

Recherche littéraire Literary Research





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As the annual peer-reviewed publication of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA), *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research* is an Open Access journal published by Peter Lang. Its mission is to inform comparative literature scholars worldwide of recent contributions to the field. To that end, it publishes scholarly essays, review essays discussing recent research developments in particular sub-fields of the discipline, as well as reviews of books on comparative topics. Scholarly essays are submitted to a double-blind peer review. Submissions by early-career comparative literature scholars are strongly encouraged. Past issues back to 2014 can be accessed on the ICLA website: <https://www.ailec-icla.org/literary-research/>

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EDITORIAL

The Urgency of Practising Comparative Literature

Although the Covid-19 pandemic seems to be entering its last phase, the armed conflict that has recently erupted in Ukraine invites us again, in this new instalment of *Literary Research*, to consider how comparative literary studies can possibly contribute to healing our wounded world. The title of Dorothy Figueira's opening essay, "Why Do We Do Comparative Literature?", resonates through our 2022 issue. Indeed, all the authors of the scholarly essays, review essays, and book reviews contained here echo Figueira's preoccupations, as they affirm the urgency of practising comparative literature today. In doing so, they also provide examples of the various ways in which the discipline could and should be reconfigured in the twenty-first century. Contrasting comparative literature to world literature studies, Figueira insists on the necessity of practising a comparative poetics that implies a strong command of foreign languages. Taking Simone Weil's French translations of the *Iliad* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* as case studies, she contends it is possible to identify the source of the philosopher's distortion of the originals through a careful analysis of the Greek and Sankrit versions of those texts. As she claims, a comparative literature methodology predicated on the knowledge of foreign languages enables us "to engage alternative discourses" (33).

The subsequent scholarly essays, review essays, and book reviews further explore the various ways in which a culturally-sensitive approach to the methodology of comparative literary studies can be achieved. Crystel Pinçonat's article, "Revenir, un motif envahissant dans la fiction contemporaine," re-evaluates the notion of homecoming while enabling an intermedial and cross-cultural comparison between Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* and two French television series, Jean-Luc Lagarce's *Juste la fin du monde* and Tanguy Viel's *Paris-Brest*. Eugene Arva, in his essay entitled, "Genesis vs. Mimesis: The Real, the Virtual, and the Illusion of Representation in Magical Realism," analyzes how in Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1985), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005), "the virtual is meant to complete the real while maintaining its differentness

rather than denying it, no matter how horrific the ‘real’ background might be” (85). In “Mobility, Exchange and Ecology in Pacific Theatre,” David O’Donnell examines three Indigenous plays from the Pacific region, Vela Manusaute’s *My Name Is Pilitome* (2014), Victor Rodger’s *Girl on a Corner* (2015) and The Conch’s *Marama* (2016) from the perspective of Indigenous critic Chadwick Allen’s concept of the “transindigenous”: “I have attempted to make ‘purposeful juxtapositions’ of the texts, suggesting that the prefix trans- contains the promise of transformation of the contemporary Pacific, of positive connections and change between Pacific people” (121).

The review essays section likewise continues to build on Figueira’s premise. In “Où en est la théorie littéraire?”, Alexandre Gefen productively comments on the recent theoretical developments, such as ecocriticism, that open up literary theory to a plurality of approaches. In “Translanguaging Comparative Literature,” Matthew Reynolds focuses on the notion of “translanguaging,” arguing it could reinvigorate translation studies, as it, in Li Wei’s words, “better captures multilingual language users’ fluid and dynamic practices” (148). The section concludes with two review essays by Fabrice Preyat and Franca Bellarsi, which respectively deal with significant books about realism and romanticism. These four contributors’ plea for fluidity, for attention to the particular rather than the homogeneous, is a characteristic of comparative literature further highlighted in the book reviews section.

While marked by its heterogeneity, this part of the 2022 issue is nevertheless framed by three contributions that lend it structural coherence, as they deal with the present and the future of comparative literary studies. Jenny Webb’s review opens the section with a discussion of one of the last books co-edited by Eugene Eoyang, *Comparative Literature Around the World: Global Practice*. In contrast, Amaury Dehoux’s review of the *Bloomsbury Handbook of Posthumanism* and Françoise Besson’s reflections on *Modern Ecopoetry: Reading the Palimpsest of the More-than-Human World* conclude this issue with an examination of philosophical tenets likely to influence our discipline for years to come. Moreover, in an echo of Figueira’s call for culturally-sensitive methodologies, the section includes, for the first time in the recent history of *Literary Research*, reviews of no less than five titles written in German, thus breaking away from the purely bilingual template so characteristic of the journal. The whole review section is comprised of various clusters, of which the first concentrates on books examining the literary motifs

of mysticism and the double across time (contributions by Dehoux and Acke). The second cluster deals with several periods in the history of literature, including the middle ages, the baroque, and realism (reviews by Strickland, Viehöver, Orosz and Grener). A third, more theoretical, cluster focuses on postmodernism, the theory of movement, the legacy of Foucault and the theme of forgiveness (Beloborodova, Arlaud, Liu and England). The fourth (and longest) cluster relies on more geographical parameters, successively focusing on France, Italy, Poland, Germany, Latin America, and postcolonial countries. The contributors of this last cluster comprise Sabina Gola, Marek Tomaszewski, Raluca Rădulescu, Annelies Augustyns, Diana Castilleja, Ilka Kressner, Rebecca Romdhani, Anne-Rosine Delbart, and Yunfei Bai.

As I write these lines in the early summer of 2022, the world seems to be, as Hamlet would describe it, “out of joint.” I hope the wealth of material collected in this issue will provide, through the energy of comparative literature, some of the inspiration necessary to regain a much-needed cultural empathy between nations.

As regards the future of the journal, I am delighted to announce that, as of 2023, I shall be assisted in my editorial tasks by my colleague Fabrice Preyat, who has accepted to join the *Literary Research* team as Associate Editor. An excellent comparatist, Professor Preyat teaches in the French Department of the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB). I am convinced his exceptional scholarly talents will enable him to further develop the French-language reach and research impact of the journal.

I could not conclude this editorial without thanking my devoted assistant editor, Jessica, and my meticulous editorial assistant, Samuel, who made the publication of this issue possible. I am also grateful to those board members who peer-reviewed the scholarly essays collected in this volume. This time again, I wish to thank Peter Lang for the efficiency of its production team and Mr. Thierry Waser, our commissioning editor, for accepting to renew the journal contract until 2025. As always, I warmly thank the International Comparative Literature Association for its unflagging financial support of this publication.

Marc Maufort
Brussels, July 10, 2022

ÉDITORIAL

L'urgence de pratiquer la littérature comparée

Même si la pandémie de la Covid-19 semble entrer dans sa dernière phase, le conflit armé qui a récemment éclaté en Ukraine nous invite à nouveau, dans cette livraison de *Recherche littéraire*, à nous interroger sur la manière selon laquelle les études littéraires comparées pourraient contribuer à guérir notre monde meurtri. Le titre de l'essai de Dorothy Figueira, qui ouvre ce volume, « Why Do We Do Comparative Literature? », résonne à travers tout le numéro. En effet, tous les auteurs d'articles de recherche, d'essais critiques et de comptes rendus font écho aux préoccupations de Dorothy Figueira, dans la mesure où ils affirment l'urgence de pratiquer la littérature comparée aujourd'hui. De ce fait même, ils offrent des exemples des diverses façons dont la discipline pourrait et devrait être repensée au XXI^e siècle. Mettant en contraste la littérature comparée et la littérature mondiale, Figueira insiste sur la nécessité de pratiquer une poétique comparatiste basée sur une bonne maîtrise des langues étrangères. À partir de l'exemple des traductions françaises de l'*Iliade* et du *Bhagavad Gītā* de Simone Weil, elle montre qu'il est possible d'identifier la source de la mauvaise compréhension des originaux qu'avait la philosophe à travers une analyse méticuleuse des versions en langues grecque et sankrite de ces textes. Comme Figueira l'affirme, une méthodologie de la littérature comparée qui repose sur la connaissance des langues étrangères, nous permet de comprendre des « alternative discourses » (33).

Les articles de recherche, essais critiques et comptes rendus suivants explorent encore davantage la possibilité de concevoir une méthodologie de la littérature comparée prenant en compte la diversité culturelle. L'essai de Crystel Pinçonat, « Revenir, un motif envahissant dans la fiction contemporaine », ré-évalue la notion de retour grâce à une comparaison intermédiaire et interculturelle entre *Les Revenants* de Henrik Ibsen et deux séries télévisées françaises, *Juste la fin du monde* de Jean-Luc Lagarce et *Paris-Brest* de Tanguy Viel. Eugene Arva, dans son essai intitulé, « Genesis vs. Mimesis: The Real, the Virtual, and the Illusion of

Representation in Magical Realism », analyse comment, dans *The House of the Spirits* d'Isabel Allende (1985), *Beloved* de Toni Morrison (1987), et *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* de Jonathan Safran Foer (2005), « the virtual is meant to complete the real while maintaining its differentness rather than denying it, no matter how horrific the 'real' background might be » (85). In « Mobility, Exchange and Ecology in Pacific Theatre », David O'Donnell se concentre sur trois pièces indigènes de la région du Pacifique, *My Name Is Pilitome* de Vela Manusaute (2014), *Girl on a Corner* de Victor Rodger (2015) et *Marama* du collectif The Conch (2016), tout en adoptant le concept du « transindigène » cher au critique indigène Chadwick Allen: « I have attempted to make 'purposeful juxtapositions' of the texts, suggesting that the prefix trans- contains the promise of transformation of the contemporary Pacific, of positive connections and change between Pacific people » (121).

La section des essais critiques continue à explorer les prémisses de l'article de Dorothy Figueira. Dans « Où en est la théorie littéraire? », Alexandre Gefen se penche très utilement sur les récents développements théoriques, tels que l'écocritique, qui ouvrent la théorie littéraire à une approche pluraliste. Dans « Translanguaging Comparative Literature », Matthew Reynolds se focalise sur la notion de « translanguaging », qu'il estime être à même de revigorer les études de traduction car elle, comme le dit Li Wei, « better captures multilingual language users' fluid and dynamic practices » (148). La section se termine avec deux essais critiques écrits par Fabrice Preyat et Franca Bellarsi, qui traitent respectivement de livres importants sur le réalisme et le romantisme. Le plaidoyer de ces quatre contributeurs pour la fluidité, pour une attention portée au particulier plutôt qu'à l'homogène, est une caractéristique de la littérature comparée que la section des comptes rendus met également en exergue.

Si elle se caractérise par son hétérogénéité, cette partie du numéro de 2022 est néanmoins encadrée par trois contributions consacrées au présent et au futur des études littéraires comparées qui lui confèrent une cohérence structurelle. Le compte rendu de Jenny Webb ouvre la section avec l'examen d'un des derniers livres co-édité par Eugene Eoyang, *Comparative Literature Around the World: Global Practice*. À l'opposé, le compte rendu du *Bloomsbury Handbook of Posthumanism* par Amaury Dehoux et la discussion de *Modern Ecopoetry: Reading the Palimpsest of the More-than-Human World* par Françoise Besson constituent la conclusion du numéro. Ces contributions examinent des perspectives philosophiques

qui influenceront probablement la discipline dans les années à venir. De plus, se faisant l'écho de l'appel de Dorothy Figueira en faveur de méthodologies sensibles aux aspects culturels, cette section inclut, pour la première fois dans l'histoire récente de *Recherche littéraire*, des comptes rendus de non moins de cinq livres écrits en allemand, rompant ainsi avec le modèle bilingue si caractéristique de la revue. La section entière est constituée de différents groupes de comptes rendus, dont le premier se concentre sur des ouvrages consacrés aux motifs littéraires du mysticisme et du double (contributions de Dehoux et Acke). Le second groupe traite de plusieurs périodes de l'histoire de la littérature, notamment le Moyen-Âge, le Baroque et le Réalisme (comptes rendus de Strickland, Viehöver, Orosz et Grener). Un troisième groupe plus théorique se concentre sur le postmodernisme, la théorie du mouvement, l'héritage de Foucault et le thème du pardon (Beloborodova, Arlaud, Liu et England). Le quatrième groupe, le plus long, est ancré dans des paramètres plus nettement géographiques et se penche successivement sur la France, l'Italie, la Pologne, l'Allemagne, l'Amérique latine, et les pays postcoloniaux. Parmi les contributeurs de ce dernier groupe, figurent des chercheurs tels que Sabina Gola, Marek Tomaszewski, Raluca Rădulescu, Annelies Augustyns, Diana Castilleja, Ilka Kressner, Rebecca Romdhani, Anne-Rosine Delbart et Yunfei Bai.

Au moment où j'écris ces lignes, au début de l'été 2022, il semble que le monde soit, pour citer Hamlet, « out of joint ». J'espère que la richesse des articles rassemblés dans ce numéro nous fournira, à travers l'énergie de la littérature comparée, l'inspiration nécessaire pour retrouver une empathie bien utile entre nations.

En ce qui concerne le futur de la revue, je suis heureux d'annoncer qu'à partir de 2023, je serai assisté dans mes tâches éditoriales par mon collègue Fabrice Preyat, qui a accepté de rejoindre l'équipe de *Recherche littéraire* en tant que rédacteur associé. Excellent comparatiste, Fabrice Preyat est professeur de littérature française dans le Département de Langues et Littératures romanes à l'Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB). Je suis convaincu que ses talents exceptionnels de chercheur lui permettront de consolider le rayonnement et l'impact scientifique de la revue dans le monde francophone.

Je ne pourrais conclure cet éditorial sans remercier ma dévouée rédactrice assistante, Jessica, et mon méticuleux assistant de rédaction, Samuel, qui ont rendu possible la parution de ce numéro. J'adresse toute ma reconnaissance aux membres du comité consultatif qui ont expertisé

les articles scientifiques de ce volume. Cette fois encore, je remercie Peter Lang pour l'efficacité de son équipe de production ainsi que M. Thierry Waser, notre directeur des publications, pour avoir accepté de renouveler le contrat de la revue jusqu'en 2025. Comme toujours, je remercie chaleureusement l'Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée pour son soutien financier sans faille de cette publication.

Marc Maufort
Bruxelles, le 10 juillet 2022

ARTICLES DE RECHERCHE / ARTICLES

Why Do We Do Comparative Literature? Simone Weil's Reading of the *Iliad* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* as a Case Study

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Abstract: By focusing on issues of translation, this essay examines how a Comparative Literature analysis can be more fruitful than a World Literature or national literature analysis. I take as my case study Simone Weil's readings of the *Iliad* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* that derive from her French translations of the Greek and the Sanskrit originals. I hope to show how issues of translation and comparison are fundamental to our understanding of Weil's reading of these two texts. Weil's work on these two epic sources presents an excellent example for how Comparative Literature provides a broad methodological framework that allows for a deeper understanding of Weil's readings. I also seek to show how Comparative Literature speaks to a larger context; it talks across not only languages, but also across those disciplines that impact on a text and its possible interpretations. This essay highlights Comparative Literature's ability to engage alternative discourses, in this instance, literature and philosophy, religious studies, Indology, and the Classics.

Keywords: Simone Weil, *Iliad*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, World literature, Comparative literature.

My understanding of translation is grounded in the hermeneutics of my teacher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, who theorized how translation is a form of reading and reading is, in effect, translation:

Lesen ist schon Übersetzen und Übersetzen ist dann noch einmal Übersetzen... Der Vorgang des Übersetzens schliesst im Grunde das

ganze Geheimnis menschlicher Weltverständigung und gesellschaftlicher Kommunikation ein.

Reading is already translation, and translation is translation for the second time... The process of translating comprises in its essence the whole secret of human understanding of the world and of social communication.

(Schulte n.p.)

Whenever we read, we translate.

In the following essay, I hope to show how translation, its practices, and justifications impact on what we do as scholars of literature. Comparative Literature (hereafter CL) is a discipline that focuses on reading texts in their original language and comparing them to different texts from different contexts in order to enhance our understanding. CL, therefore, takes the topic of translation and its concerns seriously, particularly in contrast to other trends in the pedagogy of literature involving the reading of the world in translation as a preferred mode of understanding. In contrast to comparatists, World Literature (hereafter WL) scholars, even when capable, do not usually engage with the letter of a text in its original language and often ignore the limitations posed by translation. Yet World literature, at least in the United States, claims to combat the elitism of learning foreign languages and to foster a process of democratizing the study of the world's literature. As such, it asserts that its methodology is preferable to that of CL. Such virtue signaling, however, seems more indicative of academic posturing and less consistent with pedagogical logic.¹ Nevertheless, WL has effectively made inroads in academia and poses a real threat to the continued existence of CL. This pedagogical turn is ironic, given the academic pretense in this age of globalization that we purport to take the world seriously by engaging it on its own terms.

In contrast to WL and its mission to read the world in English translation, CL questions the role translation plays in our reading of the world's literatures. CL also acknowledges the importance of examining the methods and theories underlying a translation.² I take this understanding of CL (one that I realize may no longer hold sway among

¹ As seen in the number of new WL departments that have been formed and the CL departments that have been transformed into WL programs.

