'language' in Hindi and several other languages (a frequently used but awkward term in Indian English is therefore 'language literature'). Not surprisingly, *bhasha* is also occasionally refuted. 'If we are language writers, then how do other authors work – with dance?' said a participant ironically on a session about *bhasha* literature at the JLF in which Vivek Shanbhag also took part (2016). The formally correct but rather cumbersome expression is 'literature in Indian languages other than English'. In this chapter, however, I alternate between terms (such as *bhasha*, Indian language or regional literature) according to the situation and try to restrict the use of 'vernacular' to the more analytical sections. In those contexts, I discuss 'the vernacular' in three interrelated meanings: linguistically, referring to Indian languages other than English; culturally, where vernacularism stands for specific local or regional particularities narrated in a novel; and in terms of position, referring to the status ascribed to an author, publisher or text in a literary context. Taken together, these three meanings constitute what I call 'the vernacular domain' of Indian literature.

Book worlds

Some of the most important contributions to world literature research have a literary–sociological approach in common, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's ideas about literary fields (Casanova 2004), Wallerstein's world system theory (Moretti 2013 or, more broadly, conceptualizing literary texts as artefacts circulating in a global but unequal and competitive arena of world literature (Damrosch 2003, Warwick Research Collective 2015). Thus a focus has been on structural aspects of global circulation. In contrast, other scholars are looking more

closely at specific texts, interested in why they may be appreciated worldwide. Rebecca Walkowitz (2015), for example, argues that contemporary novels are increasingly written as texts to be circulated in many languages and for a variety of audiences. They are 'born translated'. Similarly, Debjani Ganguly (2016) discusses how contemporary novels may thematically narrate issues of universal concern, signifying a literary form that she calls 'the global novel'. Siskind (2010) makes a distinction between scholars focused on either structures or texts as a matter of two complementary models, and labels them 'the globalization of the novel' versus 'the novelization of the global'. Whether referring to structure or content, common to both these models is an understanding of 'world literature' as empirical objects, a particular literature circulating around the world, and which the scholar may study.

In this chapter I write about one such object: a novel that does circulate (almost) worldwide. I am interested in both the structural context and the literary content of this book. However, my discussion deviates in two ways from the scholarly perspectives mentioned above. First, regarding the context, my aim is to look closely at structure by maintaining a focus on agency, rather than on distant macro features of the global circulation of literature (cf. Knorr Cetina and Bruegger 2002). Second, regarding textual content, I do not study *Ghachar Ghochar* as a typical global (Indian) novel, characterized by certain qualities. Importantly, this novel is unique, and my approach is fairly ideographic. However, I believe *Ghachar Ghochar* has explanatory power and presents opportunities to highlight contradictory features within the worlds of (Indian) literature (see Mitchell 1983).

Consequently, I am interested in the immediate context in which this novel was written, produced, promoted, circulated and consumed; and in the relations between the various actors who were involved in these processes. I also deliberately blur the distinction between text, society and circulation. As Antonio Candido (2014: 142) claims, 'we can only understand the [literary] work by mixing text and context in a dialectically integrated interpretation'. Thus I am sympathetic to recent interventions among scholars in the academic field of world literature, attempting to refocus attention from circulation and macro structures towards a more ontological perspective on the text, as well as on the agency and activities of 'world-making' (Cheah 2015, Ganguly 2016, Helgesson 2018, Neumann 2018). My emphasis is on how *Ghachar Ghochar* relates to the construction and production of a genre or form (see Dimock 2006) of imaginaries of (and for) the world – that form is, then, 'the vernacular Indian novel'.

Methodologically, the model of approaching literature through interrelated scales of analyses – ranging from the level of the text to 'the apparatus of cultural production' – suggested by Laachir, Marzagora and Orsini (2018: 303–5) has helped my thought processes. The way I see it, this focus on agency and relations between actors of various scales resonates with an anthropological – or symbolic interactionist – approach towards the making and management of meaning as an activity going on in collaboration among various people in different roles.

In this context I have been inspired by Howard Becker's (1982) writing on collective cooperation and conventions in art worlds. Like Becker, I am reluctant to demarcate and define a particular 'social field' in which actors compete over resources and recognition. The network of agents cooperating in producing and promoting a book, or a genre of writing, is in principle endless – though some actors are of course more important than others. This is an approach that stands in rather stark contrast to the structural (Bourdieusian) sociology that has dominated studies of 'world literature' (e.g. Casanova 2004, Sapiro 2016a, 2016b). Thus I prefer the more open and sensitizing idea of 'book worlds' rather than a bounded concept of 'literary fields'.

Looking at the book

I previously mentioned Vincent, the waiter at Koshy's Parade Café. When I saw the name tag, I could not help but point towards his shirt, asking if he had heard about a novel in which there is a waiter with his name working in a restaurant just like this. Vincent immediately turned around and went quickly back to the kitchen, without taking my order. I thought that I had somehow offended him, or that he was really tired of hearing the same question from customers. But Vincent soon returned with a book in his hands, looking very pleased. It was the Tamil translation of *Ghachar Ghochar*, he said. The author had presented it to him a few days earlier, because he was mentioned in the book and could read Tamil. Well, this was not completely accurate, Vivek Shanbhag told me the next day. He had not visited the restaurant recently, but he knew that the translator of the Tamil edition had been in the city and had probably gone to Koshy's. The name of the waiter was, moreover, a pure coincidence; but yes, the author confessed, Coffee House in the novel is partly modelled on Koshy's.

The story about the waiter is a reminder of the banal fact that a novel is a material object. Vincent, the real waiter, had not read his copy yet, though he

assured me that he would soon do so. Despite this, the book obviously played a role in his life. He kept it in the restaurant kitchen, and was aware that it was an object that connected him and his mundane existence to a literary world imagined by readers far away – in a kind of reversal of how I, as a European reader of the novel, experienced Vincent, the literary character. Our encounter felt like a brief moment of convergence.

It was astonishing to see the book in the hands of Vincent, but previously I had been equally surprised by not finding the book where I had expected it to be. When I arrived in Delhi from Stockholm, a couple of weeks before my visit to Bengaluru, I wanted to obtain some copies of *Ghachar Ghochar*. So I looked around, first in a few classy bookshops in the southern part of the city, close to where I was staying, but without success. Then I went to the most obvious place to go if you want to buy a best-selling book in Delhi: in the colonnades of Connaught Place, the central circular-shaped market area nowadays renamed as Rajiv Chowk, where outdoor booksellers have displayed their commodities directly on the pavement for decades. Arranged side by side, in no particular order, you find self-help books, autobiographies of famous people, international bestsellers and not least the kind of reading that would attract a foreign tourist, such as Gregory David Robert's *Shantaram*, Shashi Taroor's *Why I am a Hindu*, William Dalrymple's books on Indian history and titles by Salman Rushdie, Aravind Adiga and Arundhati Roy – with few exceptions all in English. *Ghachar Ghochar*, however, had apparently not reached this kind of stature and was nowhere to be found. Nor was it stocked by the nearby Oxford University Press bookstore, usually a reliable place with a large section of novels by Indian writers. So I had to search among several other sellers in the area until, finally, I found a few copies of the English edition at the Jain Book Agency. The books were tucked away on a shelf inside the store, not displayed among the bestsellers or reading suggestions one meets when entering the premises. Obviously, the reputation of Shanbhag's novel had not reached the market, at least not in the Indian capital. (I had already noted that it is not the kind of book one should expect to find piled up in bookstalls at international airports.) *Ghachar Ghochar* thus seemed to be more perceptible in the specialist's discourse on Indian literature than as a material object.

The copy I obtained was a paperback edition from HarperCollins (produced for the Indian market), first published in 2016. However, the first five pages were excerpts from enthusiastic reviews in Indian and international publications, and several of these were from late 2017 – so this must have been a later reprint. The

cover showed a white food plate invaded by an army of small black ants, attracted by some brown, spilled liquid. At least two other versions of covers exist of the translation published by HarperCollins. One is purely graphic, designed in line with other translated novels in the Harper Perennial imprint. Another, which is attached to the digital edition, has a watercolour painting on the cover, showing a man sitting alone at a coffee table. On all three English-language versions for the domestic market, it is clearly stated on the cover that the book is translated from an original in Kannada.

As Isabel Hofmeyr (2004: 2–3) notes in her study of the transnational circulation of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, 'When books travel they change shape.' Thus all translations of *Ghachar Ghochar*, whether domestic or international, have different covers. The edition in Hindi is brown and depicts an empty coffee cup; the American Penguin edition is black with a tangled twine placed over the title; in Italy the cover shows a black-and-white photo of a woman's face; the Swedish edition is in ochre with an army of black ants framed by a pattern composed of Indian spices; the German edition has a peacock feather; and the Hebrew shows a box of masala spices. This diversity might not be strange considering that each translation has a separate publisher with its own artistic styles.

But that is not the only reason. Shanbhag explained that even though he had insisted that all translations should have the same title, he also wanted each edition to have its own distinct cover. Through the covers one could perceive the aesthetic preferences of each country, he believed. Apparently the author enjoyed this display of cultural diversity among his audience – in a similar vein to how the foreign reader presumably picks up a copy of *Ghachar Ghochar* out of curiosity about 'other' literature.

Vivek Shanbhag showed me the latest edition of *Ghachar Ghochar* in the original Kannada language. The cover looked plain but sophisticated, with a discreet abstract painting in green, red and yellow, in no way reminiscent of any cover on other editions that I had seen. With the title in a script I could not decode, I would never have guessed it was the same book.

Looking at the different editions side by side, it is also obvious that publishers, through their cover designers, have tried to interpret the theme and world of the novel visually for their respective audiences (which seems to be somewhat tricky when the title offers little guidance). Several of the international editions signal graphically that this is an Indian novel, by the choices of illustrations (spices, peacock feather) or colours (ochre, orange) but it is perhaps more striking that

several covers are not clearly pointing towards a specific geographical origin of the book, and particularly not towards a regional Indian setting. Unlike the literature reviewer's preoccupation with vernacularity, none of the international publishers mentions the Kannada origin on the cover of their editions – nor do all publishers in the Indian-language edition. Seemingly, it is in the marketing for a domestic English-reading audience that the 'vernacular' origin is most relevant.

A joint family

The story of *Ghachar Ghochar* is about one family and its transformation from a meagre existence to a life of overabundance. The unnamed protagonist, the only voice narrating the story, introduces his family rather stoically:

> Ours is a joint family. We live in the same house – my wife and I, my parents, my uncle and Malati. Malati is my older sister, back home now after having left her husband. It's natural to ask, I suppose, why the six of us should live together. What can I say – it is one of the strengths of families to pretend that they desire what is inevitable.
>
> (Shanbhag 2016: 10)

The narrative unfolds in, or in proximity to, the family home – though occasionally distanced by the protagonist's reflections from Coffee House. The novel could easily be dramatized on a theatre stage. Thus the joint family home could be seen as the 'significant geography' (Laachir, Marzagora and Orsini 2018) of the story; conceptually and imaginatively, as well as a real geography that 'carries special meaning for individuals and groups' (ibid.: 302). The life of this family is often narrated through their engagement with certain details in their physical home. Through the story the family members are occupied with, for example, the purchase of a gas stove, annoying ants, furniture, gifts, food items (consumed or spilled) and not least the move to a new house. These details and commodities are somehow tied together with the social fabric of the family – and they form part of how everything is changing.

Originally the family was relatively poor but very closely knit together. The protagonist recounts a time when none of them would do anything without involving the other members of the family. But even when the unity of the family has started to crack, he clings to this sense of intimacy: 'Now, what can I say of

myself that is only about me and not tied up with the others' (Shanbhag 2016: 60). The incident that prompts the chain of changes is when the father loses his low-paid job as a salesman for a tea company. The father's younger brother is then entrusted with the retirement allowance to start a business in the spice trade. This firm, Sona Masala, soon becomes a source of prosperity. The family is suddenly wealthy.