² As seen in the number of CL publications that focus on translation history and theory.

many colleagues) as my point of departure. Translation and its reception or rejection are intrinsic to cross-cultural understanding which, in turn, is the fundamental focus of our discipline. But, more importantly, CL looks at translation not merely in terms of linguistic problems or errors in the act of translation, but as having dimensions that are both conceptual and cultural (Dhareshwar 257) as well as ethical. CL recognizes that translation theories and methodologies are not uniform across all nations and eras³ nor are translations and their utilizations neutral. Comparatists realize that translation can entail a flattening out of vocabulary. In the case of an ancient text, it can also involve a false continuity between pre-modern commentaries and modern discussions.⁴ A breakdown between the host and the guest language at times is inevitable (van Buitenen xxxv–xlili). At one pole of translation practices, we find that consistency with fixed equivalents in the guest language allows the reader/translator to build on philological analysis and textual specificity. At the other pole of translation practice, we discover the translation's intent to ensure dynamic equivalence in the form of multiple meanings for single terms, giving the appearance of modern relevance (Eder 33). These two poles of translation, their contrast and tension delimit the sinewy paths of a text's translation. CL, working necessarily with originals and translations, grapples with these very issues of non-neutrality, distortion and the afterlife of distortion, the text's shadow book. It always seeks to reconcile a text's possible meanings, leaving space for the ambiguities in the text that continually introduce new venues for creative interpretation. CL recognizes that the linguistic content of a text adds a further dimension to how its various interpretations never hew together as a coherent body of ideas.

Translation, like reading, interprets otherness in the Self and highlights the otherness of the Other. CL seeks to bring a translation into confrontation with what inspired it. There are several points that CL emphasizes in examining a translation. They include loss and gain, national traditions in translation, translation as a creative and generative endeavor, the relationship between reading and translating, the status of supplemental materials to a translation, and the notion of a pure translation. A comparatist would surely question whether we can even

³ For an earlier study of national translation traditions, see Figueira's *Translating the Orient* (1991).

⁴ See Eder 20–46, qtd. in Palshikar 10.

talk of translating a text without knowing its source language. One thing is certain: the fundamental issue of translation informs the task of the comparatist and it is not primarily the focus of the WL scholar who blithely reads the ancient and modern world in English translation.⁵ In the following pages, I propose to highlight how a CL analysis would differ from other analyses (WL or national literature⁶) by examining Simone Weil's readings of the *Iliad* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*⁷ that derived from her French translations of the Greek and Sanskrit originals. My focus on Weil is happenstance. While researching a bigger project of the reception of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, I came upon her work translating materials and sought to investigate her reading of Indian epic texts and compare it to her earlier work on Greek epic. Weil is significant because, although she published very little in her lifetime, her work continues to be read today and she is often cited and considered a significant twentieth-century voice in religious circles, among feminists, and public intellectuals. Her posthumous fame was great and her philosophical work is still held in high regard. She prided herself on her interpretive work as a translator.

Weil's work on *Iliad* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* presents an excellent case study for how CL provides a broader methodological framework that allows for a deeper understanding of Weil's readings than can be found in national literature (French, ancient Greek, or Sanskrit, in this case) or WL. I also hope to show how CL speaks to a larger context; it talks across not only languages but also across those disciplines that impact on a text and its possible interpretations. The following analysis highlights

⁵ These differences between CL and WL expressed here have been brought into relief for me this semester in the large state university where I work as I teach the only course in WL to a capacity crowd of undergraduates seeking to fulfill a literature requirement for graduation and who have trouble grasping that WL is not English literature.

⁶ National literature analyses deal, of course, with language and context, but they do not share CL's ability to compare and contrast.

⁷ The *Bhagavad Gītā* is a long (eighteen chapters) poem inserted in the massive Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata*. It describes the hero Arjuna's doubt before the great battle of the epic. It consists of a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and his charioteer, Krishna, an *avatar* (incarnation) of the god Vishnu, who in response to Arjuna's doubts expounds on the religious concepts of *dharmā* (duty), *karman* (action), and *bhakti* (devotion). After the Bible, the *Gītā* is the most translated religious text. It is sacred to Hindus and more accessible than other more speculative Hindu religious books.

CL's ability to engage alternative discourses, in this instance, literature and philosophy, religious studies, Indology and the Classics.

Simone Weil (1909–43) was born into a secular Jewish family and had no spiritual dogmas instilled in her from childhood. Along with her older brother, André (1906–98), she grew up in Paris with devoted parents who nurtured in both their children a love of learning and provided them with a supportive and comfortable bourgeois existence. Although André had studied some Sanskrit, he was a mathematician by profession. He was, in fact, so convinced of his brilliance in his field that he chose not to sacrifice his time (or possibly his life) fighting for France during World War II, claiming that mathematicians often make their greatest discoveries when young. He did not wish to lose precious years of his early career for France. When repatriated back to Paris from Finland where he had conveniently gone to avoid conscription, André Weil rather absurdly claimed at his trial that the *Bhagavad Gītā* gave him the justification that he needed for his refusal to serve his country (Pétrement 355). André Weil's excuse shows the extent to which he did not really understand the *Gītā*. Individual duty (*dharma*) does not apply in a war setting. The *Gītā* teaches that since war is unreal, it is not evil and the warrior with any ethical misgivings is persuaded to kill, just as God kills (Doniger O'Flaherty 15). It is not André, the mathematician and fledgling Sanskritist, however, who interests us here but rather his baby sister. Although Simone might have thought her brother was "comparable to Pascal" (Weil *Waiting* 23) it is she who is revered the world over (justly or not) as a saint, mystic, and martyr.

Simone's privileged family life and her education instilled in her great sympathy and compassion for those less fortunate. Her philosophical bent and her love of literature led her at an early age to seek to grapple with the pressing issues of the day. She too was drawn to the study of Sanskrit and the *Gītā*. Like her brother, she too often referenced the Sanskrit poem. It also became for her an important text. In particular, the *Gītā* became instrumental for her in how she would develop her theories on force and justice,⁸ themes that would shape her philosophical work.

⁸ In this regard, see Degrâces in the presentation of Part 1 of Weil's *Cahiers*, "L'Inde ou le passage obligé" (Weil *Œuvres* vol 6, part 1: 36, 42–3).

Although a brilliant student, Simone Weil did not aspire to be a bookish intellectual. She sought engagement in worldly pursuits, beginning with her ill-fated involvement with the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War, where despite her poor eyesight she was issued a rifle. Attached to a unit of anarchists, Weil almost immediately injured herself by stepping into a pan of boiling water and needing to be evacuated. Not only was she clearly not fit for combat, but she was also incredibly naïve and idealistic to the point that she exhibited surprise and dismay at the atrocities that she witnessed committed by her fellow anarchists. Her brief engagement in the Spanish Civil War resulted in confirming Simone Weil's commitment to pacifism.

In the early days of her working life as a secondary-school teacher, Weil joined the workers' movement. She took numerous leaves of absence from teaching assignments at various institutions in order to work in what she saw as mind-numbing and dangerous factory jobs. She wanted to work in factories to have the joyful contact of an encounter with real life (Pétrément 252). In her first teaching job in Le Puy, she became deeply involved with unemployed workers who, viewing her as an employed bureaucrat, evinced no need for her help. Her teaching suffered from her extracurricular activities. Less than a third of her class passed their baccalaureat examination that year. Finding her opportunities for engagement with the workers too limited, Weil then applied for a job transfer. At a subsequent teaching posting in Bourges, she made numerous entreaties to factory supervisors to employ her. She also approached farmers with the aim of being taught how to work their equipment (and breaking it on occasion, when given the chance). She lived with farmers, refusing compensation for work she did for them, since children in Indochina were hungry (Pétrément 258). She even sought employment in a mine (Pétrément 121). All this job-searching and commitment to physical labor took place while she was either employed teaching or on leave from teaching assignments.

In the subsequent hagiographic accounts of her life,⁹ it is not emphasized that this factory and field work usually lasted only for a few months at a time. It is one thing to be condemned, due to social status, lack of training and educational opportunities, to work throughout one's entire life in mind-numbing labor and quite another to partake of it in

⁹ These works are referred to the Works Cited section.

short installments, as someone “slumming,” so to speak, in a factory, knowing full well that a civil service position awaited you after you had shared the travails of the common laborers. Weil was sincere, but she was also clearly a willful and indulged individual who was humored in these ventures by her family, her bourgeois sense of entitlement, and society-at-large. After the factory work, she continued this dilettante-like approach to manual labor in the fields of Ardèche. Here, her commitment and effectiveness replicated her involvement with the Republican forces in Spain and her teaching career. Repeatedly, she worked for a bit before leaving the job or being let go due to incompetence.

However, Weil was refreshingly idealistic and non-conformist. Unlike many French Leftists, she was not attracted by Stalinism. She viewed it in the same way that she saw religious fundamentalism and as she would later see Nazism. She considered them all to be totalitarian ideologies to which only persons in a position of uprootedness (*déracinement*) were susceptible (see *The Need for Roots* and *Gravity and Grace* 32–39). They were forms of enslavement. For all her ill-fated or (some might say) frivolous attempts at engagement in the cause of the exploited and the downtrodden, she intellectually understood very well how totalitarian and fundamentalist ideologies oppressed the individual. She truly was what the modern cultural critic Andrew Ross has termed in another context, an advocate for the Precariat, someone who focuses on the lives of refugees, displaced workers, and the dispossessed (Ross).

Weil believed that truth could be experienced in many religions. She dabbled in Gnosticism, Stoicism, Manicheism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Believing that the Johannine Gospel derived from Plato, she sought a Greek source for a Hellenized form of Christianity, a pure Christianity that she believed would be free from its Jewish heritage and any taint of Roman institutions, two traditions that she loathed.¹⁰ In fact, Weil held the Hebrews and the Romans in particularly low regard (Weil *The Iliad* paragraph 84–85), which was odd considering her enthusiasm for the religions of Egypt, Greece, and the East. She hated the Romans for their belief in having been chosen by destiny to rule the world; she hated the Jews for their belief in having been chosen by God (Weil *Notebooks* 256). She felt that both the Old Testament and Rome had corrupted Catholicism (Weil *Seventy* 129). She totally rejected the

¹⁰ See her “Farewell Letter” to Father Perrin. See also Pétremont 456.

Judaism of the Old Testament, seeing Yahweh as a tribal god obsessed with power and domination. She had, however, great respect for the God of the New Testament, whom she felt suffered powerlessness for a love that transcended national and racial boundaries.

While all religions, according to her teacher, the philosopher Alain,¹¹ were one, Weil did not consider them all valid, especially Judaism (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 4, part 2: 75–76). In the first volume of her *Cahiers* (*Notebooks*), Weil catalogues Old Testament atrocities (von der Ruhr 110). She juxtaposes them to what she claimed to discover in the Hinduism of the *Gītā* (16.2–3) which she describes as emphasizing renunciation, serenity, aversion to fault-finding, sympathy for all beings, peace from greedy cravings, gentleness, modesty and other Christian virtues (von der Ruhr 111). She felt that biblical Judaism was so inferior to Hinduism that the Old Testament should not even be deemed a sacred text (Weil *Letter* 43–44). Her violent critiques against Israel are significant for their timing. Here she was a French cradle Jew, who somehow felt in the climate of 1941 and 1942 that it was appropriate and responsible to openly equate the religion of the Old Testament with totalitarianism (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 3: 291). Weil's decision to launch her critique of biblical Judaism when she did, points to a cluelessness or perversity that, in hindsight, is difficult to find sympathetic, as was her complete silence on the fate of the Jews in Europe at the time (Pétrément 300). In a letter to the Ministry of Public Education, she showed no solidarity with the situation of Jews in the French labor market. Was it effective to critique the “Statutory Regulation on Jews” by mockingly comparing its definition of what it was to be a Jew to her own understanding of Jewish identity? Weil took pains to personally deny any relation to Judaism, not in order to avoid any discrimination and persecution, but rather to demonstrate her philosophical position and to define what she felt the word “Jew” really meant (Pétrément 392). Isaiah Berlin saw her stance vis-à-vis Judaism and the Jews as a symptom of her self-hatred (Berlin). George Steiner termed it “a classic Jewish self-loathing carried to a fever pitch” (Steiner 4), particularly in those instances where Weil indulged in strident denunciations of the God of Moses and a near hysterical repugnance in what she saw as the excesses of Judaism present in modern Catholicism (Weil *Letter* paragraph 14). In short, Weil's rejection of

¹¹ Alain, alias Émile-Auguste Chartier (1868–1951), a French philosopher, journalist and pacifist.

the Old Testament was exaggerated and cannot simply be ascribed to historical prejudices; it may well have also had psychological foundations (Calvert 180).

Weil believed that the ultimate purpose of each human is to be absorbed and possessed by God. Each person should strive towards the utmost purity in his/her life and this purity of being could only be attained through the experience of affliction (Weil *Waiting* 64). In *Attente de Dieu*, Weil relates three life changing religious events that seemed to confirm these beliefs. In Portugal in 1935, she saw a group of fisherwomen in procession and recognized them as engaging in a sad religion of slaves. Weil commented that she found their behavior authentic and that she longed to be part of it. She saw in their worship a form of obedience akin to that taught by Marcus Aurelius and the Stoics, an *amor fati*, and the need to conform to divine will (Weil *Waiting* 24). The second experience occurred at St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi. Here, she remained for two days in the chapel and could not resist the impulse to kneel down. The third religious experience occurred in 1938 while listening to Gregorian chant at the Benedictine Monastery of Solesmes. Although she had a terrible migraine, she experienced complete joy and was astonished that one could love God intensely despite affliction (26). She described this last experience as God coming down and taking possession of her (61). These experiences drew Weil to Catholicism, a faith she felt was intrinsically hers. However, she also recognized and repeatedly listed a number of issues that prevented her from joining the Church.

Weil claimed that she could not forgive Catholicism for having established a form of totalitarianism in the thirteenth-century suppression of the Albigensians (Gray 155–56; Weil *Waiting for God* 37). She would revisit this “crime” of the Church repeatedly, comparing it to the abuses of the Roman Empire. She also faulted both Rome and the Church for demanding uncritical and absolute obedience (*Waiting for God* 21–38, letter IV). Weil felt that the Catholic Church historically provided a model for totalitarian behavior that would eventually contribute to the rise of both Communism and Nazism.¹² So, while she regularly attended mass in the Catholic Church and read the New Testament, the mystics and the liturgy, she also devoted considerable effort to excoriating Catholicism.¹³ Another difficulty Weil had with the Church was its

¹² In her letters to various priests and *Waiting for God*.

¹³ Letter V in *Waiting for God*.

relationship to other religions, particularly those of Egypt, India, China and Greece (Griffiths 233). For all these various reasons, Weil felt she could not commit to Catholicism. In fact, she saw it as her vocation to remain outside the Church and not be baptized, even as she more assiduously attended mass while temporarily living in New York after fleeing occupied France. She claimed that she did so out of solidarity with those who belonged to religions not accepted by Catholicism and in support of those who belonged to no religion at all (Weil *Waiting* 32–34). As with the Republican cause, factory work, and field labor, Catholicism now offered yet another opportunity for her, as an educated and privileged secular French Jew, to bond partially and intermittently with something she considered Other. Around the time of her three religious experiences, Weil was also exploring the theme of force and particularly the form it took in ancient Greece. In her essay *L'Iliade ou le poème de la force* (1939), her most complete interpretation of any text and her most reworked composition, she examined this theme in some detail.

Weil's essay on the *Iliad* deals with ideas she first expressed in an earlier text written in 1937, "Ne recommençons pas la guerre de Troie." Weil had studied the *Iliad* at Henri IV with Alain in 1926–7 (Pétrement 79) and had read it again when she interrupted her teaching for health reasons in January 1938. Weil published *L'Iliade ou le poème de la force* in Marseille, where she had moved with her parents after the occupation of Paris. Weil's essay examines the psychological changes that force brings upon both its victims and momentary possessors. According to Weil, the true subject and the center of the *Iliad*, its hero, is force (Weil *The Iliad* paragraph 1). As the center of all human history, force is the most beautiful and flawless of mirrors (paragraph 2). The body of Weil's essay consists of her random thoughts on force presented as fragmentary commentaries to passages from the epic poem. It is a disjointed text containing no narrative filler to tie the argument together. Weil's commentary often does not even reflect the Greek quote that she cites. She completely uncouples her thoughts on the *Iliad* from the Greek text she claims to read. In fact, the key focus of her essay deals with the ontological status of the defeated man paralyzed by the immanence of force who supplicates his conqueror. Weil emphasized those passages where she envisions the warrior is struck or about to be struck by death and is reduced to silence. She interprets the *Iliad* as describing the suppliant as someone impersonating in advance the nothingness that is his/her fate. The suppliant ceases to exist, becomes a thing, even before

the fatal sword can strike (paragraph 7). Along with other inhabitants of the empire of force (she specifically cites enslaved women and children), Weil's suppliants are forcefully deprived of expression and feeling. They are consigned to "a life that death has frozen long before putting an end to it" (paragraph 14).

Force, as Weil interprets and claims is expressed in the *Iliad*, demonstrates the pathetic debasement of all humans. It works not just on the victims but also on the conquerors (Weil *The Iliad* paragraph 24–32), as all suffer (paragraph 33). No goodness or worth determines if one will be subjected to force. It is blind destiny (*nemesis*), supervised by amoral gods in violation of any measure which brings retribution (paragraph 34). Those who possess force do so only fleetingly and illusorily. One can either be reduced to the position of a suppliant (paragraph 7–12) or experience a form of death in life as a slave (paragraph 14–23). Even those to whom fate has "loaned" force will also perish, through their overreliance on it. So, force effects all; it petrifies both the users and the victims (paragraph 61). It makes beings into objects, either as corpses or as suppliants. This is, according to Weil, the message of the *Iliad*, not what earlier generations might have thought the epic poem might have conveyed. The *Iliad* is not about the Trojan War and the military adventures of the Greeks and the Trojans. It is actually a "tableau de l'absence de Dieu" (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 490 n55) and a portrait of the "misère de l'homme sans Dieu" (*Œuvres* vol. 6, part 2: 327). Even without the figure of Christ, the *Iliad* presents us with a Christian vision.

This is, indeed, a unique reading of the *Iliad*. It was clearly informed by Weil's involvement with Catholic spirituality, and it disregarded key issues that permeate the Greek poem. She certainly did not read Homer in Homeric terms, as several critics have noted. George Steiner commented on how wrong she was in her analysis of the epic. In *Language and Silence*, he described it as a "perverse reading" (26). Other critics commented on how Weil conveyed no understanding of the text's formulaic style (Ferber 67) and seemed to be blind to Homer's thematic of honor, shame, immortality and glory. Weil ignores the epic's code of merit that the warrior is not only doing his job but also sustaining his renown and performing his *arête* (excellence). Weil's essay on the *Iliad* was seen to present fundamental problems and, as an interpretation, it was deemed a failure (Ferber 69). Harold Bloom viewed it as a "strong misreading" (qtd. in Ferber 70), particularly in Weil's interpretation of the encounter between Achilles and Priam. It was absurd for her to

conclude that Priam was made into a “thing” through this interaction (Ferber 71–72).

If Catholicism and ancient Greece did not supply Weil with the necessary solution to her philosophical malaise, a more advantageous outlet soon presented itself in the form of Hinduism, which could perhaps deliver what the Christianized *Iliad* and Roman Catholicism had lacked. It was in the *Gītā* now that Weil sought (and found) a mystical antidote for the evil she had evinced in the mechanism of force. Hinduism, as she would understand it through her reading of the *Gītā*, offered a validation of the message first announced to her in her reading of both the New Testament and the *Iliad*. The *Gītā*, like the *Iliad* and the Gospels, also deals primarily with violence. All three texts share the pivotal moment where Weil believes a decision is made to deploy brute force or deflect it (Doering 154). The advantage of Hinduism for Weil was that she could really interpret it freely, even more idiosyncratically than she had interpreted the *Iliad*. She could take from it what she wanted, since as opposed to her “reading” of Catholicism, she would encounter in her “reading” of Hinduism no pesky priests and no society of believers to thwart or contradict her interpretation. She could misinterpret the *Gītā* with impunity, given the relative ignorance her reading public had of this “exotic” text. In contrast to the priests with whom she corresponded who disagreed with her understanding of Catholicism or anyone who might find her interpretation of the *Iliad* idiosyncratic and unsubstantiated, no Western Sanskritists in the midst of World War II had the time or energy to point out the infelicities of her reading/translation of the *Gītā*. There were few readers to gainsay her misreading of Indian philosophy or her disregard for potential problematic concerns present in the poem, such as caste, that might otherwise skew her romantic and idealized view of Hinduism.

Hinduism fascinated Weil. She had early on been impressed that her brother had studied Sanskrit at the Sorbonne in the 1930s. When she and her parents fled Paris and relocated to Marseille, Simone was able to reconnect with her *khagne* mate.¹⁴ René Daumel, who was an Indologist. She borrowed his books and undertook to study Sanskrit with him. With Daumel’s help, she began to study the *Gītā* in the Spring of 1940.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Khagne* is the preparatory year for the French university entrance exams.

¹⁵ For Weil’s Sanskrit studies, see Degrâces in Weil’s *Œuvres* (vol. 6, part 1): 35–38.

She became enamored with the language, writing: "I hope never to stop loving these Sanskrit characters, which are sacred and have perhaps never served as a vehicle for anything base" (Pétrément 422, qtd. in Gray 167). Unsurprisingly, just as in her reading of the *Iliad*, Weil felt that here too was a text with a Christian ring to it. Moreover, she felt an allegiance to the truth of the *Gītā*'s message that far exceeded that of mere poetry.¹⁶ Her fragmentary commentary on the *Gītā* can be found in her notebooks from this period containing selections of Sanskrit transliterations and Weil's translations of Sanskrit exercises. Daumel was clearly her major source of information on Hinduism and he advised her to read the esotericist René Guénon, who provided her with additional references to source material on Indian philosophy. Unfortunately, both Daumel and Guénon had a tendency of seeking facile correspondences between Hinduism and other religions. Their scholarship generally offered a series of artificial, forced, and contrived parallels between Vedic terminology and Western philosophical and religious concepts. But Daumel and Guénon are not to be blamed exclusively for what we shall see as some of Weil's more extravagant readings of Hinduism. They were just bad gurus for Simone Weil to have found, since their work facilitated her own predisposition to see common revelations. We see this tendency throughout the *Cahiers*, where references to the *Gītā* are juxtaposed without rhyme or reason to mathematical formulae, quotations from Heraclitus, and evocations of T.E. Lawrence, Jeanne D'Arc and St. John of the Cross. Simone Weil was not a good comparatist. She made random comparisons without cause or justification.

For Weil, the greatest importance of the *Gītā* was its questioning of individual conduct in a war setting. Even before the war, she and her brother had discussed the *Gītā* and its advocacy of violence (Gabbellieri 422). As the realities of war overtook France, Simone felt more and more guilt over her brother's disengaged political stance. So much so that, at the beginning of the German offensive, the *Gītā* took on an intense topicality for her. It was, indeed, serendipitous that she was able to reconnect with Daumel, begin to study Sanskrit, and attempted to

¹⁶ In *Attente de Dieu*, Weil wrote: "Strange to say it was in reading those marvelous words, words with such a Christian sound, put into the mouth of the incarnation of God, that I came to feel strongly that we owe an allegiance to religious truth which is quite different from the admiration we accord to a beautiful poem; it is something far more categorical" (*Waiting* 28).

read the *Gītā* in the original at the very moment when she felt that its teaching of *dharma* could offer her a truth of the utmost importance for conducting her life (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 2: 87). Once the hostilities had begun, the *Gītā* allowed her to escape from her brother's hide-bound notion of non-engagement and prompted her own ensuing reservations regarding pacifism. She took from the *Gītā* the understanding that it was illusory to think that one can sit apart from the world and its evil actions (Nevin 296). Although she had studied the pervasive nature of force in the *Iliad*, it was in the *Gītā* that she found inspiration for understanding and countering force in an era of particular injustice. With it, she moved from the pacifism she had espoused in the 1930s to an acceptance of the use of force premised on obligation, and ultimately to a movement ever upward toward the Divine.

Weil recognized that the *Gītā*'s teaching of detachment was alien to Western culture, but she did not see its foreignness as an obstacle. From her translation of the *Iliad*, she claimed that the continued use of force is never desirable. Through its continued deployment, force continues to survive and thrive on itself in a spiral without end. Weil maintained that in the *Iliad*, the inevitable suppliant, whether a dead thing or the living dead, had to submit to force. However, with the rise of Hitler, she acknowledged that there were times when force demanded a response. Since it was impossible to control the sources of action in one's nature (*guṇas*) or past deeds (*karma*), one should not adopt an erroneous perspective of action as ultimately important (*Œuvres* vol. 6, part 2: 67, 76, 82–83, 88–9, 94, 96, 112, 117, 305, 330, 396, 423, 443, 546).

One must make a response and Weil's default solution was suffering. She claimed that any notions of personal responsibility arise out of our confusion regarding the individual's role as that of a sufferer. Weil read the *Gītā* as presenting a theology of suffering akin to the Christian mystery of the cross (Bingemer 86). In the *Iliad*, she had sought out the nuances of force in order to articulate a notion of just force. War is seen not as an aberration or a movement from order into chaos, but rather as a dramatization of existence *in extremis*, reality with intermittent luminous moments of courage and love (such as the scene on the parapets of Troy between Hector and Andromache) (Weil *The Iliad* paragraphs 16, 39, 68).

But in the *Gītā*, Weil found intimations of a spiritual resolution to the dilemma of how to participate in forceful action in the course of war, while avoiding its contagion. She saw in its teaching both the

injunction to perform action and a transcendental orientation of the soul that allowed one to obey the demand of waging war without making of the war a good thing (Gabellieri 422, qtd. in Bingemer 81). Throughout the *Letter to a Priest* and *Waiting for God*, Weil felt that her own sense of calling – to fulfil her duties and responsibilities in life – corresponded well to the *Gītā*'s discussion of *dharmā*. It facilitated her coming to terms with the problems she was encountering. Significantly, it also permitted her to combine her earlier ruminations on force from her work on the *Iliad* with her new-found discovery of religious sentiment from her involvement with Catholicism. It enabled her to carry out her duty and also love God attentively and obediently.

Let us look briefly at a few representative mis/translated passages that Weil used to support her readings of these texts. For her reading of the *Iliad*, we turn to her interpretation of Priam's encounter with Achilles (24. 508–12). Weil's thesis here is that there are two kinds of suppliants: those who are things (Weil *The Iliad* paragraph 11) and those who are part corpses and part living (paragraph 14). Weil claims that Priam is the first variety of suppliant and her commentary in the essay presents her attempt to make him conform to this role (paragraph 11).

The problem with this thesis is that, in Priam coming to Achilles to ransom back his son Hector's body, his supplication in no way resembles what Weil wants to see in a suppliant. Priam is not “un objet inerte.” Achilles does not act “comme s'il n'était pas là,” Priam does not imitate nothingness (imiter le néant) and, significantly, Weil offers no text to support this commentary because nothing in the Greek text supports these readings (paragraph 13). Achilles does not react to him as if he were a corpse nor does he react to him with a “*frisson*” (pleasurable shiver or thrill), Weil's mistranslation of the Greek “*thembos*” which normally signifies “wonderment” or “astonishment.” Priam appeals to Achilles's feelings for his own father and they weep together, one for his dead son, the other for his dead friend that the son had killed.

ἀψάμενος δ' ἄρα χειρὸς ἀπώσατο ἦκα γέροντα.
 τῷ δὲ μνησαμένῳ, ὁ μὲν Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνιοιο
 κλαί' ἄδινά προπάροιθε ποδῶν Ἀχιλλῆος ἔλυσθεις,
 αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς κλαίεν ἐὼν πατέρ', ἄλλοτε δ' αὐτε
 Πάτροκλον· τῶν δὲ στοναχὴ κατὰ δώματ' ὀρώρει. (*Iliad* 24.480–84)

Then, indeed, taking grasp of his hand, he pushed off gently the old man.

And then they both remembering, the one (Priam) sobbing over the man-killing Hector,
 Rolling about in front of the feet of Achilles
 But Achilles wept for his father and at other times for Patroklos
 Their wailing rose throughout the house.

One critic points out the “perversity” of Weil’s rendition (Ferber 70). Priam is not an inanimate thing of no value to Achilles. Achilles does not “with a single movement push him to the ground,” (Weil *The Iliad* paragraph 13) as Weil asserts. In fact, in the Greek, there is no pushing down, rather he pushes him gently away (ἦκα), indicating if anything, that he should cease being a suppliant (Ferber 71), Weil also omits from her commentary the fact that Achilles agrees to return the body and that he and Priam sit together and eat. The Priam, who comes to the camp of his most-hated foe and dines with him, is no metaphorical corpse, as Weil presents him (Ferber 72). It is also significant to note that Weil’s reading/translation allows no comforting prospect of honor, heroism, or immortality to intrude into her commentary. She builds her interpretation out of thin air, supports it with a mistranslation of one word (ἦκα) and follows it with a commentary to which she offers no substantial secondary citations from the text to substantiate her thesis. She imposed on the Greek poem conclusions that she believed pertained to the nature of force, her primary concern. Her reading of the *Iliad* was a willful misreading/mistranslation (in the sense that her command of Greek was good and she had studied the text extensively in the original at school) and a rejection of its message by her refusal to cite the actual text of the *Iliad* to support her interpretation. In contrast, with her reading of the *Gītā*, she was working with a text whose language she barely knew. The comparatist in me asks whether she took the same liberties in her reading/translation of the *Gītā* as she did with the *Iliad*. With the *Gītā*, did she “manage” the Sanskrit in a similar fashion? A CL reading is valuable here, as it offers a broader skill set than that of the WL scholar or even that of the Sanskritist or Hellenist.

For all her professed love of the Sanskrit language and her excitement in learning it, Weil seems to have mastered very little in the two and a half years she devoted to its study.¹⁷ Initially she had considerable trouble even learning the *devanāgarī* script, not being able to approach the text

¹⁷ We can chart this study from the end of December 1941 to August 1943.

before she had secured a transliterated version. The texts that appear in her *Cahiers* are actually not her work at all, but the translations of the Indologist Émile Senart. Weil herself did not translate the passages she evokes, cites, and juxtaposes to other philosophies, to an eclectic range of authors, and even to mathematical formulae. She does not compare the Sanskrit terms word for word to Senart's translation. Rather, she effects a "reduction." She replaces certain words in the text with Sanskrit concepts that she thinks they represent. She reads and cites Senart, and then questions the text in terms that reflect her own philosophical interests. In short, she weaves what Senart translates into her own thoughts, thus "reducing" them both. She lightly modifies the text, grafting some of her chief concerns, such as limited human knowledge, the desire to know, obedience (i.e. all very Weilian themes) onto her rewriting of Senart's translation (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 481 n99). These reworked translations of Senart then undergo further cutting, condensation (351), and redistribution of blocks of words to make connections that establish a pre-ordained connection that Weil sought in the *Gītā*. Just as in her reading/translation of the *Iliad*, one does not have to worry that Weil gives us too literal a rendition. In both readings/translations of the Greek and the Sanskrit epics, she gives us simply her interpretation (*Œuvres* vol. 6, part 2: 458), with little attention paid to the Greek and even less to the Sanskrit.

In both epic contexts, Weil focuses on the topic of interest that was most pressing to her: the guilt one accrues by not acting. Her synthesis of *Gītā* 2.47–53 and 6.16–21 specifically addressed this concern. Here she curiously qualifies her translation of the *Gītā*'s teaching of non-attachment to the fruits of one's actions (*nishkāma karma*) as an injunction to reject action *tout court*; it is "au-dessous de soi" (below one or beneath oneself) (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 331). The *Gītā* promoted action tied to the individual's *dharma* (duty). In the Hindu context, ego concerns (such as whether a task is "beneath" one) must be ignored. Yet, I would imagine that Weil would have difficulty with this teaching and, indeed, she filters her sense of superiority and entitlement through the optic of abjection that she jealously maintained for herself and regularly foisted upon others.¹⁸ In her reading of the Sanskrit poem, she combines her attraction for self-mortification with her new-found "mystical"

¹⁸ In this regard, see the statements made by Father Perrin and her friend Thibon (Perrin and Thibon 117).

appreciation of Krishna. Both impulses sought to address the dilemma of action in the time of war. Her interest in action/non-action is translated through her love of Krishna and her sense of caste/entitlement. It also reflects her religious encounters in Assisi, Solesmes and Portugal, her curious lack of interest in the fate of the Jews under occupation, and her “acceptance” of Vichy. The quotes cited in the *Cahiers*, the transcriptions of the Sanskrit texts, and the emendations of Senart’s translations (*Gītā* 3.35b; 18.45–9; 18.57, qtd. in Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 361–65) further explore action/non-action, religious fervor, and abjection.

The Sanskrit of *Gītā* 6.25b is as follows:

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत्।

It can be literally translated as “the mind fixed in the Self, he should not think about anything.” Senart translated the Sanskrit in the following manner and Weil added (in brackets) her emendations:

Ayant obligé le [manas (mental)] à demeurer dans l’âtman [soi]; il ne faut plus penser à autre chose? Ou: [il faut], s’enfermant en soi, ne plus penser.¹⁹

We see that Senart took a simple statement and needlessly over-translated it, omitting the concept of *manas* (thought, mind). Weil, in her subtle emendation places the obligation coming not from force, but from a necessary firmness of spirit, introduced by Senart by the addition of “ou” and augmented by Weil with [il faut] (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 507 n281).

Another passage Weil cites is *Gītā* 8.12:

सर्वद्वाराणि संयम्य मनो हृदि निरुध्य च ।
मूर्ध्याधायात्मनः प्राणमास्थितो योगधारणाम् ॥

Literally, we might translate this verse as:

Controlling all gates²⁰ and shutting up the mind in the heart

¹⁹ Having obliged the [*manas* (mental)] to remain in the *âtman*, it should no longer think of something else? Or [it is necessary] closed up in the Self, to no longer think.

²⁰ The nine gates (orifices) of the body (eyes, nostrils, ears, mouth, penis/vagina, anus).

Having placed one's breath in the head
One is situated in yogic concentration.

Senart translates it as:

Ayant clos toutes les portes et enfermé le mental dans le Coeur, ayant fixé son souffle dans la tête, il maintient la concentration vers l'union.²¹

Weil will translate Senart's translation as: "Emprisonnant en soi la faculté de percevoir (*l*) retenant en soi le souffle vital. . ." ²² She leaves out the bodily component (the nine gates) and this time omits reference to the mind (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 351). In both these citations, there is a conflict between the mind and the bodily processes.