However, the main transformation they experience does not concern material wealth. It is about how the family members start to relate to each other and to certain core values as they become rich. The key person in the family is, for example, no longer *appa*, the father of the house, but *chikkappa* – the Kannada term for a father's junior brother – who has become the sole earning member, whom the rest of the family must keep in a good mood. The new-found wealth also enables personal consumption – not everyone needs to be involved in each purchase now. The idea of individualism and self-reliance starts to grow – not least due to the protagonist's wife, Anita, who is uncomfortable with the fact that her husband is completely dependent on income from a family business in which he is not at all involved.

This tension between the individual and the family is a familiar theme in Indian literature as well as in public culture broadly. In her study of the emergence and growth of the novel in India from the nineteenth century, Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985: 7) notes that 'The Indian novelist had to operate in a tradition-bound society where neither a man's profession nor his marriage was his personal affair.' The essential hurdle for the novelist, she claimed, was to write in a form 'that requires individualism as a value and writing about a society that denies it'. Thus in this sense *Ghachar Ghochar* is not a particularly regional novel, as the main theme is (at least) pan-Indian. The blurb on the back cover of my Harper Perennial edition states that, 'Here is an India that is immediately recognizable to Indians, not an exotic concoction fabricated for a foreign audience.'[2]

Though India is recognizable in the narrative of *Ghachar Ghochar*, the name of the country is never explicitly mentioned, and the novel hardly refers to society on any larger scale.[3] The city of Bangalore is introduced in Chapter 3, but, as I said previously, it never really figures as a significant geography (except, perhaps,

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[2] The blurb is signed by the author Suketu Mehta, internationally acclaimed for his book *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*.

[3] It is reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's comment on the novel *Semarang Hitam* by the Indonesian communist nationalist Mas Marco Kartodikromo: 'Marco feels no need to specify this community by name: it is already there' ([1991] 2006: 32).

in the imagination of the reader). The family members rarely interact with the rest of the world and the reader does not learn about any friends of Malata, Anita or *chikkappa* – it is only the protagonist who we follow to Coffee House with its waiter, Vincent. Furthermore, the narrative is also vaguely located in time. There are a few technologies mentioned (a television, a telephone) that obviously place the unfolding drama in the last three to four decades. But there are no references to political events or public persons that would make the timeframe more specific.

The novel evokes the feeling of a very claustrophobic, family-centred world. The joint family appears as a hegemonic institution, existing for itself, independent of place and time, and as a fertile ground for all kinds of evil. The book also ends on a destructive and violent note. Thus it is hardly surprising that the novel could be read as a social critique of the Indian system of joint families – a point made by several reviewers in the Indian media.

I gave the Hindi edition of *Ghachar Ghochar* to a friend, a north Indian author and journalist, who had helped me with contacts in the Delhi book world. Initially he was rather sceptical of this kind of 'internationally celebrated Indian writing'. But after I had returned to Sweden, I received a long email from him, explaining that he really had appreciated the book. He emphasized, in stronger words than most reviewers, that Vivek Shanbhag 'throws light on the power structure within an average Indian family (whether Kannadiga or not)', showing the 'hypocrisy, dual standards, injustice and lack of free will'.

Globalizing India

There is, however, another interpretation of the novel, commonly found in reviews from outside India. When I met the author, he took up this issue himself when telling me how he had received many letters from book lovers around the world, and many people had seen the novel in ways he had never anticipated. There was, for example, an American professor of finance who thought the novel was 'a brilliant comment on globalization in India'. Even though that was never intended, Shanbhag was pleased with the interpretation and had no objections. 'A lot of changes have been going on in India during the last twenty-five years and I have experienced that myself', he said. There was, for example, a time during the 1990s when the retail market for consumer goods was restructured and many people lost their jobs, like the father in the novel. 'It was natural for

me to write about how the external world is reflected in the Indian family; any change for one member impacts the entire family' (Shanbhag 2019).

What is interesting about the interpretation of *Ghachar Ghochar* as a story of 'globalizing India' is that it is basically metaphorical. All details connecting the family to the external world, intentionally left out by the author (as he tells me), must be filled in by the reader. In that sense, the novel is open to interpretation by readers anywhere in the world. Local or regional contextualizations of the novel do not restrain the imagination. This openness of interpretation might, however, take the distant audience quite far away from a reader more familiar with the cultural setting. My friend the north Indian writer was sure about his interpretation of how *Ghachar Ghochar* was related to globalizing India: 'The new economy has not even touched the old value system, that remains intact, but the money has helped to bring out what was feudal, exploitive and the worst in it.'

I mentioned to Vivek Shanbhag that in comparison to some other recently praised *bhasha* writers I thought he was easily accessible for non-local readers. Very regional novels, full of references to unfamiliar religious and cultural practices, could be rather hard to digest, I thought, and insensitively contrasted this with his more cosmopolitan style of writing. Shanbhag intervened immediately and claimed that the theme of a novel does not need to be 'cosmopolitan' (indeed, that word was as complicated as 'vernacular'), but can come from a small place. It was rather a matter of craftsmanship, he claimed. A writer must transform the local details into a metaphor. As a case in point, Shanbhag referred to a novel he had recently read by the Brazilian writer Jorge Amado. 'It is full of details and strange practices but once you know what it is you start connecting and suddenly everything is clear.'

The author surely had a point: *Ghachar Ghochar*, too, contains many Kannada expressions and cultural practices that are never explicitly clarified (though the literary agent had asked for exactly this). Kannada terms for relatives or regional food items are, for example, not translated or explained in the English translation of the book; these kinds of details just have to be accepted by an unfamiliar reader.[4] When the unnamed protagonist is reflecting on certain particularities, like the joint family or culinary preferences, he does so in an existential and introvert manner, not for a particular addressee. And, as many reviewers

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[4]   In the Hindi edition, though, terms for relatives are translated into equivalent words in Hindi.

have noted with approval, much is left unsaid. As an instructive contrast to *Ghachar Ghochar*, one may consider the narrating technique in Aravind Adiga's international success novel *The White Tiger*. In that book the protagonist tells his story through letters addressed to a Chinese prime minister; thus almost every Indian particularity must be explained to an ignorant reader (Ståhlberg 2018).

Untangled connections

Vivek Shanbhag lives in an apartment house not very far from Koshy's Parade Café, in a centrally located but calm area of Bengaluru – no doubt an exclusive address. The house seems fairly recently built and the flat is modern and elegant. Though Shanbhag is a vernacular author in the sense that he writes in Kannada, he is apparently not the kind of rustic rural writer often idealized by proponents of *bhasha* literature. The impression one gets when meeting him is rather that of an urbanite and intellectual. He speaks fluent English and – as his literary agent had described him to me – appears very suave.

By profession Shanbhag is an engineer and was, when writing *Ghachar Ghochar*, working with Unilever, the multinational consumer goods company, as its global human resources director. This job entailed frequent travel around the world, he explained, and he had also lived abroad periodically, for example in London. Simultaneously with this professional life, he was writing short stories, novels and plays – always in the Kannada language. Furthermore, he was for several years the editor and publisher of the Kannada literary journal *Desha Kaala*, and as such a central figure in Kannada literature. When *Ghachar Ghochar* was published in Kannada in 2013, he had already published two novels and four collections of short stories. Since then he has completed a fourth novel.

Shanbhag explained that a few of his short stories had been published in English before, but he had never been satisfied with the translations. Around 2014, however, he decided to quit his job and devote his time to writing. That was also the point when he felt he could engage more in translations of his own work. The original version of *Ghachar Ghochar* had quickly become quite famous in the state of Karnataka, but Shanbhag claimed the only reason he had chosen to start with that book was purely pragmatic: it was the shortest text that could be published in English as a novel. He also insisted it was completely on his own initiative that he had looked for a translator to help him – no publisher was involved at that stage.

The person he chose to help him, Srinath Perur, was a travel writer and journalist working in English. Perur had never done any translations previously, but Shanbhag had known him for a few years and liked his sensibility and language. They started the project together; when the translation was almost finished, they heard that the British *Granta* magazine was putting together an issue on Indian literature. Someone who had read the Kannada version of *Ghachar Ghochar* suggested it to the editor, Ian Jack, so on his request they sent him part of the translation, which he liked and included in the issue. In every review of the *Granta* issue, Vivek Shanbhag claimed, his text was picked up and appreciated. This was no doubt a major impetus for both the national and international career of the book. *Granta* is not just any literary journal, particularly not in this context. Over the years the journal has published several issues on new Indian literature, and it is well known among writers that it was through *Granta* that both Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy made their entrance on to the scene of literary fame.[5]

When a section of *Ghachar Ghochar* appeared in *Granta*, the book had not yet been sold to any publisher. Shanbhag had, however, contacted a literary agent to help him place the book. The reason, he claimed, was not that he doubted he could find an English-language publisher by himself; he already knew people at several national publishing houses (because of his involvement with the literary journal) and was quite convinced they would like to have the book. To work with an agent was a new experience for him, but he wanted to relieve himself of all practical details in placing this book. The agent he contacted was Shruti Debi, who had worked with the British literary agency Aitkin Alexander Associates (that is how he knew about her) but was now running her own firm. The agent read the manuscript, which she apparently liked, and agreed to take on the book.

When I met with Shruti Debi at that Delhi café, she pointed out that the manuscript she received from Vivek Shanbhag and Srinath Perur was almost perfect. Her only reservations were about its format. It was a very short text, only around a hundred pages, and it would be difficult to market it as a novel for an English-reading audience. In the original Kannada book, *Ghachar Ghochar* had been published as a short story with several other unrelated stories, but Shanbhag did not want this format for the English version. Readers in English would be confused, he had thought. The literary agent's recommendation was

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5   Salman Rushdie in *Granta* 3 (1980) and Arundhati Roy in *Granta* 13 (1997).

that the author should make some additions to the text to make it somewhat longer. However, she gave no suggestions about what should be added. It was a text, she thought, with so many things left unsaid that perhaps were obvious to a Kannada reader, but which were lost on everyone else. Some places could be clarified. But she also understood that Shanbhag was a strong writer, and would find places to extend by himself. She had no further instructions on how to do it.

Vivek Shanbhag hesitated about making the book longer, and thought about it for six months. Then he extended a few sections and sent it back. It was never a demand from anyone, he said. The book would have been published even without those additions. He had finally extended the manuscript by around 4,000 words. In principle, two short episodes were added. One of these narrates a shopping spree that the protagonist and his wife went on during their honeymoon in a South Indian hill station[6] (the only part of the story that takes place outside the city). The second episode is a scene in which the protagonist's wife has left him and he opens her wardrobe and notices her smell. Apart from that, Shanbhag says, very few formulations are changed in the text: 'every sentence from the English translation is also in the Kannada book'.

But then he corrected himself: there are actually a few extra sentences in the English book that do not exist in Kannada. One example is in an episode describing how the mother of the protagonist killed annoying ants in the house. In the Kannada version the protagonist describes what his mother was doing in a slightly humorous way. Srinath, the translator, could not get this lightness in English so he added a sentence to achieve the same tone ('Amma resorted to chemical warfare'). Another example is in the description of the honeymoon. There is a formulation in Kannada referring to how the man bounces upon his wife 'like a tiger'. That sounds very harsh in English but not in Kannada, so here too Srinath added a few sentences to make it softer.

In many interviews and panel discussions Vivek Shanbhag has been asked how he feels about the translation of his work. Is it possible to bring experiences expressed in his native language into English? The answer complicates the concept of vernacularity further because the author usually emphasizes that Kannada is not his mother tongue. Like many other people in urban India, he grew up in a multilingual environment, speaking Konkani (the official language in the neighbouring state of Goa) at home, Kannada in school and

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[6] Originally vacation resorts for British civil servants, today often visited by newly wedded couples.

later English in higher education and work. Thus transposing thought and feelings between different languages was nothing new or particularly strange for him, he told me.

If linguistically not an obvious 'vernacular writer' – he is not writing in his mother tongue – Vivek Shanbhag is very much at the centre in the world of Kannada literature in terms of social positioning; by his own writing and journal editing, of course, but also by family connections. His father-in-law, U. R. Anantha Murthy, was the doyen of Kannada literature, often referred to as one of the major Indian literary modernists of the twentieth century (Mukherjee 1985). Before *Ghachar Ghochar* gained international fame, Anantha Murthy's novel *Samskara* (published in 1965 and in English translation in 1976) was virtually the only translated Kannada novel with a significant circulation in India as well as internationally. Few people I met in the worlds of Indian literature failed to remark on the family predicament when Vivek Shanbhag was mentioned. In a sense, there is also a literary familiarity between the two Kannada authors. Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985: 166) argues that the importance of Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* lies 'in the author's attempt to exploit the tension between two world views' of tradition and modernity. Vivek Shanbhag, the son-in-law, is continuing to explore the same theme, though in a very different historical epoch.