A focus on action or non-action pervades Weil's reading of the *Gītā*. The issue, as Weil sees it, is that Arjuna has no choice to fight or not (*Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 331). His desire not to fight is unreal (*irréel*). But violence for Weil, whether here or in other references to God's violence, is always perceived "through the lens of food and eating" (Irwin 259). She writes that Arjuna can no longer "bite on the real in the form of action" ("mordre sur le réel sous forme d'action") (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 331). Weil frames the relationship to God and her inquiries into the human condition (*Œuvres* vol. 6, part 2: 439–41) appear in eating metaphors. Amidst a discussion of Racine's *Phèdre*, the Gospel of Luke, Colette, and Heraclitus, she translates the Sanskrit term *amṛta* ("nectar of the gods" or sometimes "immortality") as "to eat being" (manger l'être) or "to eat opinion" (manger l'opinion) (451). In the context of her discussion of Arjuna seeking good in action, Weil announces for no textual reason, "food is irreducible (la nourriture est l'irréductible)." She speaks of sacrificing her body, that she professes to love, allowing it to be consumed as food, drink, cover, and fuel (439–41). In *Attente de Dieu*, she writes how God awaits her in order to eat her so that she can be changed and become Other (devenir autre) having been consumed and digested by God (Weil 122, qtd. in Irwin 265).

Weil's devouring God is the God she reads/translates into the *Gītā*. In a notebook entry, alongside passages from the *Gītā*, she cites a passage from Heraclitus:

²¹ Having closed all the gates and closed the mental process in the heart, having fixed one's breath in the head, he holds concentration in order to achieve union.

²² Locking up the faculty of perception in oneself, holding one's vital breath. . .

Vivre la mort d'un être, c'est le manger. L'inverse est d'être mangé. L'homme mange Dieu et est mangé par Dieu.

(Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 2: 454)²³

It is significant that Weil highlights this quotation in the section of the notebook that deals primarily with her interpretation of the *Gītā*. In fact, on first reading, I assumed she was citing the *Gītā* (11.29–30)

यथा प्रदीप्तं ज्वलनं पतङ्गा विशन्ति नाशाय समृद्धवेगाः ।
 तथैव नाशाय विशन्ति लोका- स्तवापि वक्त्राणि समृद्धवेगाः ॥
 लेलिह्यसे ग्रसमानः समन्ता- ल्लोकान्समग्रान्वदनैर्ज्वलद्भिः ।
 तेजोभिरापूर्य जगत्समग्रं भासस्तवोग्राः प्रतपन्ति विष्णो ॥

As moths enter the blazing flame to their destruction with great speed,
 so also to their destruction the worlds enter with great speed your mouths.
 You lick, swallowing from all sides, all the worlds with flaming mouths.
 Filling with splendor all the world, your terrible rays consume, O Vishnu.

before I realized she was quoting from Heraclitus. But, given the context of her comments on the *Gītā*, she could have just as easily attributed it to the Sanskrit poem, since she regularly inserted the theme of eating God or being eaten by God into her readings from the Sanskrit. This thematic found throughout her later work and especially in her discussions of the *Gītā* reflected what can only be called the issue Weil had, as an individual with an eating disorder, with the intake of food, and her ultimate self-starvation. This focus on eating that she imposed on her “translations” of the *Gītā* provide a heart-rending confession of personal, physical, and spiritual despair.

The point is that for non-comparatists, without access to or particular interest in the originals, such curious readings/translations are not noticed. The unsuspecting reader can then believe that what Simone Weil says about the *Iliad* or the *Gītā* is standard, legitimate, and reasonable.

²³ To live the death of a being is to eat it. The reverse is to be eaten. Man eats God and is eaten by God (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 2: 454).

Why not believe her? She is sincere and serious. She did place first in that *concours* in philosophy for entry into the École Normale Supérieure.²⁴

Earlier, she had distorted the *Iliad* by ignoring passages in the text or mistranslating them. Here, she simply did not translate the words of the *Gītā* at all or simply rewrote them and juxtaposed them to other authors she admired. Weil seems to have combined several strategies in her *Gītā* reception; on occasion she subtly amended Senart's translation to express her own concerns with little recourse to the actual text and she threw the *Gītā* together with a variety of other works, suggesting a commonality of message that did not necessarily exist and, in the process of drawing such facile and non-sensical connections, leveled out meaning to universalize her own philosophy of life. The *Iliad* is seen to celebrate abjection and the *Gītā* repeats this general theme, adding the component of being eaten:

We must die to ourselves and become defenseless to the “fangs of life”, accepting emptiness as our lot in life. We must annihilate our ego by suffering and degradation.

(Weil *Gravity* 21, qtd. in Penaskovic 393–94)²⁵

Weil saw in her own behavior a parallel to that of Arjuna: they both submit to the obligation of force as to a necessity (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 335).²⁶ She also envisioned her status as a Jew to be akin to that of an Indian Untouchable and she chose to conform to this political reality (Pétrément 422). However, exoticizing the French collaboration with the Nazi persecution of the Jews, romanticizing caste, and passively accepting this persecution (at a safe distance as a privileged refugee) was quite another matter. Another remedy Weil devised for her dis-ease with the political situation and the human condition was her notion of “decreation,” sharing in creating the world by self-abnegation and dying to ourselves, as Christ had done. To achieve a similar end, Weil

²⁴ She scored first in the nationwide entrance exam in General Philosophy and logic to gain admission into the ENS – with Simone de Beauvoir placing second and dozens of male students following in her wake, with Jean-Paul Sartre first among the men.

²⁵ Penaskovic cites from the 1979 edition of Weil's *Gravity and Grace*.

²⁶ She urges her parents when they are bored to ease their boredom by thinking of Krishna and taking comfort in him (Nevin 302). Even when hospitalized at the end of her life, she continued to write cheerful letters to her parents evoking the *Gītā*. In her final letters, she will urge family and friends to see “how it does one good the language of Krishna” (Weil *Seventy* 188).

embraced affliction, suffering and death (Weil *Gravity* 80–84). But she believed that the Hinduism she read in the *Gītā*, offered, perhaps, an even more amenable solution to the Occupation's net of complicity (i.e. her initial decision to remain in Vichy).

The *Gītā* was the text that helped her come to terms with the issue of force more effectively than Christianity and the *Iliad* had done.²⁷ Its remedy of action without any attachment to the fruits of action became, for Weil, obedience and self-renunciation (Weil *Connaissance* 230). According to Weil, the *Gītā* posed the problem of how finite means can be ordered with a view toward transcendent ends; it also provided her with an acceptable solution: the renunciation of personal will. The *Iliad* had taught Weil the ubiquity and mercilessness of force and the Gospels revealed to her that contact with force deprived one momentarily of God. There was no such deprivation in the *Gītā* (Nevin 297). One remains in contact with God. Weil felt that the *Gītā* taught us to seek good in our own acts. We can see her argument as pertaining specifically to Vichy:

Are there certain things we can do without wanting success and others we cannot do that way? Does this criterion permit us to distinguish between our actions? It is not certain. . . we can attribute some things to limited injustice, required by the social order. But how much? That's the whole question.

(qtd. in Nevin 299)

As noted, Weil accepted Vichy. She gave in to force but felt guilty and resisted it in a limited manner, particularly in her writings for *Combat* and *Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien*, both promoting Left-leaning works and virulently opposed to Vichy (Gray 175). It was through the authority she vested in the *Gītā* and her high-handed method of translating it that Weil was able to make the case that this text of ancient wisdom supported and legitimated her vision of the world more than any other text.

After her family had escaped from Paris to southern France and avoided Nazi persecution and deportation, they arrived safely in New York. Desperately wanting to return to Europe and engage in the war effort, Weil devised what she termed her "Projet d'Infirmières de

²⁷ "Contact with force, from whichever end the contact is made (sword handle or sword point) deprives one for a moment of God. Whence the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Gospels complete each other" (Weil *Œuvres* vol. 6, part 1: 297, qtd. in Bingemer 75).

première ligne” a plan to set up a group of nurses to parachute behind Nazi lines with the mission of espionage. She devoted the rest of her life trying to implement this mission, seeking support from many influential family friends (Jacques Maritain, Pierre Mendes-France, etc.).²⁸ However, when she arrived in London, De Gaulle only offered her a desk job. She simply could not accept such an inactive position for someone of her intellect and sense of self-worth. In her last letters, she complained that no one paid attention to her ideas, just her intelligence. She wrote to her parents that she had “deposits of pure gold” in her to be handed down and there was perhaps no one to receive them (Weil *Seventy* 196–97). As with the other jobs, Weil did not stay long in this job either.

Weil died in a sanatorium from heart failure aggravated by pulmonary tuberculosis and self-starvation. It is said that the last word she wrote was “nurses.” Either she was acknowledging the care she had received or, more likely, she was leaving her project as a final wish to be satisfied after her martyrdom (Moi n.p.). The coroner’s verdict was suicide (Pétrément 537), the effects of not-eating.²⁹ Her father and mother out-lived her by twelve and twenty-two years, respectively. They devoted the rest of their lives to editing her work (Gray 214).³⁰ It is thanks to them that the thousands of pages of Weil’s often inchoate ramblings are now available in her collected works. For someone who published nothing really in her lifetime, there is a considerable corpus consisting of everything she ever wrote or doodled.

Weil’s hagiography was immediately put in place. Yet, it is indeed hard, as one reads through her work and her notebooks, which are so *soigneusement* edited and available in print, to fathom why she was taken so seriously as a philosopher in the late 1940s that Albert Camus and T.S. Eliot would anoint her work with their introductions. For Eliot, she was a genius and a saint (Weil *Need* vi). For the eminent Harvard

²⁸ The first version was written before the German offensive in May 1940 (Pétrément 374–75) and reworked while she was in the US and eventually published in *Écrits de Londres et dernières lettres* (187–95).

²⁹ If, indeed, she was anorexic, it is quite possible that she could not eat after years of not eating properly. At the end, she asked for mashed potatoes in the English sanatorium, cooked in the French way, preferable by a French cook who could be enlisted for the job (Pétrément 538). The accommodations that her mother had made to satisfy her food desires well into her adulthood were clearly seen by Weil as universal privileges that she could request of anyone anywhere.

³⁰ Gray’s personal conversation with Sylvie Weil in 2000.

psychologist Robert Coles, she put her line on the line consistently in the workplace and in her activism (*Need* vi). J.M. Cameron chides us for noting her extravagance, given that she is so attractive, mystical, and brilliant. There was, however, a counter narrative to such panegyrics. Friends admitted that she was very demanding in her quest for abjection (Pétrement 425), not detached from her own detachment (Perrin and Thibon 117), and inflexible in her pursuit of self-immolation (Perrin and Thibon 116, qtd. in Gray 172). The American poet Kenneth Rexroth accused her of captious misinformed playing with Hinduism (Rexroth 38) and concluded that she suffered from “moribund, intellectual and spiritual agony” and played the role of an actor in her own spiritual melodrama (38). But her work continues to find enthusiastic readers. More recently, intellectuals such as Susan Sontag (49–51) and Judith Butler have eulogized her (Dumm and Butler 102–3). In the opera *Decreation*, the poet Anne Carson portrays Weil alongside Sappho and the mystic Marguerite Porete. One might ask, after reading Weil’s work, why does she inspire such fascination? What is the fascination that Weil continues to exert? In the 1930s and 1940s, she was appreciated in French intellectual circles as an advocate for the worker. Today, she is not seen as a champion for the precariat. Does she speak more to us as a woman, an intellectual, a victim of physical and mental illness, or as an anti-Semitic Jew?

It was in Greek and Sanskrit epic literature that Simone Weil sought guidance in dealing with force, violence, and war. Her readings of the *Iliad* did not provide her with the necessary answers. She then moved on to Catholicism and realized that it had too much baggage – the Church, the priests, the hegemonic violence of Rome. Weil felt that some further theophany was needed. It was then that she discovered Sanskrit and opted for the Hinduism that she read into the *Gītā*.

I have not sought, in the preceding discussion, to have the last word on Simone Weil or her reading of either the *Iliad* or the *Gītā*. I have primarily examined how she read these texts, what she read into them, and the reading/translational strategies she used to arrive at her conclusions. I have also sought to compare these readings /translations of the Greek and Sanskrit epics for similarities and divergences in technique and thematic. In the process, I have sought to open up discussion to ancillary disciplines, such as religious studies, philosophy, twentieth-century French cultural history, Classics and Indology. This conversation of literary texts across disciplines is an enjoyable component

of CL; it enhances our experience of texts. There is value to be found in comparison; it helps us make sense of the world around us. But in order to reach a greater understanding through comparison, there must be a valid rationale for making the comparison in the first place.

Comparing Weil's readings/translations of the *Iliad* and the *Gītā* shows how fundamental the theme of force was for Weil in the period of time leading up to and encompassing the global conflict of the Second World War. Her almost simultaneous interpretations of these two texts were unique for their time and her readings/translations differed radically from customary scholarly interpretations of these two epic poems. Our CL analysis dealt with and compared the original languages and Weil's renditions. In doing so, it provided insight into both Weil and her interpretations that extend well beyond the understanding we would have gained from a national language study (French, Greek, Sanskrit) of these texts. For all these reasons, a CL analysis is both warranted and its broad perspective is welcomed. However, Simone Weil also had much to teach us about intellectual arrogance (perhaps more than she taught us about the *Iliad* or the *Gītā*) and she certainly was very instructive on the topic of female abjection. So while I offer her readings/translations of the *Gītā* and the *Iliad* as a case study for what we might and should continue to do in CL, I also realize that I am ultimately unworthy to define categorically the task of the comparatist or dictate how we should read the literature of the world, especially when we have been told that the educational system has so deteriorated that the acquisition of the linguistic and broad-based disciplinary skills needed for comparative work has become too difficult for students to obtain in many American universities today.

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Revenir, un motif envahissant dans la fiction contemporaine

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Résumé: Si, pour reprendre une formule de Gilles Deleuze, « le devenir est géographique », qu'en est-il du revenir ? Que dit ce mouvement de boucle, de retour vers le chez soi qui inverse l'élan vers l'ailleurs, fondateur de la littérature ? C'est à ces questions que tente de répondre cet article. Si, dès l'antiquité, on relève l'emploi d'une telle construction dans *L'Orestie* d'Eschyle ou *Œdipe-roi* de Sophocle, on s'est attaché ici à un corpus plus récent. Le procédé est en effet envahissant dans la fiction contemporaine, tant dans les formes littéraires sophistiquées (*Juste la fin du monde* de Jean-Luc Lagarce, *Paris-Brest* de Tanguy Viel) que dans des productions beaucoup plus populaires qui retravaillent le récit de filiation (*The Monsters of Templeton* de Lauren Groff et *Heart Spring Mountain* de Robin MacArthur aux États-Unis). On note également la récurrence de cette structure dans un grand nombre de séries télévisées, parmi lesquelles *Sharp Objects* de Jean-Marc Vallée pour les États-Unis, *Les Sauvages* (2019) en France de Rebecca Zlotowski, *Patria* d'Aitor Gabilondo en Espagne. Afin d'appréhender le procédé et ses répercussions sur la fable, on s'est appuyé, dans un premier temps, sur *Les Revenants*, pièce de Henrik Ibsen, que l'on a considérée comme emblématique des dramaturgies du retour fondées sur la rétrospection typiques du XIX^e siècle. Les enjeux d'une telle forme ainsi éclaircis, on a pu interroger le fonctionnement du procédé au sein de la temporalité sérielle (*Patria* et *Sharp Objects*), avant de traiter de textes – *Juste la fin du monde* et *Paris-Brest* – qui perturbent la logique du secret traditionnellement liée à cette forme pour nourrir une poétique de la répétition.

Mots-clés: Revenir, retour, répétition, séries télévisées, Ibsen, Tanguy Viel, Jean-Luc Lagarce

“Homecoming, a Pervasive Motif in Contemporary Fiction.” Abstract: If, to use a phrase from Gilles Deleuze, “becoming is geographical”, what about homecoming? What is expressed in this looping movement of returning home, which reverses the impetus towards elsewhere, so characteristic of literature? This article attempts to answer these questions. If, from antiquity, the use of such a construction is notable in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* or Sophocles’ *Oedipus-king*, the corpus examined here is more recent. The process is in fact pervasive in contemporary fiction, both in sophisticated literary forms (*Juste la fin du monde* by Jean-Luc Lagarce, *Paris-Brest* by Tanguy Viel) and in much more popular novels, which rework the narrative of filiation (*The Monsters of Templeton* by Lauren Groff and *Heart Spring Mountain* by Robin MacArthur in the United States). The recurrence of this structure is also notable in a large number of series, including *Sharp Objects* by Jean-Marc Vallée for the United States, *Les Sauvages* in France by Rebecca Zlotowski, and *Patria* by Aitor Gabilondo in Spain. In order to better understand the process and its repercussions on the fable, *The Ghosts* by Henrik Ibsen, which is considered emblematic of the dramaturgies of the return based on retrospection, so typical of the nineteenth century, is first examined. The stakes of such a form thus brought to light, the functioning of the process within serial temporality is explored in *Patria* and *Sharp Objects*. Towards the conclusion of this article, two texts – *Juste la fin du monde* and *Paris-Brest* – are considered, which disrupt the logic of secrecy traditionally linked to this form in order to nourish a poetics of repetition.

Keywords: Homecoming, return, repetition, TV series, Ibsen, Tanguy Viel, Jean-Luc Lagarce

“*They’re my family. They’re not ogres.*”
(Pinter 23)

« Partir, s’évader, c’est tracer une ligne. L’objet le plus haut de la littérature. » On pourrait gloser avec Deleuze cette tendance majeure de la littérature qui consiste à découvrir d’autres horizons, franchir des frontières en quête d’autres mondes. Si, pour reprendre une autre de ses formules, « le devenir est géographique » (47–48), qu’en est-il du revenir ? Que dit ce mouvement de boucle, de retour vers le chez soi qui inverse l’élan vers l’ailleurs, fondateur de la littérature ? Revenir, la littérature est pleine du motif du retour et l’on pense, bien sûr, à la figure d’Ulysse. Cependant ce n’est pas l’aboutissement d’un parcours et la tension qu’il crée qui nous intéresseront ici, mais plutôt une structure narrative et ses potentialités. Rentrer chez soi, à la maison, au pays natal dessine

un mouvement significatif, une structure éminemment remarquable dans un grand nombre d'œuvres de fiction. Si, dès l'antiquité, on relève l'emploi d'une telle construction dans *L'Orestie* d'Eschyle ou *Cédipe-roi* de Sophocle par exemple, on s'attachera ici à un corpus beaucoup plus récent. Le procédé est en effet envahissant dans la fiction contemporaine, tant dans les formes littéraires sophistiquées (*Juste la fin du monde* [1990] de Jean-Luc Lagarce, *Paris-Brest* [2009] de Tanguy Viel) que dans des productions plus populaires qui retravaillent le récit de filiation (*The Monsters of Templeton* de Lauren Groff [2008] et *Heart Spring Mountain* de Robin MacArthur [2018] aux États-Unis, par exemple). Cette structure est également récurrente dans un grand nombre de séries télévisées, parmi lesquelles, pour les États-Unis, *Sharp Objects* (2018) de Jean-Marc Vallée, *Les Sauvages* (2019) en France, adaptation par Rebecca Zlotowski de la saga éponyme de Sabri Louatah, et *Patria* (2020) d'Aitor Gabilondo en Espagne. On pourrait encore citer la série finlandaise de Mika Ronkainen *All the Sins* (2019) ou *The Third Day* (2020), série britannico-américaine de Felix Barrett et Dennis Kelly. La reprise du scénario s'observe dans les principaux pays producteurs. Quant au genre utilisé, si le récit d'enquête domine, il croise d'autres formes comme le *thriller* psychologique, le drame historique ou la fiction politique.

Afin d'appréhender plus finement le procédé et ses répercussions sur la fable, dans un premier temps, on s'appuiera sur l'analyse des *Revenants* (1881), pièce de Henrik Ibsen, emblématique des dramaturgies du retour fondées sur la rétrospection, si chères au XIX^e siècle. Cette analyse permettra de mettre au jour les enjeux d'une telle forme et de mieux comprendre le fonctionnement des séries *Patria* et *Sharp Objects*, après quoi on abordera des textes – *Juste la fin du monde* et *Paris-Brest* – qui perturbent le procédé pour nourrir une poétique qui s'en inspire pourtant directement.

Les Revenants d'Ibsen, un texte programmatique

On sait qu'Ibsen appréciait la traduction française du titre original de sa pièce, *Gengangere*, au sens où, contrairement aux traductions anglaise et allemande – respectivement *Ghosts* et *Gespenster* –, elle est conforme à l'étymologie et au sens de « *Gengangere* », soit « ceux qui reviennent », et non les « fantômes » (Chevrel 159). « Ceux qui reviennent » dans cette pièce, c'est au premier chef « le jeune monsieur », Oswald. Il est peintre, a visité l'Italie et la France, et il rentre de Paris après deux ans d'absence

pour passer l'hiver auprès de sa mère, M^{me} Alving, dans une petite ville portuaire norvégienne. Là, il entreprend de séduire Régine, la femme de chambre, dont on apprendra plus tard qu'elle est aussi sa demi-sœur.

Ce retour évoque explicitement la parabole du fils prodigue (Luc, XV, 11–32). Face à la sidération du pasteur Manders (« Quand Oswald est apparu sur le pas de la porte, la pipe à la bouche, j'ai cru un instant voir son père en chair et en os » [302]), Oswald déclare : « Oui, c'est bel et bien le fils prodigue, pasteur. [...] Le fils retrouvé, si vous préférez » (300). Dans la version originale, Oswald utilise en premier lieu l'expression traditionnelle « *den forlorne sønn* » qui aurait pour traduction exacte « le fils perdu » et, en second lieu, « *den hjemkomne sønn* », soit littéralement « le fils revenu à la maison » (Chevrel 157). Comme dans les Évangiles, les retrouvailles avec le fils invitent à la réjouissance : « il était perdu, et il est retrouvé », conclut le père de la parabole pour justifier sa joie. Pourtant, dans le drame, on assiste à un premier déplacement par rapport au texte lucanien. Malgré son exil français, sa vie d'artiste et sa rencontre avec de nombreux couples vivant hors des liens du mariage, ce n'est pas Oswald qui a dilapidé son héritage « avec des filles » et mené une « vie de dissipation », mais son père. Mme Alving raconte au pasteur Manders comment elle a découvert que la « dépravation » de son époux s'était infiltrée au sein de son foyer :

Mme Alving. [...] Mais quand le scandale s'est installé entre ces quatre murs – Manders. Comment ! Ici !

Mme Alving. Oui, ici, dans notre maison. C'est là (*indiquant la première porte de droite*) que j'ai d'abord eu vent de la chose. [...] J'ai entendu la femme de chambre monter du jardin avec de l'eau pour les fleurs.

Manders. Oui ?

Mme Alving. Puis j'ai entendu Alving entrer. Je l'ai entendu lui parler à voix basse. Et j'ai entendu – (*Avec un rire bref*). Oh, ça me paraît toujours aussi déchirant et aussi ridicule ; – j'ai entendu ma propre femme de chambre chuchoter : « Laissez-moi tranquille, monsieur le Chambellan ! Lâchez-moi ! »

(Ibsen 313)

La scène narrée marque le spectateur. À quelques brèves interruptions près, elle suspend pratiquement le dialogue et le récit s'installe. Ce changement de régime rend le rejeu de cette scène d'autant plus

remarquable. Un peu plus loin en effet, l'échange entre Mme Alving et Manders est interrompu par « *le bruit d'une chaise que l'on renverse* » :

La voix de Régine (*à moitié étouffée mais perçante*). Oswald ! Tu es fou ! Lâche-moi !

Mme Alving (*tressaillant de peur*). Ah – !

Comme dans un délire, elle fixe la porte entrouverte. On entend Oswald tousser et chançonner, puis le bruit d'une bouteille que l'on débouche.

Manders (*avec agitation*). Qu'y a-t-il ? Que se passe-t-il, Madame Alving ?

Mme Alving (*la voix rauque*). Des revenants. Le couple du jardin d'hiver – est revenu.

Manders. Que dites-vous ! Régine – ? Elle est – ?

Mme Alving. Oui. Venez. Pas un mot – !

(316–17)

Alors que Mme Alving s'apprêtait à liquider la figure du son époux (« Après-demain, ce sera pour moi comme si le mort n'avait jamais vécu dans cette maison », 316), celui-ci revient en force sous sa forme actualisée, son fils Oswald. Le terme employé par Mme Alving (« *Gjengangere* », selon l'orthographe de l'édition citée par Yves Chevrel) pour qualifier « le couple du jardin » fait écho au titre de la pièce et permet d'appréhender la puissance de ce que l'on pourrait comparer à un retour du refoulé. Régine est certes la fille de Johanne, l'ancienne femme de chambre de Mme Alving, mais on le comprend ici malgré les ellipses, elle est aussi la fille du Chambellan et donc la demi-sœur d'Oswald. En ce sens, le retour met en branle une spirale péjorative au sein de laquelle on n'assiste pas au rejeu exact de l'identique. Le spectateur n'a pas d'accès direct à la scène traumatique : elle est modalisée, une première fois par le récit, une seconde fois par le recours au hors-scène. En ce sens, elle conserve le statut de fantôme et vient trouser de son absence l'espace scénique. Tout le travail du dramaturge consistera à éclairer les différences majeures qui séparent les deux occurrences de la scène, le gondolement du temps ainsi produit venant signaler une étrangeté radicale à résorber.

Dans son ouvrage, *À la recherche de l'autre temps*, Daniel Sibony revient sur l'image développée par Héraclite, « le temps est un enfant qui joue à déplacer les pièces de son jeu » (23), et la commente. À travers cette métaphore, le philosophe grec ne dit pas : « Le temps, ce sont les permutations d'un jeu... », il dit que c'est l'enfant qui est le temps ;

que le temps est un corps vivant qui joue et qui permute, retrouvant les mêmes pièces disposées autrement » (23). Le scénario du retour, avec les effets de rejeu qui lui sont liés, permettrait en ce sens de mettre en scène la malléabilité fondamentale du temps. Si ce scénario produit de la répétition, il signale aussi des obstructions, morceaux de temps non assimilés qui viennent briser la linéarité chronologique. Toutefois, comme Sibony le souligne : la répétition « fait mieux que reproduire, elle fait de la place à la variabilité » (121). Dans la répétition cohabitent des éléments répétés – c'est l'ossature, qui permet d'identifier le redoublement –, mais aussi de l'inédit, qui révèle autre chose, fait surgir de l'enfoui. La répétition va ainsi de pair avec un effet de « relance » qui modifie la donne initiale. Dans le texte d'Ibsen, on entend bien sûr l'écho entre les paroles de Johanne et celles de Régine, mais l'une chuchote : « Laissez-moi tranquille, monsieur le Chambellan ! Lâchez-moi ! », quand l'autre déclare : « Oswald ! Tu es fou ! Lâche-moi ! » (313). La répétition fait événement, elle a été préparée visuellement (en ouverture de la pièce, Régine est seule en scène dans le jardin d'hiver, « *un vaporisateur vide à la main* », quand sa mère dans la scène traumatique remontait « du jardin avec de l'eau pour les fleurs », 313) et elle est glosée par Mme Alving qui, dans son commentaire, emploie le terme clé du drame. Pourtant, d'une réplique à l'autre, les variations sont remarquables. D'un côté le vouvoiement et l'emploi d'un titre pour interpeller le partenaire, de l'autre un prénom et le tutoiement qui n'est pas le fait du traducteur, comme on le comprend avec la remarque d'Oswald : « Pourquoi ne veux-tu pas me tutoyer, Régine ? Pourquoi ne m'appelles-tu pas Oswald ? » (358). Comme l'écrit joliment Sibony : « *le présent tente l'avenir et le passé lance au présent des tentacules* » (42, en italique dans l'original), pour autant le surgeon que lance le passé vers le présent ne duplique rien à l'identique. Le texte remet en jeu le passé, pour en créer une nouvelle version. Oswald, qui se sait condamné (« les péchés des pères retombent sur les enfants », lui a déclaré le médecin parisien qu'il a consulté [339]), n'a pas approché Régine pour rien : il sait que, le moment venu, elle sera apte à lui donner « un dernier coup de main » (Ibsen 358) (« Régine était si merveilleusement dépourvue de scrupules. Elle en aurait vite eu assez de soigner un malade comme moi » [368]). L'hypothèse se confirme par la suite. Alors qu'elle avait chassé sa mère enceinte des œuvres de son époux, quand Mme Alving ouvre sa porte à la jeune femme après lui avoir révélé sa véritable identité, Régine dévoile sa nature profonde : « Si j'avais su qu'Oswald était malade –. Puis maintenant qu'il ne pourra

rien y avoir de sérieux entre nous –. Non, je ne peux tout de même pas rester à la campagne à m'user la santé pour des gens malades » (361). On le voit, malgré la répétition, les situations sont radicalement différentes. Tandis que Johanne a endossé le rôle de victime, épousée – autant dire vendue – pour trois cents rixdales à un homme peu scrupuleux qui « à force de la martyriser [...] [a] fini par la tuer » (282), Régine, elle, mène le jeu et ne s'en laisse pas conter.

On retrouve, dans *Les Revenants* d'Ibsen, les traits récurrents identifiés par Thomas Postlewait dans le scénario du retour :

[...] the double identity of woman, a son's return home, a ghostly presence hovering over the action, the false power of a father figure, the imagery of blood and pollution, the violation of sexual taboos, confusion or controversy over conception, family violence, breakdown of moral codes, revenge of or against the mother, and the call or impulse for vengeance.

(Postlewait 196)

Cette énumération rend certes compte des différents thèmes qui s'entrecroisent pour décrire une situation familiale complexe, un entre-soi violent et mortifère où plane la présence des morts et qui se joue des interdits pour mieux mettre à mal les figures maternelles et paternelles, mais elle ignore la structure temporelle qui va de pair avec un tel enchevêtrement, soit une forme de sérialité.

***Patria* et *Sharp Objects*. Deux partis pris antithétiques**

Du théâtre d'Ibsen aux séries télévisées, il y a certes un monde, mais le succès du scénario du retour, si récurrent dans cette forme populaire, incite à s'y attarder. Parmi toutes les séries disponibles, notre choix s'est arrêté sur *Sharp Objects* de Jean-Marc Vallée, tiré du roman éponyme de Gillian Flynn (2006), et *Patria* d'Aitor Gabilondo, adaptation du *best-seller* de Fernando Aramburu (2016). Les deux séries sont composées de huit épisodes d'une cinquantaine de minutes chacun, dimension qui permet de clairement maintenir l'arc narratif principal – le retour chez soi de la protagoniste. Cependant, malgré leur format identique, les deux récits optent pour des traitements temporels radicalement différents.

Souvent qualifié de « roman de l'année » lors de sa parution en 2016, *Patria* a fait date en Espagne. L'œuvre de plus de 600 pages a connu des

ventes exceptionnelles (quatorze rééditions, 170 000 exemplaires) pour devenir un phénomène de société tant au Pays basque que sur le territoire national. Le texte a bénéficié d'une presse importante qui, le plus souvent, s'est peu attardée sur ses qualités littéraires – assez médiocres –, mais a privilégié sa dimension politique et sa vision du conflit au Pays basque. Selon l'écrivain Iban Zaldúa, Aramburu a cherché à « produire le Grand Roman sur le terrorisme basque »¹ en y puisant tous les thèmes qui l'irriguent : les attentats, la mise au ban de certaines familles au sein de petites communautés où domine la culture de la gauche indépendantiste, l'impôt dit « révolutionnaire », l'éloignement des prisonniers basques de leur région, « le difficile processus de reconnaissance de la culpabilité (tant individuelle que collective) »² (Zaldúa n.p., mes traductions). Le récit couvre trente années de conflit et montre ses répercussions sur la vie des gens ordinaires, à travers l'histoire de l'amitié entre deux femmes, Bittori et Miren. Txato, l'époux de la première, est un petit entrepreneur local au sein d'une communauté industrielle, proche de Saint-Sébastien. Il a payé une première fois l'impôt révolutionnaire, mais ne peut verser la seconde somme que lui réclame l'ETA. Commence une campagne d'intimidation (lettres, graffitis, refus de vente de certains commerçants), qui entraîne la mise à l'écart de sa famille par la communauté et certains proches, parmi lesquels Miren et son mari Joxian, un ami de Txato, compagnon de ses randonnées à vélo. Le tout débouchera sur l'assassinat de Txato par l'ETA, une exécution dans laquelle Joxe Mari, le fils aîné de Miren, est impliqué.

Pour aborder cette série, on partira de l'idée développée par Jean-Pierre Esquenazi selon laquelle « le cœur de la machinerie sérielle est temporel : s'il y a un art des séries, il est de composition des temporalités selon une figure caractéristique » (155). La figure caractéristique qui s'élabore dans *Patria* est assez simple ; elle découle de l'*incipit*. Le premier épisode s'ouvre sur la catastrophe : l'exécution de Txato. Le spectateur découvre tout d'abord, sous la pluie, dans un plan large, une vue de la rivière, surplombée par des maisons de quelques étages ; dans l'angle droit de l'écran, la date – 1990. La caméra opère ensuite une série de déplacements : plan sur les édifices en surplomb, suivi d'un plan large sur le pont, à l'extrémité droite duquel on peut lire, en gros plan sur un étendard où figure le drapeau basque, « PRESOAK

¹ « producir la Gran Novela sobre el Terrorismo Vasco ».

² « el difícil camino hacia la asunción de la culpa (personal y colectiva) ».