To position *Ghachar Ghochar* in this present-day context I need to make a short detour.

The contemporary conjuncture

There is a story, retold many times, about how the worlds of literature in India changed drastically in the late 1990s. A completely unknown writer sends her English-language manuscript to a new young editor at HarperCollins in India. The editor reads it and is overwhelmed, but instead of telling his employer he calls a friend in London, who connects him to a British literary agent.

> [The] … climax being the spectacular moment when a British literary agent actually flew to India – did he charter a plane? Did he fly it himself? Never mind, he gave the impression that he did – to sign up an Indian author who went on to win the Booker prize. Things have never been the same since.
>
> (Desai 2009)

The book was, of course, Arundhati Roy's (1997) *The God of Small Things*.[7] Since then, as one editor stated just a few years later, 'everyone – scouts, agents, publishers – is looking for the next Roy' (Tejpal 1999). Several other authors were brought to international fame in the new millennium, such as Vikram Chandra and Aravind Adiga.

Almost simultaneously, something else – a completely contrasting strand – happened within the Indian world of books. A few authors started to sell extremely well in India without first having been discovered in the West; a domestic market of commercial fiction was beginning to take form. Among the most commercially successful were Chetan Bhagat, with stories about a young, modern, middle-class India, and Ashwin Sanghvi's fantasy fiction based on Hindu mythologies. Most of this 'postmillennial writing' (Varughese 2013) was written and published in the English language by pan-Indian publishers such as Rupa and Westworld, but has never circulated much outside the country except within the Indian diaspora.

Importantly, the emergence of this new Indian writing in English coincided with another noticeable development: books started to be sold in new settings. I first came across a novel by Chetan Bhagat – the icon of post-millennial Indian writing – in Hyderabad, another South Indian city that since the mid-1990s had been projected to take over the role of Bangalore as a centre for information technology. The aspiration to become a global metropolis was visible in huge new shopping malls that cropped up around the town during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Several of these malls included bookshops of a kind I had not noticed in India before. They were not impressively well stocked, but posh, with a café section and shelves with bestsellers (such as Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ the Call Center*) prominently displayed – just like in many other cities around the world. Soon this kind of bookshop-café catering to an English-speaking middle class became a common sight in wealthy areas of urban India (Sadana 2012: 97–8).

Transnational publishers paid attention to these strands of development (scouting for the next international success and the growth of a domestic market) in the Indian book worlds. The global publishing industry, dominated by a few large corporations, is increasingly present in India, and since the turn of the millennium has established offices in the main cities or bought up domestic publishers; simultaneously, domestic corporate capital from the Indian IT

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[7]　The young editor was Pankaj Mishra, the friend Patrick French and the agent David Goodwin.

industry is investing in literary 'content production' for various media platforms, including book publishing. This development also has reverberations within the 'the vernacular domain' of Indian fiction writing.

A book market that only a few decades ago was fragmented in both linguistic and regional dimensions – and largely consisted of small or medium-sized family-owned and rather conservative publishers – is rapidly transforming and expanding (Ciocca and Srivastava 2017: 9). Today, publishers in languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Bengali and Malayalam are marketing their books online and looking for collaboration with pan-Indian publishers that traditionally have focused on English-language authors but are now also interested in literature from the vernacular domain (both for translations and in original languages). Publishers and authors within the vernacular domain are increasingly searching for cooperation directly with global publishing giants, for example Amazon, Penguin (owned by Bertelsmann) and HarperCollins (News Corp), or with domestic digital start-ups like Flipkart and Juggernaut. Simultaneously, the domestic mass-media industry is gradually becoming more interested in Indian-language literature, sponsoring literary festivals and prizes. From a corporate point of view, India has an enormous unexploited market for books: hundreds of millions of people, newly literate in the so-called vernacular languages. Hence an eager search for new readers and writers in the so-called regional languages has taken off.

It is in this historical context that *Ghachar Ghochar* was published. Using Stuart Hall's term (interpolated from Althusser), we may conceptualize the contemporary era as a conjuncture, that is as 'an ensemble of economic, social, political and ideological factors where "dissimilar currents … heterogeneous class interests … contrary political and social strivings" fuse' (Hall, Massey and Rustin 2013: 15). This may seem abstract, but one place to experience this recent conjuncture of market forces, new institutions and various cultural trends forming contemporary Indian book worlds is at the Jaipur Literature Festival. As I mentioned previously, it was here that I first became curious – and confused – about the preoccupation with an upcoming 'boom' of *bhasha* literature; a genre that fused people with diverging expectations of literary authenticity, market profit and political emancipation. The term 'conjuncture' seems to capture the character of the context in which the JLF is organized and where I eventually noticed Vivek Shanbhag and his novel *Ghachar Ghochar*.

In 2016 Shanbhag had participated in a session at the JLF about *bhasha* writing in which some writers were critical of being labelled with that word, as well

as with the term 'vernacular'. The following year Shanbhag participated in four sessions and in 2018 he was scheduled for no less than five two-hour sessions, according to the programme folders. Among the titles of the public sessions were 'At home in the world' (2017), 'The writer and the world' (2018) and 'Litro world series: India, the power of fiction across borders and translations' (2018). Clearly, Vivek Shanbhag was not only a *bhasha* writer; in this context he also seemed to be an author of 'world literature'.

Though entrance for audiences is free, the JLF is a commercial event, largely funded by sponsoring companies in various businesses. At most sessions the logo of a particular sponsor is part of the stage design. Apart from the public panels, the JLF has in recent years also organized events exclusively for professionals in the business, at a side event called Jaipur BookMark. In 2018 one of these sessions was entitled 'Bestselling: The Indian Way'. In the programme folder the session was introduced with the following paragraph:

> Nielsen ratings have now arrived in the Hindi market and books across the 24 [*sic*] Indian languages are beginning to realize their vast potential. The numbers game has begun and Indian writers are now outperforming well-known international names. A panel that includes eminent publishers, self-publishing successes and marketing professionals speak the how and why of Indian bestsellers.
>
> (Zee Jaipur Literature Festival 2018: 13)

The multinational Nielsen book rating company has for the last ten years been present in India, primarily auditing sales of the English-language publishing market. At this session a regional representative of the company explained that it is now increasingly trying to make numbers out of the vernacular domain; but there are still huge difficulties, because it cannot monitor sales that are not recorded using digitized billing systems, which many vendors of *bhasha* books lack.

Vivek Shanbhag was not listed at that session, but participated the same year at another BookMark event concerned with the constraints and challenges of marketing literature from Indian languages, nationally and internationally. The topic, 'Translating India', was discussed by a number of writers, publishers and translators in a session sponsored and organized by Vani Prakashan, a major Hindi-language book publisher. Incidentally, this was the publishing house that would soon publish the Hindi translation of *Ghachar Ghochar*.

Tangled generations

In Delhi a year later, I decided to visit Vani Prakashan to purchase a copy of its Hindi edition of *Ghachar Ghochar* directly from the publisher (I had failed to find it in the bookshops) and perhaps meet with someone on the staff. The office is in Daryaganj, an area close to the old part of Delhi, and for decades has been famous as a hub for North Indian publishers and book distributors. This is a place where one may still get a glimpse of how the worlds of Indian book publishing appeared at a very different conjuncture – during the decades after Independence when the production and circulation of books in *bhasha* was a subsidized political concern of government departments such as Sahitiya Academy (The National Academy of Letters) and the National Book Trust (the government publisher of low-cost books); or was pursued as an idealistic mission, promoted by progressive writers associations. As Rashmi Sadana (2013: 78) remarks in her monograph on the Delhi book world, following Independence 'the notion of making "good books" was tied up with doing "good for the nation".

Not much of the atmosphere in Daryaganj seems to have changed recently. The main thoroughfare, Ansari Road, is lined with dilapidated office buildings of publishers and jammed with people, cycle rickshaws, overloaded lorries and streetside food stalls. The scene offers a striking contrast to those posh book-cafés in south Delhi and other upper-middle-class areas of urban India. At least that is how it looks on the surface. I find the Vani Prakashan office in a narrow side road. Entering the building I am met with stacks of books wrapped for distribution to bookstores in the Hindi-speaking belt. At the end of a dark corridor there is a store in which I can get my copy of *Ghachar Ghochar* in Hindi. (I notice that it is very cheap, priced at 125 rupees only, compared to the English translation selling for 299 rupees.)

The team of editors is on the first floor and I meet Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal, executive director of Vani Prakashan, in one of the conference rooms. Maheshwari-Goyal is the third generation of publishers in a family business that was established in the 1950s. Both the location and the premises of Vani Prakashan may appear as remnants of that time, but the current director is a woman in her thirties, part of a new generation of Hindi publishers (see Vater 2016).

Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal talks keenly about the importance of the digital boom – 'we have to be part of that'. And she complains about the market characteristics of Hindi publishing – 'you can hardly ever sell a Hindi book for more than 100 rupees'. The high-brow seriousness and intellectualism of Hindi publishing is declining these days, she claims: Vani Prakashan are now producing fun books in Hindi, books that a college student can read in the metro without feeling embarrassed. 'And we have Amazon bestsellers coming out.' Much to my surprise, the executive director reveals that her company is pitching their Hindi books for streaming audio with Storytel, and as TV serials with Netflix – and they are in the process of recruiting a new employee for that purpose. Though highly respectful towards the older generation (her father still keeps an office downstairs), Maheshwari-Goyal is enthusiastic about how Hindi publishing has changed in the last decade. For the better, she believes, not least regarding the role of women in an industry that formerly had been very patriarchal.

Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal recalls the 2018 'Translating India' session at the JLF. The panel was discussing possibilities for books to travel between Indian-language markets, and the Vani Prakashan editor realized that she was having similar thoughts as another participant, an editor from HarperCollins India. From that meeting came the idea of a long-term association between the two publishers. Vani Prakashan would get access to HarperCollins publications for translation into Hindi while supplying Hindi books for translation into English under the Harper Perennial imprint.

One might have thought that this cooperation also resulted in Vani Praksahan's translation of *Ghachar Ghochar*, which found its success through its HarperCollins English edition. But that does not seem to have been the case at all. Neither did Vani Praksahan acquire the copyright for the translation through the literary agent, Shruti Debi. 'We dealt directly with the author', Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal claims. As Vivek Shanbhag had earlier told me, he had made use of his personal network and selected all *bhasha* publishers himself, and had apparently gone for the most respected and at the same time up-to-date publisher in each language. These kinds of personal relations, engagements and initiatives among actors in the Indian book world frequently surprised me when meeting people who had been involved with *Ghachar Ghochar*. Occasionally, personal relations and engagements also seemed to characterize the international career of the novel.

Back in Stockholm I paid a visit to Appell Förlag, which in late 2018 published the Swedish edition of *Ghachar Ghochar*. It is a small and recently established

publisher with a non-fiction profile, run by a single editor. It is not an obvious choice for a translation of an Indian novel, particularly not for a book that has attracted considerable worldwide attention. How come it ended up here and not with one of the major Swedish publishers of international fiction?

When I met the editor of Appell Förlag, Helena Hegardt du Rées, at her office in central Stockholm, I was already aware of the story. While Vivek Shanbhag was himself responsible for the various editions in Indian languages, the international editions were taken care of by his literary agent, Shruti Debi. She (or one of her business partners) had promoted *Ghachar Ghochar* at the usual market fairs in the international book world, such as the Frankfurter Buchmesse in Germany. The response had, according to Shruti Debi, been very good and she handled requests from European publishers interested in securing translation rights for many languages. From Sweden she had received bids from two publishers: a major Swedish publishing house, and a new and miniscule publisher.