KALERA – AMNESTIA OSOA » (« les prisonniers dans la rue, amnistie totale »). Un mouvement de plongée aboutit finalement sur le toit d'une voiture sous la pluie battante. Le regard bascule alors à l'intérieur, outre le bruit de la pluie, on entend désormais les différents résultats d'un championnat de *football*. Gros plan à l'arrière sur un jeune homme vu de profil ; frange courte, anneau à l'oreille, il évoque un *etarra* (membre de l'ETA), ce que confirme les deux personnages que l'on découvre assis à l'avant, une femme et un homme, lequel charge son pistolet. Gros plan sur un autre *revolver* que l'on arme et retour sur le visage de profil du premier jeune homme. La séquence se clôt ; on découvre un autre décor : en gros plan, le visage d'un homme allongé dans un lit, habillé. En fond sonore, les résultats de *foot* et la pluie font le raccord entre plans extérieur et intérieur, mais désormais une note de musique stridente fait pénétrer la tension dramatique au sein de l'appartement. L'homme se chausse, se lève, regarde par la fenêtre d'où il voit l'étendard pro-indépendantiste. Un radio-réveil affiche 15h54. Sa femme depuis une autre pièce lui demande l'heure, on la découvre installée, somnolente, dans son fauteuil ; ils échangent quelques mots ; lui se dirige dans la cuisine où il boit un reste de café à même la cafetière. Il prend ses clés, salue sa femme et s'en va. La caméra revient sur elle qui est restée à la même place. Tonnerre, note stridente, les quatre coups du clocher de l'église sont suivis de trois détonations. Gros plan sur le visage de la femme qui sursaute et se précipite vers la fenêtre : à terre, elle voit le corps de son mari, allongé sur le pont, face contre terre. Elle sort tandis que la caméra s'attarde sur une photo de famille où le couple entoure un jeune homme en tenue universitaire un jour de remise de diplôme ; fondu au noir, on enchaîne sur le générique. L'exécution de Txato est traitée en hors scène ; l'arc narratif majeur de la série consistera à rétablir la séquence initiale dans sa continuité, sans ellipse, et à montrer son amont et son aval pour tous les personnages impliqués dans le drame.

Le générique passé, on découvre les mains d'une femme qui frotte une tombe ; une date s'affiche dans l'angle gauche de l'écran : 2011. Les cheveux blancs désormais, Bittori, l'épouse de Txato, adresse ses propos au défunt. Après quelques nouvelles, elle en vient à ce qui lui tient à cœur :

Il faut que j't dise une chose. L'ETA a décidé d'arrêter de tuer des gens. [...] j'ai vraiment besoin de savoir. [...] personne ne m'arrêtera. [...] Je r'tourne au village. C'est décidé, il est hors de question que j'meurs sans savoir qui t'a

tiré d'ssus. J'ai absolument besoin de pouvoir me poser et d'me dire : « voilà, ça y est ; c'est fini ». [...] S'il y a une réponse, je suis sûre que c'est au village que je la trouverai, c'est pour ça que j'y vais cet après-midi.³

L'argument du retour est mis en place. Après l'assassinat de son époux, Bittori s'est installée à Saint-Sébastien, mais les événements historiques aidant, elle revient chez elle, vingt-et-un ans plus tard.

La construction temporelle est explicite. Comme dans *Hamlet*, avec la mort du père, « *the time is out of joint* ». Le traumatisme initial a brisé tant la routine du quotidien, symbolisée par la sieste de Txato, que les solidarités entre personnages. Tout en jouant sur plusieurs temporalités et le morcellement propre à l'œuvre sérielle, le récit va se développer afin de montrer comment chacun, dans les familles de Bittori et de Miren, a fait face à l'événement. Ce sont là des arcs narratifs secondaires qui vont éclore, la trame principale se dessinant à travers le retour de Bittori au village et sa volonté de savoir.

Pour le spectateur, la force de *Patria* tient, d'une part, à la qualité du jeu des acteurs et, d'autre part, à sa puissance de reconstitution – reconstitution d'une ambiance et d'une région à une certaine époque. D'un point de vue narratif, c'est un même parti pris qui l'emporte. La scène d'*incipit* est elliptique. On ne sait ni comment Txato a été exécuté, ni qui a tiré. La série se donne pour objectif de restituer cette scène dans sa continuité linéaire, comme en temps réel, sans plus de blancs. Moment zéro, elle tient lieu de point de capiton à partir duquel le récit se fixe et va pouvoir se déployer dans sa discontinuité. Le montage sériel reprendra de nombreuses fois l'événement premier pour faire tenir ensemble le faisceau des diverses temporalités subjectives liées aux différents personnages. Outre le fait que les réitérations réactivent à chaque occurrence la mémoire du spectateur, comme dans *Les Revenants*, elles traduisent la pulsion de répétition qui caractérise la scène traumatique. L'originalité du scénario tient ici au fait que la séquence est reproduite à l'identique à plusieurs reprises : nulle modification du noyau dur, la

³ Le texte retranscrit est celui que prononce l'actrice qui double Elena Irureta dans la version française. Pour la version originale : « Hay una cosa que no te contao. ETA ha decidido dejar de matar. [...] Pero tengo una necesidad de saber. [...] no me van a parar. [...] Voy a ir al pueblo. Ya lo tengo decidido yo no quiero que me entierren sin saber quién fue que te mató. Es una necesidad muy grande que tengo yo de poder sentarme y decir: "ya está, se acabó". [...] Si hay una respuesta, la voy a encontrar en el pueblo, así que me voy esta misma tarde ».

variation n'intervient que par le biais d'éléments qui viennent s'y ajouter raboutés par rebroussement ou avancement, telles des pièces de Lego ajoutées en amont ou en aval du point d'origine. La séquence s'étoffe ainsi, entourée de part et d'autre par ces nouveaux apports : en aval, Bittori dévalant les escaliers et embrassant le corps de son époux sous la pluie, *pietà* hurlante que nul ne viendra secourir ; en amont, Joxe Mari, sortant de la voiture avec son compagnon d'arme, emboitant le pas de Txato, trois coups de feu, et le corps de ce dernier qui s'effondre. Le même principe est repris pour plusieurs séquences clés, dont le sens échappe dans un premier temps au spectateur : après avoir rangé sa voiture dans son garage, Txato découvre Joxe Mari – posté là, capuche rabattue sur le visage, protubérance dans la poche. En rentrant chez lui, Txato rapporte l'événement à Bittori. On n'aura une pleine compréhension de la scène que dans le dernier épisode. Elle a eu lieu le jour de l'assassinat de Txato. Ce dernier rentrait déjeuner chez lui, Joxe Mari était censé l'exécuter, mais la reconnaissance a suspendu son geste.

Le huitième et dernier épisode de la série s'ouvre sur Joxe Mari en prison qui écrit à Bittori. La séquence est suivie d'un *flash-back* qui va permettre de reconstituer la linéarité des événements qui ont abouti à l'assassinat. Txato désigné comme cible à abattre par le commando auquel appartient Joxe Mari, on assiste aux préparatifs préalables à l'exécution du plan. Pour autant l'épisode ne renonce pas au montage alterné qui caractérise toute la série. La séquence des préparatifs suspendue, on revient au présent de Bittori : elle a reçu la lettre que Joxe Mari écrivait au début de l'épisode et la lit. Son contenu ne sera toutefois révélé au spectateur que plus tard, lorsque s'emboîteront présent de la confession et passé de l'assassinat. Progressivement, la séquence dévolue à l'assassinat s'étire. Désormais, la scène peut être livrée dans sa continuité : Txato descend les escaliers de son immeuble, Joxe Mari sort de voiture avec son compagnon d'arme ; ils emboîtent le pas à Txato, mais cette fois-ci l'ambiguïté n'a plus cours. Un gros plan montre le visage du complice de Joxe Mari. On le voit, le bras tendu, tirer trois fois, tandis que Joxe Mari reste là à contempler la scène, immobile, les bras collés au corps. Il prend ensuite la fuite et s'enfuit dans la voiture qui l'attendait. Là, gros plan sur son visage, il retire sa capuche et voit Bittori sortir de l'immeuble en courant. Désormais, les différentes pièces du puzzle sont raccordées. La lecture de la lettre peut être lancée, une lecture faite par son auteur en voix *off*, une voix qui se superpose aux sanglots de Bittori et à la scène de *pietà* :

Kaixo, Bittori.

Je t'écris sur les conseils de ma sœur. C'est pas moi qu'ai tiré sur ton mari. Mais peu importe qui l'a fait, ton mari était une cible de l'ETA. J'te demande pardon à toi ainsi qu'à tes enfants. Je suis vraiment désolé, si je pouvais remonter le temps, j'le ferais, mais je ne peux pas. [...] J'espère que tu me pardonneras. Je purge ma peine. Je te souhaite le meilleur. Joxe Mari.⁴

Dans cette série, le montage sériel a inlassablement répété l'événement premier, pour en faire son point d'origine et son point d'aboutissement. Le retour devient ainsi principe de construction, figure de boucle bouclée. On comprend mieux dès lors les premiers plans qui mettaient lentement en place la localisation spécifique du meurtre. Centre de gravité, le décor a été posé pour que la catastrophe puisse y exploser. À partir d'elle, la série travaillera en expansion pour assouvir la « pulsion de complétude » du spectateur (Besson 136), incarnée dans la fiction par la *libido sciendi* de Bittori.

« What is a home? In drama it is often not a safe place to visit or return to. The homecoming theme [...] reveals that the home is haunted by past crimes, usually concerning sexual matters and the misuse of power » (Postlewait 195). Le constat – fort juste – acquiert une acuité particulière s'agissant de la série *Sharp Objects*. Adaptation du premier roman de Gillian Flynn (autrice de *Gone Girl*, 2012), le texte est demeuré pendant 70 semaines sur la liste des *best-sellers* sélectionnés par le *New York Times*. Sa force tient – tout comme la série – à la puissance des personnages féminins qui déjouent les stéréotypes genrés. En un sens, étant donné sa charge libidinale, *Sharp Objects* révèle peut-être le fantasme qui hante la plupart des scénarios du retour, soit la plongée dans un monde préœdipien, d'où l'ordre masculin a été éradiqué, pour mieux accomplir la symbiose entre la mère et l'enfant. Scénario masochiste par excellence, la mère y est objet d'amour et d'effroi pour l'enfant dépendant qui s'offre à sa dévotion avec béatitude (Studlar 9). L'onomastique est ici des plus claires. Dans le nom de la mère, Adora, on peut lire « *adored* », mais aussi « *devour* » ; ceux de ses plus jeunes filles – Marian et Amma, quasi anagrammes de l'hypocoristique « *Mama* » – préparent le sacrifice : « Adora devours

⁴ « *Kaixo*, Bittori. De acuerdo con el consejo de mi hermana, te escribo. Yo no fui el que disparó a tu marido. Pero da igual quién lo hizo, pues tu marido era objetivo de ETA. Os pido perdón a ti y a tus hijos. Lo siento mucho. Si podría dar marcha atrás al tiempo, lo haría. No puedo. [...] Ojalá me perdones. Ya estoy cumpliendo mi castigo. Te deseo lo mejor, Joxe Mari ».

you, and if you don't let her, it'll be even worse for you. Lookit what's happening to Amma. Look at what happened to Marian" » (Flynn 261). Mais venons-en à l'intrigue.

Camille Preaker (Amy Adams), journaliste au *Saint-Louis Chronicle*, est envoyée par son supérieur à Wind Gap dans le Missouri, sa ville natale, pour couvrir une affaire – le meurtre sanglant d'une fillette retrouvée édentée, et la disparition d'une autre. Outre le fait que, selon lui, elle pourra en tirer d'excellents articles qui propulseront sa carrière, il a l'intuition qu'un tel retour lui permettra d'affronter certaines blessures d'enfance. Comme le montre le premier épisode, Camille a en effet développé des conduites addictives : alcool, cigarettes, « remontants » qu'elle consomme dans sa voiture tout en écoutant de la musique à plein régime. Plus tard, on apprendra également qu'elle pratique la scarification. Son corps est comme gravé, recouvert de mots. Pour le cacher, elle porte toujours la même tenue : des *leggings* et un *sweat shirt* à manches longues noirs, ce qui la disqualifie dans l'univers sudiste féminin que gouverne sa mère (Patricia Clarkson), héritière qui règne sur Wind Gap où elle possède la principale industrie locale : un élevage de porcs. On comprend dès lors le titre. *Sharp Objects* renvoie à tous les objets qu'utilise Camille pour se mutiler, mais c'est également une métonymie qui renvoie à la mauvaise mère et à ses pulsions d'emprise : « Then [my mother] reached behind me and, with one fingernail, circled the spot on my back that had no scars. "The only place you have left. [...] Someday, I'll carve my name there" » (Flynn 191–92).

Gillian Flynn a participé à l'adaptation télévisuelle du roman, dont la série demeure très proche. La difficulté majeure consistait ici à traduire la narration à la première personne. Pour ce faire, Jean-Marc Vallée trouve une stratégie fort efficace qui, comme dans *Patria*, produit une image spécifique du temps. Elle s'élabore dès l'*incipit* du premier épisode et concerne donc le protocole d'entrée dans la fiction. Sans que le spectateur en soit pleinement averti, on plonge d'emblée dans le temps subjectif du rêve. Le premier plan est ambigu. L'image est floue, et se précise très légèrement par un jeu de focale. En haut de l'image, on distingue un mouvement de rotation, une forme qui évoque une pupille avec quelque chose qui tourne à l'intérieur, en bas, une masse rousse agitée par le mouvement ; en fond sonore, une voix douce chantonne une mélodie lente avec un effet d'écho. Le plan suivant, on parcourt la rue principale d'une petite ville américaine, le fond sonore est maintenu et assure le raccord. Aucun point de vue n'est indiqué, la caméra semble

flotter, tout en enchaînant dans un montage *cut* différentes vues de la ville à hauteur d'homme, une ville déserte où semble régner une certaine torpeur. Sur un mur est inscrit « Welcome to Wind Gap ». Au chant, se sont superposés le souffle du vent et un bruit de roulement à bille qui va s'accroissant. Une jeune fille rousse aux cheveux courts, floutée, entre dans le champ par la droite et le traverse. Son image se précise peu à peu, on comprend qu'elle est en patins à roulettes et regarde le paysage se dérouler autour d'elle. Une voix l'interpelle, fortement travaillée par un effet d'écho : « You' sure, Mama won't notice we're gone? » « Better hope not », répond-elle à la silhouette de petite fille qui la suit. Patinant, l'une et l'autre se suivent puis se rattrapent ; les bras écartés du corps, elles semblent voler ; leurs mains se touchent, on entend toujours la chanson lancinante. Effet de coupe, elles déchaussent leurs patins et contournent un portail en fer forgé. On découvre au loin une grande demeure vers laquelle elles se dirigent en courant. Elles traversent la pelouse, montent précautionneusement les marches extérieures. On n'entend plus la chanson, mais une musique qui traduit la tension. Elles entrent dans la maison, s'infiltrant sans attirer l'attention de quiconque et montent discrètement le grand escalier. En haut, elles entrent dans la pièce qui fait face à l'escalier. La porte franchie, le spectateur découvre, avec elles, un appartement : un bureau, une salle-de-bain, puis une chambre où quelqu'un somnole sur un lit avec un ventilateur en marche. La jeune fille rousse aux cheveux courts s'approche du lit, elle a un trombone à la main et pique la main de la dormeuse de son extrémité. On entend la sonnerie étouffée d'un téléphone, Camille se réveille. La séquence est suspendue ; on revient au tout premier plan flouté de *l'incipit*. On peut désormais l'interpréter : au premier plan, la chevelure de Camille, au-dessus l'auréole dessinée par le ventilateur en mouvement. Le rêve achevé, le récit peut se déployer. Camille se rend à son travail. Un peu plus tard, elle prendra la route pour Wind Gap où le spectateur reconnaîtra certains lieux parcourus par la patineuse.

Le protocole d'entrée dans la fiction crée un temps fondamentalement poreux, où passé et présent fusionnent. Si parfois, on bascule d'un univers spatio-temporel à l'autre à la faveur du franchissement d'une porte (comme dans le rêve, où l'on est passé, sans le savoir, de la demeure familiale à l'appartement de Camille), les *flash-backs* ne sont pas nécessairement signalés. Parfois ce ne sont d'ailleurs que de simples *flashes* qui s'éclairciront plus tard, comme le tout premier plan. « More-or-less faintly hallucinatory scenes [flashbacks to wanderings in the woods and

teenage dens plastered in porn with boys cackling outside, suffocating dreams] intertwine with Camille's day-to-day efforts to build up a picture of the dead and missing » (Mangan n.p.). Grâce à la scène d'*incipit*, le spectateur a plongé avec Camille dans son passé – « stuck in the loop of her own past, unmoored in time » (Poniewozik n.p.). Il a admis le fonctionnement de la fiction qui veut que le sens de certaines images décrochées de l'arc narratif principal – comme les pâles du ventilateur initial – lui échappent. Il sait qu'elles s'éclaireront le moment venu.

Outre ce travail sur le temps, beaucoup plus complexe que dans *Patria*, dans cette série, un autre élément marque la répétition : la mise en abyme. Elle est de deux ordres. Corporelle, elle s'inscrit sur la peau de Camille à travers tous les mots qui y sont sculptés. Comme les *flashes* visuels, ils relèvent de la métonymie : « cherry », un écho à « plump as a cherry », lancé ironiquement par Adora. La mise en abyme est aussi spatiale : c'est la maison de poupée qui reproduit à l'identique la demeure familiale. Cet objet fait d'Amma, sa propriétaire, une Adora en miniature, apte – comme elle – à toutes les manipulations. Petite fille modèle dans la demeure sudiste ancestrale (elle porte une robe et des socquettes blanches avec un nœud dans les cheveux, la première fois que Camille l'y rencontre), elle l'avait croisée au préalable, patinant en *hotpants*. À travers elle se rejoue – comme le signale la miniature – l'histoire de Marian, l'autre sœur de Camille, décédée alors qu'elle n'était encore qu'une enfant.