When the editor from the small publisher in Stockholm emailed her, Shruti Debi recalled, 'she was so passionate' about the novel, very eager to publish it, and said she already had an excellent translator in mind. Furthermore, the Indian agent realized she was acquainted with the Swedish editor. They had both been working with translations of a Chinese writer and had on some occasions been in contact; both expressed profound appreciation of each other. Appell Förlag won the bid for *Ghachar Ghochar* and money was not a decisive issue. The editor of Appell had, furthermore, not encountered the novel through promotion at a book fair. It was a close friend, she told me, who had recommended it to her.

Closure

Initially I was curious about the confusing preoccupation with 'regional writing' at a festival in India. I then stumbled on Vivek Shanbhag's book and its remarkable success all over the world. I have used the novel *Ghachar Ghochar* methodologically, for constructing an ethnographic narrative allowing me to explore Indian book worlds. In this chapter I have tried to unravel how this novel, written in the South Indian language Kannada, entered the international arena of literature, and how it then continued its circulation in other Indian languages. My strategy has been to look closely at actors contributing to this journey, rather than at the macro structures of the publishing industry.

Still, I do not dispute the structuring capacity of a global market. Thus while most fiction authors, in India as well as around the world, may write for vernacular audiences and publish with local publishers, the relentless search for new writers and readers is gradually producing an increasingly integrated global market for books. Franco Moretti's (2013) claim about literature as a planetary system does have perceivable substance when looking closely at Indian book worlds. I believe this short ethnography makes clear that both structures and imaginaries of a global scale form an essential horizon for understanding the phenomenon of which *Ghachar Ghochar* is a concrete instance.

But, importantly, this horizon of a global structure does not necessarily translate into processes following a simple top-down logic, assuming that a particular book has been produced and entered the circuit of 'world literature' because the global industry has harvested a vernacular domain. Rather, as the career of *Ghachar Ghochar* illustrates, agents in various positions (on the regional, national and international levels of Indian book worlds) in the production and circulation of books may actively contribute with very personal desires, social networks and efforts – not always following a market logic. By looking at this novel and its publication career, we may understand a tangled context at a particular historical period, though ultimately belonging within a global market of literature.

Before closing this story, there is a thread which needs to be untangled. It has to do with the strange circumstance that although *Ghachar Ghochar* has been described as a success and an example of a 'boom' for Indian-language writing, it was still hard for me to find the novel in Indian bookshops. Thus let me return to where I started this chapter, with Vincent at Koshy's Parade Café, or rather with the 'Coffee House' episodes in Shanbhag's novel. When I met the author, I told him that this literary location had an immediate appeal to me because it reminded me of establishments I have patronized on visits to India for a long time – it was no coincidence that I had eagerly looked for the real place in Bengaluru. What puzzled me was that these old-time coffee houses are quite rare, and – a point in the novel – very different from regular places for a drink or a meal in Indian cities. Does the common Kannada reader relate to 'Coffee House'? No, of course not, Shanbhag explained. Indian coffee houses are establishments frequented and romanticized by intellectuals with cultural capital, not by the common person. It is exactly among intellectuals that the author finds his vernacular readers. Aditi Maheshwari-Goyal, the publisher of the Hindi translation of *Ghachar Ghochar*, confirmed the same impression.

Shanbhag's novel will not be a bestseller in Hindi, she claimed, but it will sell for a long time in specific circles.

Ironically, a rather exclusive status of a novel in vernacular domains may change into a more mundane existence elsewhere. In that sense, a novel might change when it moves and finds readers in new places. The further career of *Ghachar Ghochar* in Sweden is a telling example. While writing this chapter in spring 2020 (working at home, disconnected from most personal encounters in the world because of a global pandemic), I could simultaneously listen to the drama about the Bengaluru family in an audio version of the novel serialized by the public broadcasting company Sveriges Radio. Worlds are indeed tangled.

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Loss of words and end of worlds: Transitions and troubles of travel writing

†Anette Nyqvist

With a heart-warming smile and arms flung wide open, the keynote speaker kicks off the four-day travel writers' conference with 'Welcome!', followed by the words: 'We are here to celebrate a shared passion. Most people don't understand the impulse to travel and write about it. But we do. This is a tribe. You are all now officially members of this tribe.'[1]

I am attending the twenty-sixth annual travel writers' conference in a small town in the San Francisco Bay area on America's West Coast. It is a gathering of colleagues and competitors; a mix of seasoned professionals and hopeful newcomers. A hundred-plus travel writers, mainly American and most of them based on the West Coast, in various stages of their careers have come here to exchange knowledge and share experiences; to learn from others and develop their writing skills in workshops and consultations; to network and pitch their work to publishers and editors; to meet old and new friends of 'the tribe', as it were. The sense of community is displayed throughout the conference. The keynote speaker, for example, continues the opening address by declaring: 'People among

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[1] For the research project as a whole, I have conducted a study of semi-structured qualitative interviews with professional travel writers in both the United States and, to a lesser extent so far, Sweden. The interviews, eighteen in total, were conducted in New York, California and Stockholm between February 2017 and November 2019; ten of these interviews explicitly inform and illustrate this chapter. The research also includes archival studies at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg carried out in March 2017. I conducted participant observation at one trade conference, the twenty-sixth annual Book Passage Travel Writers' and Photographers' Conference in Corte Madera, CA, 10–13 August 2017, which was used explicitly as an illustrative example in this chapter. I have also conducted participant observation at travel-writing workshops in New York, Gotham Writers July–August 2017, and California, a four-day extracurricular activity in conjunction with the above-mentioned trade conference in August 2017, as well as an online writing workshop with nine American travel writers in monthly meetings between December 2017 and June 2019. Insights from these workshops inform the discussion in this chapter, but the material from the participant observations at the workshops is not used explicitly here.

the very best in the field are here. We have assembled people who like to share and to teach. People that are iconic in their fields: they are all here.' Over the coming days other invited speakers and professional travel writers reaffirm the sense of community, and even tribe, to the participating peers gathered for the conference. One senior professional travel writer says during a panel: 'There is a community of people here. A community of travel writers. Travel writing is a craft that you keep working on and keep on developing. And we are all here now to learn from each other.' Another day, at another panel, another well-known travel writer smiles at the attentive audience and says: 'This is one great big tribe, a travel writers' tribe.'

As at most trade conferences, the programme for this one is filled with knowledge-sharing activities such as talks, seminars, panels, workshops, meetings and consultations; events, large and small, scheduled back-to-back, in parallel or as break-out sessions, non-stop from early morning to late at night. The so-called 'informal', yet scheduled, karaoke evening that is – as tradition here dictates, I am told –the last item of the third day on the conference programme highlights the ongoing community-building purpose of the gathering. At 9 pm sharp the small café by the entrance to the venue turns into a bar serving local wines by the glass. Steps away, the large 'event room' has been cleared of all chairs and now quickly fills up with conference participants gathered in small groups. Next, lights are dimmed, microphones put in place up on the small stage and music turned up. One after another, well-known, seasoned and established travel writers, as well as those new to the trade and yet unpublished, step up to the microphones and sing their hearts out as the audience jubilantly cheers on. Soon the conference podium is crowded with travel writers locked together with arms around each other, bawling out the lyrics to Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Sweet Home Alabama' and other requests. As far as community-building activities go, the traditional and scheduled 'informal' karaoke evening of this conference seems to be quite effective.

This chapter is about the experiences of a profession and literary practice in transition. Travel writing is, scholars agree, an elusive and ever-changing literary form but recent, ongoing and significant changes concerning both travel and writing have the community of professional travel writers (the writers interviewed here are all based in the United States) currently worried about the very future of their profession and craft. In this chapter I account for how both travel writers themselves and scholars of travel writing emphasize that at the core of such writing sits a set of principal and defining elements: curiosity-driven

stories of travels, narratives based on first-hand experiences and observations from distant places, and texts intended to reach a broad audience with the aims of both informing and entertaining the readership. Furthermore, both scholars of travel writing and professional travel writers stress that these fundamental features of contemporary travel writing had already been established in medieval travel literature. This leads me, finally, to the voices of contemporary professional travel writers, who express concern that recent and ongoing developments in the business of professional travel writing might, in fact, signal its end, at least in the form we know it.

Travel writers see themselves as a 'global tribe' in much the same way that foreign correspondents do (Hannerz 2004). What unites the professional community and self-proclaimed 'tribe' of travel writers is – apart from a 'cosmopolitan habitus' similar to the foreign correspondents in Ulf Hannerz's (ibid.) research – a passionate interest in not only travelling to far-away places but also, by writing, mediating their experiences and observations of those places to a readership back home. For this chapter, I draw from interviews with ten American professional travel writers who, with two exceptions, are based in the states of New York or California. They all have long careers behind them and have published extensively in, mainly, American print media. Insights from participant observations at a trade conference and participating in writing workshops for travel writers have, less explicitly, informed this text. From attending the conference and workshops, I have gained an understanding of how the professional identities of travel writers take shape and what aspects of their professional practices they see as essential. Industry conferences are opportunities for knowledge production and networking among peers, and are therefore good sites for ethnographic inquiry into various aspects of specific industries. Such large-scale gatherings are events where professional identities are shaped (Nyqvist 2017: 23–42, Nyqvist, Høyer Leivestad and Tunestad 2017: 1–22). The methodological approach of the study behind this chapter is also inspired by the interview-based ethnographic studies of textual production, practices of different kinds of writers, and writing as a profession that scholars such as social anthropologists Hannerz (2004) and Helena Wulff (2017) have conducted and written about. To maintain focus on what different travel writers have to say about some fundamental elements and current changes of travel writing, rather than igniting curiosity about who says what, I have opted to anonymize the interviewees, give them all new names and treat the interview material as a 'collection of voices' (Gudeman and Rivera 1990, Nyqvist 2016, Rothenberg 1998).

The general premise here is that travel writing is a literary form, and practice, in which writers produce texts in an ongoing negotiation between cosmopolitanism and vernacularism. Literary products are key elements in the configuration of the world itself (Archetti 1994), and cosmopolitan writers – such as foreign correspondents and travel writers – translate and mediate the world to their readership at home (Clifford 1997, Hannerz 2003, 2004, Nünning and Nünning 2010, Wulff 2016, 2017). This leads to the postulation of the world-making ability of literature which Nelson Goodman (1978: 6) proposed: 'Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking.' Goodman (ibid.: 94) includes a wide range of modes of expression, other than words, in his approach to world-making, claiming that: 'Worlds are made by making such versions with words, numerals, pictures, sounds, or other symbols of any kind in any medium.' A main point here is that, until recently, the world-making capabilities of travel writing have been inherent and fundamental, and constitute its very core.

Mediating the soul of a place

Curiosity and a sense of wonder are seen as important drivers for a good travel writer, and personal experience of a place is key. In the interviews and writing workshops, travel writers talk of their efforts to portray the actual place as the main character in their travel stories, and emphasize the importance of conveying 'a sense of place' in their writing. As ways to accomplish this, they mention the significance of being well prepared, yet open to change travel and writing plans according to surprises and mishaps along the way. They stress the importance of being able to mediate 'the soul of a place' in a simultaneously informed and entertaining way to a broad readership at home.

One renowned travel writer, here called Andrew, is an author and editor with numerous published articles and books on travel and travel writing. Andrew claims he has been 'wandering and writing' for more than forty years, and in the interview he sweeps through the history of travel writing and concludes that the personal experience of a journey has become increasingly conspicuous for this literary form, and especially its ability to 'make worlds':

> What the Marco Polos of the world did was that they wrote about places that
> no one had ever been to and would never get to. So they had this incredible

artistic licence to really make a world. That continued for a long time but now, whenever I go somewhere, the chances are huge that someone has already posted something about that place on Instagram and Facebook. So as a travel writer, I cannot say: 'Reader, you've never seen this but here's what it looks like.' Instead, it's about my interaction with the place. As a travel writer, I think I bring value by saying to people: 'This is how this place affected me and therefore, this might be how it would affect you too as a traveller, as a human being.' I don't think Marco Polo was saying very much about what he felt about the different places but it was totally his take. He was the filter. Not that the story today is all about you but you're the vehicle that illuminates the story about a particular place. That is, I think, what travel writing has been evolving towards. That uniqueness. What I, as a travel writer, am creating is an emotional world. My world. Which is what travel writers have always done really but it's much more explicit now.

To keep alive one's curiosity as well as a sense of discovery and wonder – all important features of travel writing introduced by medieval travel writers – is something that is often communicated as crucial for any travel writer (see for example Shapiro 2004). But Brian, a self-proclaimed 'old-school travel journalist' based on the American East Coast, does not like the word 'wonder': 'There are people that talk about "the wonder", even "the magic". I just think of it as "the cool stuff". My goal is always to go somewhere that I've never been to before. Somewhere that excites me. Somewhere that gives me a sense of: "Oh, wow! This is going to be cool!"'

But a sense of wonder and an 'insatiable curiosity' were not enough for the early travel writers in medieval times (Asfour 2003: 578), and do not seem to suffice for the contemporary travel writer either; an element of adventure and 'a willingness to brave difficulties' are needed as well (ibid.). The travel writers I interviewed talk about mishaps and mistakes, unexpectedness and serendipity. Charles, a non-fiction author, travel writer and documentary filmmaker based in San Francisco, California, argues that 'real travel' and great storytelling is all about misadventure and serendipity, it is about taking the wrong turn. To make his point and demonstrate what he sees as the difference between tourism and travel, Charles tells the story of how Thomas Cook, the seventeenth-century British businessman, first began to arrange group travel:

He [Cook] said: 'Hop on the train with me in Birmingham. We are going to London and then back again. I'm taking you on a tour.' And that's the start of tourism. But, what's key is that at the bottom of Cook's travel posters it said: 'No surprises guaranteed.' Because that's what people going on organized group

tours wanted. And still, to this day, tourism means no surprises. But surprises are the thrills for any real traveller. It is about taking the wrong turn and getting lost. And that's where the story for one's travel writing is. You want that element of surprise in your travel story; otherwise you'll just be feeding the beast: the beast of stereotypes.

David, a travel writer and magazine editor with more than ten published travel books, also emphasizes the unplanned as an essential element of good storytelling, especially when writing about travel. 'The bad experience *is* the story', David exclaims when talking about telling stories based on his travels. He continues:

> Nobody wants to hear stories about everything that went as expected. You're lucky when bad shit happens. I'm interested in telling stories, not in writing an encyclopaedia article, or describing something for the would-be traveller. I want to tell a story, and misfortune is often part of that. So, what might be a terrible trip for someone else would be an absolute wonder for me because I get to write about it. It makes a good story.

'I often accidentally find my way into other stories while I'm on an assignment. You have to be open to serendipity and accidents', says Elizabeth, a travel writer formerly based in New York but now living in California, who has built her career writing about travel for American magazines. Frank, a travel and art writer based on the West Coast, says: 'Of course you have to do your homework beforehand, but if you do exactly your pitch then you're doing something wrong. You'd better get surprised out there.' Brian puts it this way: 'The opening yourself up to the unexpected is very important. Observing is obviously important but if you're just walking there, observing, you risk only seeing and experiencing that which you already know. You have to allow for the unexpected. Leave room for the whimsy, for happenstance and for chance.' Andrew, in his interview, expresses his concern about the fact that information about everything and every place today can be found on the internet, and social media may ruin the necessary element of surprise in travel and travel writing. He says: 'Nowadays the surprise element has been diminished. It gets diluted by social media and when you can find out everything before going somewhere. People need to go out and get lost. I always say: "Lose yourself in the place. Rely on a stranger. Engage with the place."' A personal engagement with the particular place that the writer visits is yet another long-lasting element of travel writing. Charles simply states: 'Attention and intention. Ask yourself: "Why am I going? Why am

I here?" And remember: you're looking for the soul of a place.' A poet, novelist and travel writer, here called Grace, talks passionately about engaging with the places she writes about:

> It is all about place. Place has a personality in good travel writing. You create a feeling for the place. First, you have to know your facts and the history, but what happens then is that the place leaves the shadows. It leaves an imprint and you can capture the colour and the light, the people and the language, how that particular place is used, what it does and what it can reveal. You capture the mood of the place, the feelings of the place. The place is the character in the story.

These 'collections of voices' and experience-based insights from contemporary long-term professional travel writers convey what they see as the principal and fundamental elements of their craft. Sincere curiosity and an open mind combined with a well-informed knowledge of, and engagement with, the place are held up as necessary prerequisites for a travel writer to write personal, experience-based, well-researched text that conveys the soul of a distant place to a broad readership back home. I return to contemporary travel writers, but first I take a closer look at what scholars of travel writing see as the very roots of the practice and craft of travel writing, and some of the more salient shifts within the evolution of travel writing as a literary form.

An elusive literary form

As a literary form, travel writing is inherently elusive and has constantly proved difficult for practitioners and scholars alike to define and classify. A set of commonly, albeit not universally, agreed-upon tenets of travel writing are that such writings are experienced-based, first-person descriptions of far-away places aimed at a readership at home. The main feature is that the text is a narrative of an actual journey personally conducted by the author (Borm 2017: 17, Pettinger and Youngs 2019: 4, Sherman 2002: 31, Youngs 2013: 5, 2017: 180). Beyond that, scholars struggle to establish what, in fact, travel writing is, and some argue that it should even be considered as a literary genre (see for example Borm 2017: 13). Travel writing is not readily determined or contained (Youngs 2013: 1, 15), but remains instead 'a loosely defined body of literature' (Hooper and Youngs 2017: 2) and 'a relatively open-ended and versatile form' (ibid.: 3). Travel writing is always fluid and flexible, adaptable and versatile (ibid.: 11,

Korte 2000: 9, Littlewood 2001: 20, Youngs 2013: 1). Over time, travel writing has 'taken a bewildering multiplicity of forms and functions' (Speake 2003: vii), which is something that is seen by some as being increasingly divisive (Youngs 2013: 188). Because of its mixed and cross-over character, travel writing has been dubbed by some scholars as 'the most hybrid and unassimilable of literary genres' (Holland and Huggan 1998: 8). Pointing to the fact that travel writing often encompasses, and makes use of, a number of other types of texts and forms of literature, such as newspaper articles, official documents, letters, diary entries and much else, it has been suggested that 'travel writing is the art of the collage' (Bishop 1985: 203). Travel writing is, in short, a 'stubbornly indefinable form' (Youngs 2013: 2), characterized by its 'generic range and mixture' (Pettinger and Youngs 2019: 6). Travel writing scholar Tim Youngs (2013: 6) states that: 'A near-consensus has developed that travel writing is a mixed form that feeds off other genres' and talks about 'the hybridity of travel writing' (ibid.: 173). Travel writing, Youngs (ibid.: 6) asserts, is 'a genre whose intergeneric features constitute its identity'. The broad range of this fluid and flexible hybrid literary form include guidebooks, itineraries, reports and other such factual accounts, but also less restricted narratives of journeys written as prose or poetry, in the form of a private diary, an essay, a short story, a novel or a poem, often with elements of several of these or other literary forms mixed in single pieces of travel writing (Bishop 1985: 203, Borm 2017: 14–16, Youngs 2013: 6).

Travel writing, then, is a broad, ever-shifting hybrid literary form – one that feeds off other genres, constantly reinvents itself and adapts to its time and place. Travel writing has 'travelled' (Youngs 2017: 167) and has 'altered, reflecting the shifting aesthetic and cultural fashions of the day' (Hooper and Youngs 2017: 3). In a broad sense, travel writing reflects 'the society in which it is produced and consumed, multifarious elements of culture are contained within it' (Youngs 2017: 175). It is therefore argued that travel writing 'is the most socially important of all literary genres. It records our temporal and special progress. It throws light on how we define ourselves and on how we define others' (Youngs 2013: 1).

Curiosity and storytelling at the core

'Do you want to hear my theory about stories?' David asks rhetorically during the interview, and proceeds: 'Alright. We as homo sapiens told stories around the camp fire. Homer did his stories in poems. Gutenberg let us disseminate

our stories through the printed word. We read stories on the internet. Stories are baked into our DNA. We're storytelling creatures.' If telling stories to each other is a fundamental human trait, then perhaps a tale of travel might very well be one of the first stories to be told. Scholars and writers have over the years discussed and reflected upon how the act of returning from a journey to share the experiences with those who stayed behind may, in fact, be the origin of all storytelling (Benjamin 1969: 85, Goody 2010: 134, Legassie 2017: 16, Youngs 2013: 1, 19). It has also been suggested that the travel story may be seen as the very basis for any good plot, whether oral or written. Leo Tolstoy is often credited with having said 'All great literature is one of two stories: a man goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town.' Whether it was Tolstoy or someone else who first said this matters little; what is interesting to note is that these two basic storylines are different perspectives of travelling, one focusing on the onset of a journey, the other on the arrival at a destination; both equally intriguing and enticing, open-ended and with infinite exploration possibilities. If people can be said to be both travelling and storytelling creatures that have always ventured out on journeys, and those who come back told stories about their adventures – the travel story, then, has been around for thousands of years and contemporary travel writing can be seen to have its roots in diverse ancient texts which, in various ways, describe journeys (Howard 1980: 29, Humble 2011, Legassie 2017, Pretzler 2013, Rubiés 2002: 248, Sherman 2002: 21, Youngs 2013: 21–4).

It was, however, with the widely circulated experienced-based and curiosity-driven written narratives of medieval travellers that the travel story found its literary form as we now know it. The stories of the journeys of Marco Polo, one of the most famous travellers of the medieval period, are seen by scholars of travel writing as the starting point of a new impulse in such writing, one specifically 'attentive to observed experience and curiosity towards other lifeways' (Hulme and Youngs 2002: 3).[2] With the medieval overland routes between Europe and the vast Mongol Empire secured by the Pax Mongolica, more and new kinds of travellers journeyed east: merchants, of course, but also adventurers and explorers, philosophers and other individuals driven by curiosity and wanderlust. Marco Polo, born into a Venetian merchant family circa 1254, was by no means the first European to travel east during the Middle Ages, but the written account

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[2] Outside the Christian tradition, the Arabic literary form *rihla* – referring to both a journey and the written account of that journey – flourished during medieval and early-modern periods and lasted up to the seventeenth century (Euben 2008, Youngs 2013, Zumthor and Peebles 1994).

of his experiences in the Mongol Empire captured the imagination of an unprecedentedly large readership, setting new and lasting standards for travel writing (Elsner and Rubiés 1999: 35, Frankopan 2003: 971, Youngs 2013: 25). As a teenager, Marco Polo accompanied his merchant father and uncle on a journey east. When they returned to Venice twenty-four years later, arriving in 1295, they had lived in East Asia for seventeen years and travelled extensively in Central, East, Far East and Southeast Asia (Frankopan 2003: 972–3, Legassie 2017: 39). Soon after their return, Marco Polo was captured and imprisoned in Genoa, where he happened to share a cell with the then well-known writer Rustichello da Pisa, to whom Polo dictated his experiences and observations from his journeys (Frankopan 2003: 971, Legassie 2017: 39).

The Travels of Marco Polo, or *Le Divisament dou Monde*, was originally written in 1298 in a version of French known as Franco-Italian. The opening paragraph reads: 'Lord emperors and kings, dukes and marquises, counts, knights, and burgesses, and all people who want to know about the diverse races of men and the diverse wonders of diverse regions of the world, take this book and have it read' (translation from *Divisament* as quoted in Legassie 2017: 40, see also Polo ([1845] 2018). Based on the fact that *Divisament* was first written in a popular vernacular language instead of Latin, and is filled with captivating and detailed descriptions and composed in a rather regular and inclusive narrative tone, the book is considered to be a pioneering attempt at reaching out to a different and broader readership (Elsner and Rubiés 1999: 36, Frankopan 2003: 972, Legassie 2017: 39–47, 93, Youngs 2013: 27). *The Travels of Marco Polo* was, at the time, a new kind of literary work: new not only because of its extensive descriptions of the life and reign of the Mogul emperor and the accounts of many lands, peoples and cultures previously unknown to Europeans, but also innovative as a literary work in that it 'sought a socially mixed, geographically wide-ranging reading public, which it addressed in the vernacular' (Legassie 2017: 39–40). It quickly became one of the most widely read travel books of its time and within a few decades had been translated into several other languages, including Latin and French (ibid.: 39). It is argued that Marco Polo's influence on not only his contemporary fellow travellers and writers but also 'the broader medieval mind' is 'almost second to none' (Frankopan 2003: 973). Scholars have argued that Polo's palpable curiosity and desire for knowledge, his detailed first-hand observations, his lay empiricism and his immersion in the life of the places he visited successfully introduced these new and lasting features to travel writing (Elsner and Rubiés 1999: 30–6). Jennifer Speake (2003: vii) phrases the lasting

influence of *The Travels of Marco Polo* succinctly: 'Curiosity, information, pleasure – not much has changed in the underlying compact between travel writers and their audience since Marco Polo's visit to the court of the Mogul Great Khan, Kublai, in the thirteenth century.' In an earlier account, British poet John Masefield alludes to the world-making capacity of *The Travels of Marco Polo* in his introduction to a 1908 edition of the book: 'The wonder of Marco Polo is … that he created Asia for the European mind' (quoted in Youngs 2013: 25).

After this look at the roots and essential features of travel writing, in what follows I provide a brief historicization to point out some of the more salient shifts of this literary form.

The year 1492, with Columbus's first voyage, is typically viewed as a 'new beginning' for travel writing: rather than meaning a novel type of travel writing *per se*, this seems to allude to the fact that Columbus's 'discovery' of a new continent demarks the beginning of a new epistemological turn, with shifts in the perception of the world (Hulme and Youngs 2002: 3, Legassie 2017: 59, Quadflieg 2017: 28, Ramachandran 2015, Youngs 2013: 13). The early-modern period, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, did see a continuous increase in both production and popularity of travel writing. The form and style of writing varied greatly, and by the end of the period illustrations of the places, people, nature and culture described in the texts had become a new, even expected, supplement to the published works (Sherman 2002: 19–20, 30–1). The travel writing of the early-modern period, accompanied by detailed maps as well as drawings of landscapes, coastlines, harbours and settlements, was not only in popular demand but also played significant roles in political debates and raising funds for new journeys (Hulme and Youngs 2002: 3, Youngs 2013: 30). Youngs (ibid.: 31) sums up this key notion of travel writing in early-modern times: 'It manifests the connection between travel, nation, commerce and colonial expansion that has been evident in so much travel writing, and that would appear strongly again in the mid to late nineteenth century.'

As the so-called 'age of discovery' continued into the eighteenth century, an ever-growing plethora of travel writing followed in its path, some with an obvious intent to entertain, others with more scientific purposes, many a mix of these two aims and most with an underlying agenda of a political, economic or religious character (Bridges 2002: 53, Youngs 2013: 41). Two new types of travellers gained notoriety during this era, those in groups and the individualistic romantic traveller – each producing different kinds of texts.

The new phenomenon of the Grand Tour gained traction during the eighteenth century, and the well-travelled routes gave rise to standardized guidebooks which, in turn, paved the way for later mass tourism and the tourist as a new type of traveller (Chard 1999, Littlewood 2001). An assortment of new types of subgenres of travel literature saw the light of day during the eighteenth century, and the popularity of this heterogeneous literary form was unparalleled (Youngs 2013: 38–41). The eighteenth-century press, of course, enabled broad dissemination of travel writing and, due to public demand, extracts from travel books were often published in periodicals (Steward 2003: 659).

The Romanticist approach to travel writing began towards the end of the eighteenth century and came into full bloom during the nineteenth. Salient novel characteristics here were individual reflection and introspection, where travel accounts often included descriptions of the author's inner journey and personal change alongside descriptions of the actual trip. Just as the tourist's guidebook continues to be part of the broad spectrum of contemporary travel writing, so does this new introspective and transitional travel literature (Littlewood 2001: 56, Youngs 2013: 46–7, 55).

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, colonialism followed by criticism of the colonial era, new modes of transportation, innovations in printing and the steady increase in literacy rates all affected the travel writing of the era. Throughout the nineteenth century the continuous advancements of the steam engine, with transcontinental railways and trans-Atlantic passenger ships as a result, enabled more people to travel longer distances at greater speeds. And in the twentieth century cars revolutionized the possibilities for individual travel and airplanes pushed the limits of distance and speed in travelling even further. All these advancements and innovations led not only to new ways of travelling but also new ways of viewing the world and oneself in it, as well as new ways of writing about travel (Bassnett 2003: xii, Korte 2000: 18, Legassie 2017: 229, Steward 2003: 660, Youngs 2013: 38–67). Innovations in book printing and the expansion of daily and periodical media, as well as a general increase in literacy rates, led to a growth in both production and reading of, among much else, travel writing (Steward 2003: 659, Youngs 2013: 53–6).

Altogether a more subjective, individualistic, self-conscious and reflective, even parodic, type of travel writing emerged as modernism became established and novelists venturing into travel writing spurred a more literary kind of account (Hulme and Youngs 2002: 7, Youngs 2013: 68–83). With seemingly no blank spots left on the map of the world to travel to and write home about,

a general tendency among travel writers became to, in various ways, turn the focus on to – and into – themselves. A strong emphasis on individuality was developed, sometimes manifested in stories of the lone traveller, often by the creation of a narrating persona invented to carry the story of the travel forward as well as to distinguish one's writing from that of others (Youngs 2013: 68–83). Youngs (ibid.: 152) writes: 'A common strategy employed by travel writers who are visiting areas that have already been written about is to distinguish their accounts from previous ones. This is often managed through humour and irony, qualities that help construct their narrative personae and that create a warm relationship between author-narrator and reader.' The renewed interest in the journey into the self in the twentieth century originated with the introduction of psychoanalysis and the work of Sigmund Freud in the late nineteenth century (ibid.: 102–14). The late-nineteenth and twentieth-century travel writing with themes of inner journeys is often written as introspective responses to contemporary political and cultural developments (ibid.: 103). During the post-war era, however, politics of decolonization brought a new awareness that began to challenge and rebut assumptions and stereotypes in earlier travel writing. The post-colonial criticism grew stronger and became even more widespread towards the end of the twentieth century (ibid.: 68–83).

Much as travel changed with the introduction of new modes of travel, and travel writing subsequently changed with the new ways of thinking about and being in the world that the new ways of travelling enabled, so too is travel writing currently changing with the introduction of new media technologies. In the twenty-first century, due to globalization, innovations in information technology and the introduction of low-cost airlines, long-distance travel has become more accessible to a great many more people. Some claim that the value of and interest in travel writing is in decline. Youngs (ibid.: 177), however, argued differently when in 2013 he wrote that 'the proliferation of blogs and the increasing ease of self-publishing means that the production of travellers' accounts will not be halted by any decline in readership'. Instead, he expected: 'Travel writing, like all literature, responds to new technologies. The means and speed of motion affect the way people experience their travel as well as how they write about it' (ibid.: 178). Youngs (ibid.: 180) further anticipated increased self-publishing and greater empowerment, given that social media allows 'anyone who can get online to publish their thoughts and experiences'. With examples of the new media technologies such as Tumblr, Flickr and Twitter, Youngs broods over the brevity of these novel ways of recording and sharing one's travel experiences, and

asks whether travel writing in these formats can be considered to be much more than electronic postcards. 'One might question whether tweets, emails, blogs and texts count as travel writing at all' (ibid.: 187).

In sum, scholars of travel writing have shown that at different moments in time such writing both reflects and influences the way people view the world and themselves in it. Travel writing is shaped by the political, economic, social, religious and cultural conditions of the time and place in which it was produced. The hyper-marketization and pressure for profitability in the media and publishing industries, continued dominance of internet-based publishing and the constant introduction of new information technologies are a few, albeit broad and dominant, conditions that impact contemporary travel writing and have some travel writers worried about the future of travel writing. Considering these issues, I now account for some of the salient dynamics at play within travel writing as it has developed over time, and then give a reminder of some of the more lasting features of this literary form.

Tensions and tenacities

The experience-based and curiosity-driven texts conveying information based on observations from far-away places to a broad audience at home make up the very core of travel writing. Besides such pervasive characteristics, there are a few sets of intrinsic tensions or dynamics that have proved to be formative and long-lasting within the genre. The inherent dynamics of travel writing are the tension between cosmopolitan and vernacular, and between distance and proximity, as well as the tension created by mixing facts with fiction. These dynamics all work to shape the worlds presented in travel writing, so first I give a reminder of the world-making capacities of travel writing.

Scholars have, over the years, pointed to the world-making capabilities of literature in general and travel writing in particular. Peter Bishop (1985: 204), discussing travel writer Peter Matthiessen's book *The Snow Leopard*, asserts that: 'Travel writing creates worlds; it does not simply discover them.' It has been argued that travel writing can be seen as one of the most socially important of literary forms in that it both reflects and influences the way the world is viewed (Hooper and Youngs 2017, Hulme and Youngs 2002, Pettinger and Youngs 2019, Pratt 1992, Youngs 2013). As Youngs (ibid.: 12) states: 'Travel writing reflects and influences the way we view the world and ourselves in relation to it.' I have

already accounted for how Goodman (1978), in his discussion of world-making, includes a wide range of modes of expression other than words; building on Goodman's work, other scholars have shown that the intricate relationship among various forms of communication – textual, visual and oral – is at the core of processes of world-making. The role of media, medialization and the dynamics of premediation and remediation are seen as important factors that have shaped, and continue to shape, existing ways of world-making (Nünning and Nünning 2010). The narrative form in general is seen to have an especially powerful potential regarding the making of worlds. The main reason for this is that the narrative and storytelling – that is, the procedures and processes through which happenings, occurrences or incidents become meaningful events, stories and story-worlds – not only generate possible worlds but also exert performative power (Neumann and Zierold 2010, Nünning 2010, Nyqvist 2018). As Birgit Neumann and Martin Zierold hold:

> In other words, the production and circulation of cultural as well as individual knowledge, i.e. the making of worlds in the broadest sense, is to a large extent dependent on media use and medial externalisation. Cultural world-making is constituted by a host of different media, all of which operate within specific symbolic systems: literary texts, TV documentaries, historical painting, newspaper articles, and monuments, for example. World-making cannot do without media that represent or embody cultural knowledge and are capable of circulating in a social group.
>
> (Neumann and Zierold 2010: 103)

Considering travel writing specifically, these notions of the role that medialization plays in processes of world-making place the travel writer at the centre of such processes. The figure of the cultural broker is significant here, in that travel writers are situated in the intermediary position of a broker and mediate the world from one local setting to another. The role of the broker has been described by anthropologists as one that serves as a connection to mediate and disseminate knowledge between the local and global (Geertz 1960, James 2011, Wolf 1956). In writing specifically about the profession of foreign correspondents, Hannerz (2004: 2) states that they 'seemed to be key players in today's globalization of consciousness. Their reporting … makes up a major part of that flow of information from and about other parts of the world.' Without mentioning the position of the broker specifically, Hannerz (ibid.: 15), in his discussion about foreign correspondents, alludes to such a mediating function: 'That argument, about bringing a perspective from one

place and applying it to another place, then reporting it back to where it came from, is central.' Scholars of travel writing also focus on the mediating role of travel writing and the travel writer as a kind of broker who mediates, transmits and translates first-hand experiences and observations from far-away places to readers back home. Benjamin Colbert (2019: 175) suggests that, by way of detailed descriptions, the figure of the traveller in narratives may be viewed as a representation of the imagined reader, while Susan Bassnett (2003: xi) likens the travel writer to a translator in her discussion of travel writing in relation to its readers. She writes: 'travel writers write for a designated audience, whose expectations are similarly shaped by their own context. Travel writing is here viewed as a particular form of writing, closely akin to translation. Like the translator, the travel writer shapes material in such a way that readers may have access to whatever situations and places, known or unknown, are being described.' Youngs (2013: 10) points to the similarities between travellers and translators, highlighting their in-between position: 'Translators and travellers may be seen as liminal figures moving between cultures, not quite or wholly belonging to any one exclusively.' Youngs (ibid.: 166) further discusses the particular position and function that travel writing holds: 'Of all literary genres, travel writing, which deals with encounter and observation, is best placed to transmit cultural values under the guise of straight-forward report or individual impression.'

With these world-making capacities and the mediating role of travel writing in mind, we now turn to look at the inherent tensions and dynamics significant to travel writing. It seems that the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic is especially salient here. Travel writing can be seen as a literary form and practice in which writers produce texts in an ongoing translation of and negotiation between cosmopolitanism and vernacularism (Hannerz 2003, 2004, Pollock et al. 2002). The cosmopolitan notion of travel writing is, scholars suggest, linked to a structure of colonialism and imperialism from which it is seemingly impossible to depart (Lisle 2006: 70, Pratt 1992, Youngs 2013: 182). On that note, Youngs (ibid.: 159) holds that: 'Authors who suggest they learn from, rather than have superior knowledge to, indigenous peoples, or who portray the results of their journeys as indecisive, are still using the Other – at least in textual terms – in order to make a point for their own purposes.'

Connected to the tensions between the cosmopolitan and the vernacular are the dynamics of distance and proximity. As Swedish travel writer Tomas Löfström (1984: 185, my translation) formulated it: 'It is in the tension between

the traveller and the surroundings that the possibilities of the travel story lie.' The very essence of travel writing is that the writer goes on journeys to distant places and writes about his or her experiences and first-hand observations for a readership at home. Travel writing, then, translates and mediates accounts from and of the world, and it does so from one local setting to another. The dynamic between distance and proximity is, and has been so from the beginning, formative for the travel story. On this very point, Bassnett (2003: xi) writes: 'Travel writing has built into its very existence a notion of otherness. It is premised on a binary opposition between home and elsewhere … Hence all travel writing exists in a dialectical relationship between two distinct places – that designated by the writer and perhaps also by readers as "home", and that designated by the cultural other.'

In his work on the interpretation of cultural forms, and specifically on the role of the author within anthropology, Clifford Geertz (1988: 129–30) points to the two positions of 'Being There' and 'Being Here' of the anthropologist. The former represents the position of the anthropologist while in the field, as it were, something which more often than not – and especially so in the earlier days of the discipline – involved travelling to distant places to conduct fieldwork. 'In itself, Being There is a postcard experience ("I've been to Katmandu – have you?"). It is Being Here, a scholar among scholars, that gets your anthropology read, published, viewed, cited, taught.' The 'Here' that Geertz refers to is, of course, the academic world back home, and it is in the tension between the distant Being There and the nearby Being Here that the anthropological analysis is created. With regard to travel writing and the dynamics of distance and proximity, it has been argued that the positions of 'here' and 'there' are of importance. In her account of early Scottish women's travel writing, Dorothy McMillan (1997: 119) argues: 'All literature of travel operates between notions of "here" and "there" and the audience for such writing may sometimes be in both places at the same time, just as the writer too may shift positions in significant ways.' And with Michael Kowalewski (1992: 9) arguing along similar lines, we circle back to the role of the travel writer as the readers' representative or surrogate: 'No matter how much "inside" description a traveller employs in evoking another culture and its people, a crucial element of all travel writing remains the author's "visitor" status. He or she remains, as the reader's surrogate, a cultural outsider who moves into, through and finally beyond the places and events encountered.' It has been argued that inherent in one of the core features of travel writing, namely the detailed first-hand description, lies

the tension between distance and proximity. Benjamin Colbert (2019: 167) bases his discussion on the workings of descriptions on the Latin root of the word 'describe' where *de* means off, away, aside and *scriber* means to write. He argues that this 'involves distance, memory, a remove from experience; hence description is fundamental to the crafting of on-the-spot travels into narrative'. This brings us to the tensions generated by the frequent trespassing, in many other literary genres, over the distinct line between fact and fiction displayed in travel writing from the very onset.

Marco Polo was, for example, accused of both exaggerating and fabricating his travel experiences, and as Nicholas Frankopan (2003: 972) states: 'It is now generally acknowledged that Marco Polo tended to exaggerate his role.' The fluid, versatile and hybrid character of travel writing feeds off the tension between fact and fiction, in that travel writers often cross over to, borrow from and make use of other genres and literary forms to create their travel stories. The width of the literary form of travel writing accommodates more literary, creative and fictitious texts – albeit based on first-hand experiences of journeys – such as poems, short stories and novels on the one hand, and, on the other, predominantly informational texts such as guidebooks and travel writing from the pens of trained journalists who do not steer away from their fact-based material. But as Bassnett (2003: xi) reminds us: 'travellers who write about actual journeys they have undertaken are often in some way influenced by that fictitious writing, and indeed the boundaries between fact and fiction in what we shall call the genre of travel writing are often hard to discern'. Also at play here is the tension between distance and proximity, and, as discussed above, the dynamic created in the interplay of 'Being There' and 'Being Here'. As Barbara Korte (2000: 11) asserts: 'The actual experience of a journey is reconstructed, and therefore fictionalized, in the moment of being told' (see also Hooper and Youngs 2017: 9, Youngs 2013: 3). In his introduction to the seminal volume *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford (1986: 6) reminds us of the Latin root of the word 'fiction' to argue that 'ethnographic writings can properly be called fictions'. The word's Latin root, *fingere*, refers to something that is made, shaped or fashioned, not necessarily invented. Finally Youngs, building on the arguments of Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, touches upon both the mediating position of travel writing and other dynamics of fact and fiction inherent to the literary form: 'Holland and Huggan state that "travel writing enjoys an intermediary status between subjective inquiry and objective documentation" … This immediately entails two things: the construction of the

self and the other and the relationship between fact and fiction' (Youngs 2013: 173, referring to Holland and Huggan 1998).

Based on the historic overview above, we see that a few fundamental characteristics were already in place during medieval times and have since remained at the very basic core of travel writing. To venture out on a journey and with a curious mind seek new, first-hand experienced-based information about far-away places and peoples, to observe carefully and take actual or mental notes of the findings, and upon one's return to transform the information, observations and experiences into texts that are both informative and entertaining, with the purpose of disseminating the travel stories to a wide audience – these are all defining elements of the otherwise constantly changing and evolving literary form of travel writing, and have existed since medieval times. There is, however, now a growing concern that this foundation may be deteriorating, which is endangering the very essence of travel writing.

Voices of concern

I now return to the interviews with professional travel writers, and what they have to say about their experiences and the current state of their craft and profession. In recent years these seasoned travel writers have been witnessing changes that they consider fundamental, and which they fear might lead to the demise of the literary form as such.

Several of the travel writers I interviewed half-jokingly identified themselves as 'old-school' writers, implying that a new generation of travel writers that they have met on assignments in recent years practise their craft differently. When delving into this topic a little, reflections saturated with both nostalgia and concern emerged. There was clearly a longing for a vanishing cosmopolitan essence of travel writing. More explicitly, these professional travel writers expressed deep concern about the effects that escalating marketization and digitalization might entail, and worried about what a new type of competition, the so-called travel influencers, might bring about for their profession and for travel writing as a literary form. Let us begin with what the interviewed travel writers said about the increased pressures and expectations of efficiency and output they experienced from editors and others on the publishing side of the travel-writing business. They expressed a real concern about authenticity, and grievances about expectations in the pursuit of 'clicks'.

'A lot of travel writers, especially these days, are not able to focus on the kinds of stories that they, at heart, would prefer to', said Brian, continuing with an observation that:

> Most people who are doing this for a living today have to take as many assignments as they can get and they have to write stories that they may not personally like to write. I can see that most of their work comes from websites and not even from actual travels or personal experiences. The reason, of course, is that most of the work is so poorly paid that in order to make anything approaching a realistic living, you have to write story after story after story after story. So you're churning it out. And the quality … Well, it's reflected in the quality of the writing. Boy, am I glad that I'm not coming up in journalism and travel writing now.

During my interview with Grace, her friend and colleague, here called Harold, joined mid-interview and at one point the two dived into a dialogue about authenticity, or rather the difficulty they as travel writers increasingly had in finding what they perceived as authentic travel experiences to write about when tourist bureaus so heavy-handedly attempt to steer and shape what travel writers see and do during their travels. 'Everybody is trying to get beyond the industry, the tourism industry, in some way, and have an authentic experience', says Grace. 'Yes, people are looking for authentic experiences. You know, experiential things like home-stays or immersive experiences', Harold chimed in.

Brian, in particular, had a lot to say about a rather new phenomenon generated by online publishing which pressures travel writers, instead of looking for authentic and personal experiences to write about, merely to compile lists of things aimed to lure impatient online readers to click on the list rather than be tempted to read a longer travel story. Here is what Brian said about the phenomenon of lists:

> I know that many travel writers trying to make a living have to do these round-ups, these listicals, you know, writing about things that they have not personally experienced. Lists of the ten greatest whatevers. It started in the 90s on the covers of magazines when somebody came up with this rule that numbers on covers sell magazines. So, then you had to have 'The Five This' and 'The 69 Most Wonderful That.' And if you have that number on the cover – 'The 17 Best Whatevers', then that has got to be in the title of the story. And if that, then, is your headline, well, it affects the story you can write. And that's when things began to go to hell, in my opinion.

Isabella is a travel writer and travel magazine editor based in New York who has worked as a print and digital travel editor for twenty-five years. From her long-

time experience, Isabella provided insight into the world of keywords and 'clicks'. She talked about how travel writers nowadays, often with the help of editors, have to think in new ways about the exact words they use. The job now has less to do with how best to describe something interesting from a journey, and is more about generating online traffic. Isabella said:

> There's the issue of Google analytics and keywords now. In order to, you know, get the clicks, writers nowadays have to know how to incorporate those words into their stories and headlines. I'm sure that if you're a really good writer, you can develop an artistry of doing that so that you're not repeating yourself. But I think that's something that the new generation do not think the same about. It's not easy to reconcile having a bunch of searchable words with trying to keep it fresh and having strong writing. It's really difficult to be creative *and* accommodate the need for clicks. I'm sorry to say it but I think that writers of the new generation go for the clicks every time and let the writing be damned.

So who are they, then, the 'new generation' of travel writers that the more seasoned professionals keep mentioning? They are so-called travel influencers and travel bloggers, young women and men who travel and post texts, films and photos from their trips. Some have a blog or a vlog, others their own podcast, YouTube channel or Instagram account. Many of these travel influencers have hundreds of thousands of followers, some several million (see for example Johnston 2019, Mediakix 2019, Rachel 2019, Street 2017). Looking through the content and feeds of some of the more successful travel influencers, several things are apparent: most of them look like models, they have all cleared the sites to take a photograph, and the information they convey has little or no resemblance to any kind of travel writing. Mostly because there is so little actual text, some would not even qualify as what Youngs (2013: 187) calls 'electronic postcards'. It is obviously the case that, in the world of travel influencers, the image – the photograph or video clip – is the more important form of communication. The accompanying texts contain information about the name of the place the influencer has travelled to, perhaps something about the mood or emotion that the place evokes and a question to followers to entice them into direct communication in the comments section. The brief texts often also include information about products that the influencers wear, carry or use.

The travel posts of the new-generation travel influencers have little in common with the published travel stories of the professional, 'old-school' travel writers I interviewed. Given the lack of actual words, the output of the

travel influencers should arguably not be regarded as a new subgenre within, or evolution of, the ever-shifting form of travel writing. The fundamental and long-lasting features of travel writing, such as well-informed, curiosity-driven and experienced-based detailed descriptions of far-away places, are far from prominent, if present at all, in the brief notes of travel influencers. It can easily be argued that the work of this 'new generation' of travellers promoting their travels to a wide audience should not even be considered as contributing to the literary form of travel writing. What, then, are the 'old-school' travel writers worried about? Their concern is that bloggers, vloggers, YouTubers and Instagrammers are increasingly overshadowing the work of the 'old-school', some say 'real', travel writers. They wonder if the younger generation and their use of new media technology will make so-called actual travel writing obsolete. They also worry whether the young travel influencers' scant and superficial information about far-away places will dilute or even corrupt and damage the view of the world for the millions of people who follow their 'feeds'. Their concern, in short, is that travel influencers will, in fact, have real influence and impact, that they will influence not only the profession and craft of travel writing but also the travel industry *per se*, as well as the view of the world of readers-cum-followers and potential travellers.

Jennifer, based in New York, has worked as a travel writer and editor for more than fifteen years, and in recent years she keeps running into travel influencers on her trips:

> Once I was on a wonderful trip to an amazingly beautiful island with a complex history. On my last day there a PR person arrived with about nine or ten influencers. All they did was take pictures of themselves. It was ridiculous. But that's what they do. They get paid to go to places and post things. They're required to post a minimum of pictures on social media. I mean, travel writers do convey a sense of place and there are still writers out there that care about that and try to do that but what I see is more of a very inauthentic kind of reporting. Influencers and bloggers contribute to a superficial mainstreaming because all they want is 'the money shot'.

Karen, another travel writer based in New York, has a long career in both print and online travel media, and was more direct in her criticism of the new generation that she meets on press trips:

> I don't really like going on press trips any longer. There's nothing more depressing than seeing a 20-something twirling around saying: 'I'm an influencer.' This next

generation is all self-appointed. 'I'm an influencer. I'm a blogger.' But where did you learn? Did you go to school? Did you take a master's? Did you train anywhere? 'No. I take pictures.' All that kind of killed it for real travel writers. I mean, take Instagram or Twitter … It's too quick. It's all just surface.

Back to Andrew on the West Coast. He recognizes that the new generation with their new media outlets are here to stay, but like others from his generation of travel writers, he is also genuinely concerned about the recent developments. 'Travel bloggers are the future, the cutting edge of the industry', he said, and shared his experience of attending travel-writing conferences lately, conveying insight into a shift in motivation for travel writers: 'You'll find that, I would say, seventy-five per cent of the panels and discussions are about making money. I am usually the only person there talking about quality.' Andrew also spoke of the perils of the direct uploading of texts and images in travel influencers' posts:

> There is all this unfiltered material. There are no curators. No editors. Just readers that immediately come into contact with bloggers who identify themselves as travel writers. So the popular sense of what a travel writer is and what a travel writer does has become somewhat diffused and corrupt, I think. Younger people who are just coming into the world of reading don't understand the distinction well. They pretty much have an unfiltered, uncurated embrace of everything they read. And that makes me wonder about the future of the whole genre and where it's going. When the travel bloggers become the predominant source of travel information, what does that do?

End of the road?

What, indeed, will increased and potentially dominant click-bait and sponsor-driven unfiltered postcard-like online postings or best-of lists from far-away places do to travel writing? What will happen to travel writing as a craft and profession?

For thousands of years people have ventured out on journeys, returned back home and told stories of distant places to those who did not travel. Since medieval times such storytelling has evolved into the diverse literary form of travel writing; a form that at its core is defined by curiosity-driven narratives of travel, first-hand experiences and observations from distant places, and texts with the dual purpose of informing and entertaining, intended to reach a

broad audience. Travel writing has, throughout its history, shifted and changed according to political, economic, social, religious and cultural conditions, and over the centuries innovations in transportation, printing, media and communication have altered the way people travel and affected how writers tell their stories of the journeys they take. But if, as Youngs (2017: 175) argued, travel writing 'reflects the society in which it is produced and consumed, multifarious elements of culture are contained within it', the current changes that are worrying the community of professional travel writers make perfect sense, in that they reflect the contemporary condition. Much as merchants, missionaries, explorers and colonialists were driven by the conditions of their respective times to venture out into the world and write home about it for the purpose of trade, evangelism, discovering or colonializing, the drivers for a new generation of travel storytellers – bloggers, influencers and Instagram personalities – are to achieve a growing number of followers, increased online traffic, more individual clicks and other measures that, in one way or another, are seen to generate profit in online publishing and social media industries. If, in fact, there is waning interest in and demand for longer, informative yet personal narratives based on experiences, observations and reflections from distant places which the author has actually visited, then the world-making capabilities of travel writing are diminished and travel writing as a literary form and profession may very well have reached the end of a long and winding road.

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Interview material

Full transcripts of all interviews in author's possession at Stockholm University.

Interview with 'Andrew' conducted in California, August 2017.

Interview with 'Brian' conducted in New York, October 2019.

Interview with 'Charles' conducted in California, August 2017.

Interview with 'David' conducted in California, August 2017.

Interview with 'Elizabeth' conducted in California, August 2017.

Interview with 'Frank' conducted in California, August 2017.

Interview with 'Grace' conducted in California, August 2017.

Interview with 'Harold' conducted in California, August 2017.

Interview with 'Isabella' conducted in New York, October 2019.

Interview with 'Jennifer' conducted in New York, October 2019.

Interview with 'Karen' conducted in New York, October 2019.

Afterword

World literature in the making

Helena Bodin, Stefan Helgesson, Anna Ljunggren, Annika Mörte Alling,
†Anette Nyqvist, Irina D. Rasmussen, Lena Rydholm,
Per Ståhlberg and Mattias Viktorin

The making of the world. If we dwell for a moment on this phrase, two things become apparent. There is a point, first of all, where the world is *not yet* made, where it is unfinished, or rather *in the making*, as the felicitous English idiom has it. Secondly, the making can fail or terminate. Beginnings, endings, emergences, failures: these are temporal phenomena, in keeping with a world-conception that emphasizes time as much as space as its defining category. Pheng Cheah's (2017: 87) claim that 'the world is not in the original instance a spatial container but the *process of worlding*' (emphasis in original) is relevant to such an understanding, in which, inevitably, 'making' and 'unmaking' suggest notional directionalities rather than empirical finalities. The world, one could say, is never quite *in place*, nor can it be.

The chapters in this book, while moving across a diverse range of geographical locations and moments in time, have all in different ways engaged with the transitory nature of literary world-making, and hence with moments of emergence or loss – or both. They thereby illustrate empirically that emergence and loss are not successive phases in a one-directional process of expansion or progress, but that these directionalities appear, disappear and reappear over time. More specifically, each chapter adds to the general topic of this book by exploring in detail how cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamics have been at stake at different moments within the conceptual spaces of literary world-making. The multilingual inscription of turn-of-the-century Constantinople in Helena Bodin's chapter, for example, commemorates a lost world of emergence in incipient vernacular literatures. Lu Xun's search, in Lena Rydholm's chapter, for a vernacular literary language that is adequate to the need for a changed

society in early twentieth-century China draws on a range of cosmopolitan resources. Per Ståhlberg's discussion of the career of the South Indian novel *Ghachar Ghochar* contends with the present – but by no means definitive – conjuncture of market forces, institutions and cultural trends. The nineteenth-century Siberian narratives in Mattias Viktorin's chapter are involved in the textual construction of a world hitherto absent from both literary and scientific discourse. Anette Nyqvist, by contrast, demonstrates how the semiotic saturation of our contemporary digitized world, in which nothing *appears* to be distant or unknowable, causes a crisis for a Western genre of travel writing and hence a certain 'end' of the world – or an end, rather, to a particular way in which the world has been made conceivable and consumable for readers. Focused more on materiality, both Irina Rasmussen's and Stefan Helgesson's chapters engage with ephemeral and even obscure forms – the scrapbook, little magazines – that offer a glimpse into the activities and practices that *precede* the consolidation of particular literary worlds. And so on.

What do these investigations have to offer the current field of world literature studies? Firstly, we must reiterate that this book contributes to what the introduction identified as the 'world'-turn in the field – that is, the clear tendency in recent years to theorize the world-concept, rather than assume the world as just a spatial backdrop for the circulation of literature. The 'world' in our chapters is never a generalized given, but rather a specific and dynamic construct. Even the supposedly normative centre of nineteenth-century Paris is revealed in Annika Mörte Alling's readings to be in flux, subject to the social mobility and changeable desires of the characters. When examined closely, the novels of Balzac and Flaubert fail to confirm Parisian centrality but expose rather the illusory nature of wholeness, totality and overview.

Secondly, and this follows from the first point, by looking at emergence, experimentation, accumulation and failures of representation, these studies de-emphasize the centrality of circulation and mobility in world literature. Circulation and mobility are, one might say, necessary but not sufficient criteria to conceive of the modes of world-making we find in our separate cases. Without the circulation of texts, Alexander Gumby would have had nothing to put into his scrapbook, nor would Per Ståhlberg have had a story to tell about *Ghachar Ghochar* without a transnationally connected publishing industry. Similarly, Joseph Brodsky's personal mobility, marked by the particular pathos of the Soviet-era dissident, was a precondition for his autobiographical account of Venice, as can be seen in Anna Ljunggren's

chapter. Lu Xun's literary revolution was similarly premised on his own mobility. Yet, these are precisely *preconditions* that need to be accounted for in relation to other situated factors, such as the valencies of distinct languages, the sedimentation of tradition and the pressures of local social worlds and political conjunctures.

Thirdly, as should be clear by now, this book makes a strong plea for looking at the full range of textual genres and text types within the context of world literature studies. The novel, partly because it is a genre that can accommodate other genres, remains the exemplary focus of world literature, and its continued relevance is confirmed in Alling's and Ståhlberg's studies. The potential, however, for generating significantly new world literary knowledge by broadening the methodological scope to include text types such as journals or scrapbooks is enormous. This is not a wholly original point – there is much current work in the field being done, for example, on periodicals – but it remains to be fully integrated in revised conceptions of world literature.

Fourthly, this book manifests the crucial importance of considering world literature from a multilingual and translingual angle, challenging thereby not just the anglophone bias in the field but, more importantly, the habit of treating language as a general and transparent phenomenon. Language has an irreducible significance in world-making, and different languages will make the world differently – not because of some metaphysical essence, but because of the historicity of languages and their endlessly diversified capacity to constitute publics, in Warner's (2002) sense. One methodological possibility emerging from our chapters is to approach literary texts as 'translingual events' (Helgesson and Kullberg 2018), and hence as specific outcomes of linguistic hierarchies as well as centrifugal and centripetal tendencies in language contact. Such an optic may range quite freely across historical determinations such as empire, nation, the world republic of letters and ethnically defined communities.

The points listed paint a broad canvas, and so as not to present our contribution mistakenly as simply a congeries of diverse studies, it is equally important to reflect on the book's two-part structure – 'worlds in texts' and 'texts in worlds'. While Bourdieu's (1993) field concept remains productive and operative in some of our analyses, our choice of the word 'world' provides a slant on the literary that is not exclusively explicable in terms of dispositions and position-takings, but points rather towards a dynamic of the life-world positioned in relation to the 'global world' as a historical construct. Put differently, our premise is that there exists a world outside the text and the literary field, but that textuality can both

offer conditional access to such a world and impact on some of its substantive qualities.

The two-part structure makes, then, a common-sense distinction between the worlds of texts constructed by authors and recognized by readers, and worlds of all scales in which these texts are produced, distributed and consumed. This points towards the split in much world literary scholarship between the two poles – between the circulational bias of Damrosch's (2003) earlier formulations, say, and Cheah's (2017) Heideggerian emphasis on worlding as a text-immanent capacity. This, ultimately, is what motivates our liberal use of the world concept: it becomes a means to emphasize the inevitable entanglement of – but not the equation between – the two, of textuality and worldliness. This intricacy needs, however, to be demonstrated empirically. Thus the two-part structure of the book is rather a matter of engaging contrasting methodological starting points and preferences (in literary texts or social contexts) than a division of perspectives. All chapters oscillate, in fact, between worlds in texts and texts in worlds, though with varying amplitudes and distinct points of departure.

If, then, worlds and texts relate to each other in our studies as the two sides of a Möbius strip, this is also where we locate our volume's specific contribution to the overarching methodological lens of the cosmopolitan–vernacular dynamic. In the Constantinople narratives, as well as Lu Xun's 'A Madman's Diary', we see how the cosmopolitan is vernacularized, whereas the Siberian exile narratives and the Kannada novel *Ghachar Ghochar* present instances of the cosmopolitanization of the vernacular. Gumby's scrapbooks, by contrast, tend to be both trans-vernacular and trans-cosmopolitan in their idiosyncratic constellation of distant and local materials. Ultimately, what the terms 'cosmopolitan' and 'vernacular' alert us to are the shifting and combined modes of relationality that go into the constitution of publics, whose worlds will never settle but attempt to achieve a measure of duration in the precarious flux of historical change.

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