On découvrira finalement, qu'atteinte du syndrome de Münchhausen par procuration, Adora empoisonne ses filles, tout en prétendant les soigner. Comme chez Zola, la tare de l'ancêtre a frappé toutes les descendantes de cette lignée matrilinéaire toxique et s'est déclinée de différentes façons : mère criminelle, Adora a engendré une fille coupable de meurtres. Dans la dernière scène, Camille découvre en effet de petites dents humaines, reproduction en miniature des tesselles en ivoire qui parquetent la chambre maternelle, dans la maison de poupée. Ce sont celles des fillettes qu'Amma a assassinées.

Si *Patria* – à cause de son ancrage historique – privilégie la reconstitution et une esthétique réaliste, *Sharp Objects* immerge d'emblée le spectateur dans un monde hypnotique au fonctionnement hallucinatoire – la psyché meurtrie de Camille –, une Belle au bois dormant contemporaine, plongée dans le passé par le biais d'une piqûre. L'immersion dans la mémoire, qu'elle initie avec le retour à Wind Gap, livrera des bribes déconnectées qui se coaguleront progressivement pour trouver la source refoulée de la monstruosité. Elle était livrée dès les

premiers plans de façon cryptée : une demeure où est tapie la bête. La réveiller, c'est risquer la dévoration de sa gueule marquetée de tesselles d'ivoire, nouvelle version maternelle du vagin denté.

***Juste la fin du monde* et *Paris-Brest*. La répétition, un parti pris poétique**

Tout en jouant prioritairement sur un événement traumatique, le drame et les séries font leur suc de la figure du secret. Point aveugle, le secret crée une perspective ; il oriente la narration qui se donne la révélation pour horizon. Qu'en est-il des formes qui rejettent une telle construction ? C'est ce que l'on analysera à partir d'une pièce de théâtre et un roman : *Juste la fin du monde* de Jean-Luc Lagarce et *Paris-Brest* de Tanguy Viel, des œuvres qui renoncent à une écriture définitive du passé.

Dans *Juste la fin du monde*, comme Ibsen avant lui, Lagarce reprend la parabole du fils prodigue qui irrigue une partie de son œuvre et la manipule : « le Fils prodigue n'est pas le cadet mais l'aîné [...], ce n'est pas le père qui l'accueille [...], il est déjà mort au moment du retour [...], et le Fils prodigue "ne revient pas à la vie" (Luc, XV, 23), [...] s'il revient, c'est au contraire pour annoncer sa propre mort » (Sarrazac « Parabole » 271–272). Dans cette pièce, Louis revient donc, après des années d'absence, dans sa famille, un dimanche. Il retrouve sa mère, son frère et sa femme, ainsi que sa sœur. Se sachant condamné par la maladie, il vient annoncer sa mort imminente, mais repartira, quelques heures plus tard, sans avoir pu le faire. Comme chez Ibsen, la place du père est vacante, et le fils se trouve projeté dans un entre-deux entre les vivants et les morts. Faut-il voir là « un mauvais rêve utérin », selon l'expression de Jacques Mandelbaum (n.p.), qui évoque en ces termes l'adaptation cinématographique que Xavier Dolan a produite de la pièce ? Incontestablement, une étrange parenté fantasmatique se tisse entre les différentes œuvres abordées ici.

Première évidence : *Juste la fin du monde* souligne le fait que « rentrer fait mal, tout simplement ». « Cela ressemble à la mort, mais ce n'est pas la mort » (Rabat 22–25). D'où provient cette douleur ? C'est ce qu'il faut expliquer. Pour rentrer « il faut être soi-même et revenir à l'endroit d'où l'on est parti » avec l'idée que l'« on rentre soi-même au même endroit » (23). Les choses paraissent simples, elles sont cependant des

plus complexes. Dans *À la recherche de l'autre temps*, Sibony éclaire cette quasi-impossibilité :

La relativité d'Einstein [...] nous envoie un message énorme : si deux personnes sont synchronisées et si l'une d'elles va faire un tour et revient au même lieu, la durée écoulée n'est pas la même pour les deux, [...] leurs temps vécus sont différents, donc les deux personnes n'ont plus la même histoire. (16)

C'est là le *nexus* de la dramaturgie de la séparation. Elle désynchronise à jamais les personnages. Dans *Juste la fin du monde*, la présence de Catherine, la femme d'Antoine que Louis ne connaissait pas, le prouve. Pièce rapportée dans le noyau familial, elle entraîne une recomposition de la distribution qui fait bégayer la scène des retrouvailles (beau-frère et belle-sœur doivent-ils s'embrasser ou se serrer la main ? Se tutoyer ?). Sa présence oblige en outre « à ne pas recommencer exactement de l'endroit où l'on en était resté » (July 235). Aussi, d'emblée, sans que rien ne se soit passé, un malaise s'installe. L'espace-temps qui a désuni les membres de cette famille a créé une faille et c'est depuis cette béance que se fera entendre le « chœur des abandonnés » (Lagarce *Théâtre complet* 297). Jeu de voix discordantes, chacune viendra donner sa version des faits, autant d'expressions dissonantes des différentes modalités d'absorption du passé :

La mère. – [...] ils ont su que tu revenais et ils ont pensé qu'ils pourraient te parler, un certain nombre de choses à te dire depuis longtemps et la possibilité enfin.

(Lagarce *Juste* 56)

Comme Camille dans *Sharp Objects*, Louis a définitivement déserté les siens. Cela a un coût auquel il s'expose en revenant. Les sédentaires s'érigent en tribunal. Leur parole, longtemps retenue, enfin libérée, est chargée du poids de la rancœur. Eux sont restés et, face à eux, « le personnage errant va comparaître ». Comme l'écrit Jean-Pierre Sarrazac, chacun témoigne « de ce qu'il a représenté pour lui dans une sorte de déposition procédurale » (« Préface » 11). La répétition n'est plus du même ordre que dans les autres œuvres. C'est ici l'« épanchement du passé dans le présent » qui produit « une itération généralisée » (Brun 185), et programme la mécompréhension :

La mère. – [...] ils auront peur du peu de temps et ils s'y prendront maladroitement
 et cela sera mal dit ou dit trop vite,
 d'une manière trop abrupte, ce qui revient au même,
 et brutalement encore, [...]
 et tu ne comprendras pas, je sais comment cela se passera
 et s'est toujours passé.

(Lagarce *Juste* 57)

Dans ce théâtre que certains qualifient de post-dramatique, la part narrative est des plus ténues et nul n'attend de révélation. Tout se joue dans la répétition, la rectification, sachant – comme le déclare le personnage d'Antoine – que « rien jamais ici ne se dit facilement » (98) :

Antoine. – [...] nous pensions que en effet, nous ne t'aimions pas assez,
 ou du moins,
 que nous ne savions pas te le dire
 (et ne pas te le dire, cela revient au même, ne pas te dire assez
 que nous t'aimions, ce doit être comme ne pas t'aimer assez).
 On ne se le disait pas si facilement, [...]
 non,
 on ne se l'avouait pas [...]

(98)

« Oraison funèbre inconsciente prononcée devant un mort vivant » (Sarrazac « Préface » 11), la pièce répond aussi à la question fondamentale de Louis : « que ferez-vous de moi et de toutes ces choses qui m'appartiennent ? » (Lagarce *Juste* 68). La réponse à cette interrogation qui le hante est livrée de façon oblique à travers les propos de Suzanne, la sœur de Louis, qui évoque son espace au sein de la maison familiale :

Suzanne. – Je vis au second étage, j'ai ma chambre, je l'ai gardée,
 et aussi la chambre d'Antoine,
 et la tienne encore si je veux,
 mais celle-là, nous n'en faisons rien,
 c'est comme un débarras, ce n'est pas méchanceté,
 on y met toutes les vieilleries qui ne servent plus mais qu'on
 n'ose pas jeter [...]

(42)

Louis est un détonateur. Comme dans un conte, sa présence rend de nouveau actifs les vieux objets entassés qu'on croyait inertes.

Réifiées dans sa chambre-débaras, les anciennes histoires ravalées se réveillent, leur charge émotionnelle comme galvanisée. Chacun s'en empare pour les lui jeter à la figure, essayer de s'en libérer et de faire place nette. Pourtant, nul effet cathartique dans cette tentative de liquidation. Chez Lagarce, la conservation du passé s'opère comme le rangement maniaque d'encombrants réservés dans une petite pièce. Le moindre espace doit être mis à profit et, à cet effet, on procède par tuilage : « chaque avancée nouvelle se fonde sur les acquis précédents et sert ensuite d'appui aux prochains ajouts, comme un toit de tuiles » (Pavis 192). Là aussi, le texte donne lieu à une spatialisation de son fonctionnement. À la sophistication muséale de la vieille demeure sudiste, fait place le cagibi prolétaire où tout doit être conservé, dans un système d'imbrication et de chevauchement complexe. On met de côté, comme on épargne, et quand chacun en vient à solder son compte pour exhiber ses quelques fragments d'héritage dépareillés, nulle coalescence ne survient. Malgré les réajustements incessants des diverses pièces déballées, nul emboîtement. Louis est coincé dans cette boucle du temps comme les objets dans la chambre-débaras. Il n'a plus de place parmi les siens, ou plutôt sa place est occupée par ce qui est resté de sa présence après son départ. C'est la place d'un mort. Le retour est une aporie.

Du fait des différents genres investis, on assiste, chez Lagarce et Tanguy Viel, à des renversements : si la relation d'emprise se dit dans ce chœur de voix dissonantes qui enserre Louis chez Lagarce, chez Tanguy Viel, elle est totalement intériorisée et produit une démultiplication polyphonique du récit. *Paris-Brest*, comme l'indique le titre, c'est une affaire de retour et une histoire de famille, le « roman familial » de Tanguy Viel, un roman où l'argent – moteur de l'action – met en branle les personnages. Pour partir vivre à Paris, Louis a cambriolé l'appartement de sa grand-mère devenue riche à la faveur d'un mariage tardif – 18 millions d'actif. Ses parents, ruinés quant à eux – 14 millions de passif –, se sont fait oublier en partant à Palavas-les-Flots. Trois ans plus tard, Louis revient voir les siens dans le Finistère, où ils se sont réinstallés. Dans ses bagages, il tient une « bombe » – le roman de 175 pages qu'il a écrit sur eux :

[...] alors, Louis, il paraît que tu écris des choses sur nous ? [...]

Des choses sur nous.

Et c'était comme une phrase qui ne voulait pas s'effacer, qui naviguait en moi comme une boucle sonore et s'inscrivait partout sur la nappe, sur les

verres, sur la neige carbonique qui blanchissait les vitres, il paraît que tu écris des choses sur nous.

(Viel 145–47)

Ici, la boucle temporelle devient « boucle sonore ». Narrateur assujéti à la voix des autres, Louis est habité par leurs mots ; ils le hantent dans un mouvement de ressac infini et envahissent le monde et le récit. Quand Camille, dans *Sharp Objects*, sculptait ces mots sur sa peau pour tenter de les maîtriser, ils sont déjà inscrits sur le corps de Louis sous la forme de traces corporelles, mémoire des blessures infligées par la mère. Aussi la pulsion de scarification devient-elle pulsion scripturale :

[...] Après tout, ajoutais-je, toutes ces choses sont en partie écrites sur ma joue, sur la marque de sa main sur ma joue, alors je te jure qu'un jour, un jour quand j'aurai quitté Brest, je ferai parler ma joue. Un jour quand j'aurai du recul sur tout ça, lui ai-je dit tout à fait sentencieusement, j'écrirai cette histoire.

(42)

Dans sa position d'écrivain narrateur, Louis détient un pouvoir que les autres protagonistes ne possédaient pas. Par l'écriture, il peut répondre au mouvement spontané du père de la parabole lucanienne qui, devant toute requête, toute confession, accordait son pardon et annulait par là le passé de son fils (Cuvillier 48). Louis, lui, veut écrire cette histoire, faire entendre ce négatif qui habite son « roman familial », l'« ex-corporer » en quelque sorte (Green 282).

Ce 20 décembre non plus je ne l'ai pas trop quittée des yeux, ma valise, dans ce même train retour qui m'amenait là comme un aimant, sans plus de billets rangés par liasses, seulement quelques chaussettes et quelques pull-overs, et dessous pour seule liasse désormais, les cent soixante-quinze pages qui revenaient comme chez elles, au milieu des embruns dans le Finistère Nord.

(Viel 129)

En cette veille de Noël, on assiste à une double métamorphose : les liasses de billets qui ont permis le départ à Paris se sont transformées en manuscrit, lui-même transsubstantiation scripturale de la gifle maternelle. Intimement lié à son corps, il trouve sa juste place parmi les vêtements de Louis, pull-overs et chaussettes. Plus tard, la mise en abyme s'accomplit – « j'ai pensé : c'est comme des poupées russes, maintenant

dans la maison familiale il y a l'histoire de la maison familiale » (53). Régurgitation inquiétante, le manuscrit est désormais logé dans les cavités de ces *babouchkas* de bois rondelettes, versions inoffensives du corps maternel. Pour autant, comme le veut le travail du négatif,⁵ cette part honteuse restera une béance au sein du texte qui nous est donné à lire. La mère brûlera le manuscrit, « version, disons, romanesque des faits » (163) que Louis se contentera d'évoquer et de commenter, une œuvre qui en vient ainsi à trouser le texte de sa puissance spectrale.

Conclusion

Si « le devenir est géographique » (Deleuze 47–48), le revenir est temporel. Le scénario du retour exploite un gisement de temps qui a besoin d'être traversé par un sujet pour être réactivé et s'offrir comme matériau transformable. Avec la remontée du temps propre à ce type de récit, ce temps ouvert à nouveau, actif à nouveau, ne se donnera pas comme celui de la seule répétition, mais il s'ouvrira au rejeu et, avec lui, à la variation. Mais pour découvrir quoi ? Si le gisement est temporel, il est également, on l'a vu, familial ou clanique. C'est ce que nous dit le mythe premier qui fait référence : la parabole du fils prodigue. Personnage mort aux siens, il a dilapidé son héritage – s'est scindé d'avec le nous, l'a expulsé et laissé derrière lui – pour faire jaillir son moi, un moi fondamentalement clivé encore lié au nous, comme le signale son retour et l'aimantation exercée par son lieu d'origine. La parabole évangélique insiste sur la joie du père : il fait taire la rancœur de l'aîné, celui qui est resté.

Dans les fictions contemporaines, les sédentaires expriment pleinement leur acrimonie. Ceux, que l'errant avait abandonnés derrière lui, reviennent à la charge. On assiste à un phénomène qui évoque le travail du négatif. Dans l'affrontement, l'errant doit faire face à ce bout d'eux-mêmes qu'il a incorporé et qu'il régurgite en faisant retour. Après avoir tenté de l'évacuer, il faut le transformer. C'est là qu'intervient le travail d'élaboration artistique qui doit donner forme à ce renvoi. Le clivage du sujet, fruit de la séparation initiale, programme une esthétique de la déliaison et du montage, comme un écho formel à la désynchronisation première. Le temps fait des plis, gondole pour le plus grand plaisir du spectateur ou du lecteur.

⁵ Sur cette notion, je renvoie à André Green et Claire Pagès.

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Genesis vs. Mimesis: The Real, the Virtual, and the Illusion of Representation in Magical Realism

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Abstract: Critics have approached the term magical realism as a mode of reality representation, often conspicuously overlooking its functioning in the reality of the text. This essay sheds light on the role played by the real and the virtual in magical realist fiction by drawing on philosophical discussions of the real and the virtual in Gilles Deleuze's ontology and on David J. Chalmers' original interpretation of reality and virtual reality. Literary analyses discuss the creative, world-forging characters of Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1985), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005). The new worlds created by their characters – virtual realities in their own right, existing on an equal footing with the reality of the texts – acquire the function of meta-narratives, embedded commentaries on the very essence of literature. Allende's female line of characters in the del Valle family, Rosa, Clara, Blanca, and Alba, Morrison's ex-slave Sethe, and Safran Foer's nine-year-old Oskar use the magic of imagination in their molding of new realities – incongruous with “real” reality – not to escape the actual, but rather to make its pain bearable. Confronted with the impossibility of total signification, magical realists imbue the reality of their texts with imaginary objects, characters, and events (supernatural, unnatural, or, in one way or another, out of the ordinary) as if to show that, even if it might not be explained, reality can still be experienced – *textually* – as *re*-presentation or creation (*genesis*) rather than representation (*mimesis*). Fictional simulation, however, does not yield a copy of reality but a simulacrum, an augmented reality, whose sense and coherence exist exclusively on the level of the magical realist text, independently of non-textual reality.

Keywords: magical realism, virtual reality, simulation, Deleuze, Baudrillard, Allende, Morrison, Safran Foer.

“To depict realistically is not to portray or copy but rather to build rigorously, to construct objects that exist in the world in their particular primordial shape.”

(Roh 24)

Almost a century ago, the art critic to whom we owe the term “magical realism,” Franz Roh, provided an invaluable clue for our understanding of the way in which the artistic mode, as a visual medium in his time, and eventually as a textual and cinematic one in ours, operates on a formal level. As it happens, we have much too often approached the oxymoronic term as a mode of reality representation and overlooked its functioning in the reality of the text. On closer analysis, however, copying a consciousness-independent reality and constructing a new, consciousness-dependent one are artistic processes not as disparate as they might seem at a first glimpse if only because “reality” remains the wildcard-concept that underlies, and on occasion complicates various and often divergent analyses of magical realism.

From Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” in the *Republic* (-380 BC) to Jean Baudrillard’s treatise *Simulation and Simulacra* (1981) to Nick Bostrom’s paper “Are You Living in a Computer Simulation” (2001) to Hervé Le Tellier’s novel *The Anomaly* (2020) to David J. Chalmers philosophical study *Reality+: Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosophy* (2022), to name only a few works attempting to shed light on the connection between reality and human consciousness, what speaks for itself is the millennia-long preoccupation of philosophers, writers, and more recently, cognitive neuroscientists with the virtual aspect of our phenomenal experiences and the fundamental question of whether the virtual hampers, distorts or enhances our perception of reality. In what follows, I will narrow down the focus of this comprehensive field of study to *textual* experiences of reality, and more specifically, to the role played by the real and the virtual in magical realist storytelling. The argument will draw on Eva Aldea’s philosophical discussion of the real and the virtual in *Magical Realism and Deleuze* (2011) and on Chalmers’ original interpretation of reality and virtual reality in the study mentioned above.

Literary analyses will focus on the creative, world-forging characters of Isabel Allende’s *The House of the Spirits* (1985), Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), and Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005). The new worlds created by their characters – virtual realities in

their own right, existing on an equal footing with the reality of the texts – acquire the function of meta-narratives, embedded commentaries on the very essence of literature. Allende’s female line of characters in the del Valle family, Rosa, Clara, Blanca, and Alba, Morrison’s ex-slave Sethe, and Safran Foer’s nine-year-old Oskar use the magic of imagination in their molding of new realities – incongruous with “real” reality – not to escape the actual, but rather to make its pain bearable. If anything, the virtual is meant to complete the real while maintaining its differentness rather than denying it, no matter how horrific the “real” background might be.

Somewhat paradoxically, confronted with the impossibility of total signification, magical realists imbue the reality of their texts with imaginary objects, characters, and events (supernatural, unnatural, or, in one way or another, out of the ordinary) as if to show that, even if it might not be explained, reality can still be experienced – *textually* – as *re*-presentation or creation (*genesis*) rather than representation (*mimesis*). As the realist stepchild of the fantastic (which, according to Tzvetan Todorov, survives on the readers’ hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations of the events depicted in the text [33]), the magical realist text disorients readers by – and herein lies the paradox – enhancing their awareness of reality. In an older study, I suggested an understanding of the “magical realist universe not as a flight from reality but as a flight simulator” (Arva 120). Fictional simulation, however, does not yield a copy of reality but a simulacrum – or, to borrow from a three-decade-old computer lingo, an augmented reality – whose sense and coherence exist exclusively on the level of the magical realist text, independently of non-textual reality. “To depict realistically is not to portray or copy but rather to build rigorously, to construct objects that exist in the world in their particular primordial shape,” explains Roh in his preface (24).

The theoretical angle underlying the present argument aligns with those of magical-realist scholars such as William Spindler, Frederick Luis Aldama, and Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, to name only a few. From Spindler’s typology of magical realism, I will single out ontological magical realism, in which, the contradiction between the supernatural and the real world is resolved through a matter-of-fact presentation. Without any explanation of the magic, “the unreal has an objective, ontological presence in the text” (Spindler 82). In ontological magical realism, the matter-of-fact narration cancels the contradiction between the natural and the supernatural. Aldama also approaches magical realism

as functioning exclusively in textual versions of reality, which allow readers to perceive “an everyday reality that is seamlessly both real and unreal” (37–39). To Chanady, the point of view from which characters and events in the text are presented – which she calls “focalizer” – “places a supernatural event on the same level as an ordinary occurrence, and the narrative voice fuses the two levels” (36). In summary, theories that foreground the equal footing on which the real and the virtual rest in the economy of the text seem to best catch the essence of the magical realist phenomenon.

Eva Aldea insists on the need for “a theoretical framework that provides an adequate ontology, one that allows the nature of the text to be considered separately from extra-textual reality, as well as giving the concept of difference a central place” (18), that is, to the simultaneous difference and non-disjunction between the real and the magic. More specifically, her reading of Gilles Deleuze’s ontology, in which “the text and the extra-textual world are seen as separate, autonomous entities, but which still allows for the articulation of their relevance to each other” (19), may prove crucial to an understanding of the magical realist creative act in the *textual* realities of the novels mentioned above. Instead of looking for elements of extra-textual reality in the fictional world, I will choose to pinpoint those pieces of intra-textual reality whose realness and magic are equally acceptable to narrators and characters. “Deleuze’s ontology,” as summarized by Aldea, “rests on the concept of one Being with two distinct yet inextricable sides. The real consists of the actual and the virtual together” (19). Even though the univocity of Being is crucial to making sense of the paradoxical relationship between the real and the magic in magical realism, “the narration, continuing to be realist, also appears to authenticate the magic: magical events are described in the same way as the real events, using the same authenticating detail” (Aldea 21).

It is important to note that the perceived equivalency of the two ontological realms, the real and the magic, is set up by the text regardless of any external referential elements. This means that the authors’, the readers’, or the characters’ perception of the magic as true is in fact irrelevant because “it remains divergent from the worldview, or system, established on the realist level of the text,” and consequently, the narrative is “authenticating something which cannot be authenticated...” (Aldea 34). Thus, bucking the widely accepted notion that the power of magical realism lies in its oxymoronic nature, which blurs the difference between

the real and the magic, Deleuze's ontology, in which the Being – despite its univocity – has two sides, the actual and the virtual, becomes invaluable for reconsidering this double nature of magical realism. “Rather than seeing magical realism as equalizing the real and the magic, [the Deleuzean] model shows us how the genre inserts a radically divergent element into a mode of writing that depends on similarity and coherence,” and that its potential “lies precisely in the fact that the real and the magic always remain different, even when they appear indistinct, and can therefore act as complimentary facets of the text” (Aldea 146).

With these preliminary considerations in mind – the paradoxical differentness and textual equivalence of the real and the magic, on the one hand, and the realist narrative's authentication of the magic, on the other – I will show that magical realism creates the illusion of representation by using the virtual and the actual on equal terms in order to generate a new reality that characters in the novels analyzed here and the implied reader will perceive as strange and familiar at the same time. What makes the task particularly challenging, of course, is the concept of “reality” – whether “real” or “virtual” or “augmented” – which has been revisited and reinterpreted in a number of original ways in the era of television, computer games, and the Internet. Thus, at the center of David Chalmers' most recent work, *Reality+*, lies the concept of “virtual reality” and the thesis that virtual reality is real, “that is, the entities in virtual reality really exist” (107). To consolidate the foundation of his theory by defining the “real,” Chalmers offers five definitions of reality:

- 1) reality as existence: “if something is perceivable as measurable, that's a strong indication that it exists” (110);
- 2) reality as causal power: “to be real is to have causal powers. [...] something exists if and only if it can affect things or be affected by things” (110);
- 3) reality as mind-independence: “that which doesn't depend on anyone's mind for its existence” (111);
- 4) reality as non-illusoriness: “something is real when it's the way it seems; something is illusory when it's not the way it seems” (112);
- 5) reality as genuineness: “instead of asking whether something is real, [English speakers] ask whether it's a real X” (113).

Thus, existence, causal powers, mind-independence, non-illusoriness, and genuineness constitute five different ways in our perception of the real, which leaves unanswered the question, is simulated reality real?

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Jonathan Safran Foer's character Oskar in *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005) might answer it for us. Marred by the trauma of losing his father, Thomas Schell, Jr., in one of the World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001, the nine-year-old Oskar Schell is an unreliable narrator. Since his father's death, Oskar has been experiencing panic attacks and depression. He refers to the numbing feeling of depression as wearing heavy boots. The metaphoric language creates a virtual reality that complements a painfully unbearable real. Randomly, Oskar deals with his mental anguish by giving himself bruises, in desperate attempts to make physical pain override psychic turmoil. The flipbook image of the reversed fall of the unknown man from the top floor of one of the Towers shows Oskar's imagination *willing* his virtual reality to become the real. By compulsively inventing stories and various extraordinary gadgets, Oskar fills a traumatic void in order to give his life, by virtual means, a semblance of stability and security. "The storytelling mind is allergic to uncertainty, randomness, and coincidence," writes Jonathan Gottschall in *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (2013). "It is addicted to meaning. If the storytelling mind cannot find meaningful patterns in the world, it will try to impose them" (103).

An instance of "compulsive" storytelling in the novel is the detailed actualization of Oskar's father's bedtime story of the Sixth Borough, which separated from New York a long time ago and is now to be found in Antarctica, and the description of Central Park being "pulled like a rug across a floor" into Manhattan. The story-within-a-story is probably the best example of a realist narrative authenticating the virtual embedded in its structure. Thomas Schell, Jr., tells his son the story of an imaginary Sixth Borough, which supposedly was "an island, separated from Manhattan by a thin body of water whose narrowest crossing happened to equal the world's long jump record, such that exactly one person on earth could go from Manhattan to the Sixth Borough without getting wet" (217). Establishing the virtual – in this case, the sensational and the unexplainable – as a component of the real by means of realistic details, Oskar's father employs concrete, verifiable, toponymical references:

When the time finally came, the long jumper would begin his approach from the East River. He would run the entire width of Manhattan, as New Yorkers rooted for him on from opposite sides of the street, from the windows of their apartments and offices, and from the branches of trees.

Second Avenue, Third Avenue, Lexington, Park, Madison, Fifth Avenue, Columbus, Amsterdam, Broadway, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth... And when he leapt, New Yorkers cheered the jumper on and cheering each other on. For those few moments that the jumper was in the air, every New Yorker felt capable of flight. (218)

As a harbinger of the impending apocalypse, the upcoming events of September 11, the Sixth Borough starts breaking away from New York, “[t]he eight bridges between Manhattan and the Sixth Borough strained and finally crumbled, one at a time, into the water. The tunnels were pulled too thin to hold anything at all” (219). Oskar interrupts his father several times, attempting to verify the veracity of his sensational story, but Thomas Schell, Jr. ignores his son’s questions, prompting science-thirsty Oskar and the implied, “worldly” reader to settle in and accept the virtual as the “other reality” of the magical realist experience.

The abundance of visual details is intentional; ultimately, this is the virtual posing as the real without identifying itself with it. To salvage Central Park, which used to lie in the middle of the Sixth Borough, “[e]normous hooks were driven through the easternmost grounds, and the park was pulled by the people of New York, like a rug across a floor, from the Sixth Borough into Manhattan” (221). The children of New York lay on their backs in the park and were pulled “into Manhattan and adulthood. By the time the park found its current resting place, every single one of the children had fallen asleep, and the park was a mosaic of their dreams” (221). When Oskar questions the veracity of the story, his father admits that there is “no irrefutable evidence. There’s nothing that could convince someone who doesn’t want to be convinced. But there is an abundance of clues that would give the wanting believer something to hold on to” (221). In order to “see” and accept the magic and the real as one in the reality of the text, one needs to take a leap of faith; that which is not necessarily explainable is still an inherent part of it.

There is now a gigantic hole in the middle of the Sixth Borough where Central Park used to be. “As the island moves across the planet, it acts like a frame, displaying what lies beneath it” (222). Now it is supposedly in Antarctica. What follows is a tableau frozen in time, with sidewalks covered in ice, frozen fountains, and

children frozen at the peak of their swings – the frozen ropes holding them in flight. [...] Flea-market vendors are frozen mid-haggle. Middle-aged women are frozen in the middle of their lives. The gavels of frozen judges

are frozen between guilt and innocence. On the ground are the crystals of the frozen first breaths of babies, and those of the last gasps of the dying. On a frozen shelf, in a closet frozen shut, is a can with a voice in it. (222–23)

The repetition of “frozen,” a natural and explainable physical state, authenticates in fact the unnatural, eerie tableau as an instance of the virtual reality (see Chalmers 107 above). The illusion of representation is shattered. As for the last sentence, it foreshadows what will later be revealed as the answering machine (“a can with a voice in it”) with the messages that Oskar’s father left shortly before the collapse of the tower, and which Oskar had hidden (“in a closet frozen shut”) overcome with shame and guilt for not having had the courage to answer the calls.

The realism of Safran Foer’s text keeps the distinction between the real and the magic alive all along, which results in the readers’ experiencing the uniqueness of the magical realist literary aesthetics. “There cannot be any equivalence between the real and the magic in a text that depends on the two being distinguished by realism,” writes Aldea. “Instead, the structural difference of the magic from the real, or rather, from the organized ‘image’ of the world set up by the realist narration, is central to magical realism” (147). Besides the story of the Sixth Borough, Oskar’s mental inventions confer additional unnaturalness and an extra dose of strangeness to the narrative (Safran Foer 106). The causal power of their reality (see Chalmers 110, above) connects to a potential coping mechanism with trauma, given that the “inventions” pick up pace whenever Oskar feels overwhelmed with the pain of loss (the “heavy boots”). The nine-year-old boy also keeps a diary entitled “Stuff That Happened to Me,” which includes pictures of the Falling Man, cut out from magazine pages, or copied from the Internet, and imaginary accounts that reverse the order of events linked to the “worst day”: the fall from the tower window, the smoke, his father’s messages, and the hijackers’ plane heading back to Boston (Safran Foer 325). They end with the reverse order of his father’s office-home routine all the way back to the bed-story scene (326). The last words in the novel, “We would have been safe,” explain Oskar’s magical thinking, his compulsive actions, and his refusal to accept his father’s death.

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The female characters in Isabel Allende’s 1985 novel *The House of the Spirits* keep the magic alive throughout the narrative through (at times

compulsive) bursts of creativity. Four generations of del Valle women, Nívea, Clara, Blanca, and Alba – all their names signifying whiteness, will struggle with finding, preserving, and asserting their identities in an oppressive patriarchal society, represented by the fiercely narcissistic and brutish character of Esteban Trueba, by either social activism or some form of artistic creativity, such as writing, clay modeling, embroidering, and painting. The magic is set up by the text through supernatural, unnatural, or outlandish events and creatures, such as Barrabás, the strange cross between a dog and a mare, with a huge appetite for both food and sex.

“Barrabás came to us by sea” are the opening words in the novel, quoted, in fact, from the notebook of the “child Clara [who] wrote [them] in her delicate calligraphy. She was already in the habit of writing down important matters, and afterward, when she was mute, she also recorded trivialities, never suspecting that fifty years later I would use her notebooks to reclaim the past and overcome terrors of my own” (Allende 11). The narrative voice and point of view, anonymous at this point, belong to Alba, Clara’s granddaughter and the last of the del Valle women. The same words will end the book, framing the narrative in a textual time capsule.

Barrabás is not the only out-of-this-world creature in the novel. The description of del Valle’s eldest daughter, Rosa, evokes the image of both an angel and a mermaid: “... rumor quickly spread that Nívea had borne an angel. [...] There was something of the fish to her [Rosa] (if she had had a scaly tail, she would have been a mermaid), but her two legs placed her squarely on the tenuous line between a human being and a creature of myth” (Allende 15). Rosa’s character transcends the ordinary not only thanks to her exceptional beauty, but also through her creative skills: “... she was dreaming of new beasts to embroider on her tablecloth, creatures that were half bird and half mammal, covered with iridescent feathers and endowed with horns and hooves, and so fat and with such stubby wings that they defied the laws of biology and aerodynamics” (Allende 15). The narrator’s use of scientific terminology, “the laws of biology and aerodynamics,” is meant to prove her familiarity with empirical reality and her casualness towards the interference of magical elements. The beasts in Rosa’s embroideries gradually evolve from simple representations, faithful copies of reality to imaginary creatures, inhabitants of a virtual world that only Rosa can see. Their only correspondent in empirical reality is Barrabás, whom people expected to

“sprout wings and horns and acquire the sulfuric breath of a dragon, like the beasts Rosa was embroidering on her endless tablecloth” (Allende 33). Confirming her sister Clara’s prophecy, Rosa will die from drinking lemonade with poisoned brandy, meant in fact for her father, Severo, in an act of political assassination (39). After she witnesses the doctor’s assistant kissing Rosa’s dead body during autopsy, Clara stops talking for the next nine years (54).

When Clara’s childhood comes to an end, she “enter[s] her youth within the walls of her house in a world of terrifying stories and calm silences” (101). The description of Clara’s world may be read as a metatextual reflection on the very essence of magical realism:

It was a world in which time was not marked by calendars or watches and objects had a life of their own, in which apparitions sat at the table and conversed with human beings, the past and the future formed part of a single unit, and the reality of the present was a kaleidoscope of jumbled mirrors where everything and anything could happen. It is a delight for me to read her notebooks from those years, which describe a magic world that no longer exists. Clara lived in a universe of her own invention, protected from life’s inclement weather, where the prosaic truth of material objects mingled with the tumultuous reality of dreams and the laws of physics. (102–103)

The “magic world” invented by Clara in her notebooks and the magic created by Isabel Allende in the book that readers are holding in their hands are two different instances of virtual reality addressing the same audience. The virtual universe is not related to the real in any way; its differentness complements it. We also learn that Clara and her daughter Blanca’s correspondence “salvaged events from the mists of improbable facts” (283), meaning that the virtual world created by the act of writing has its own logic and *raison d’être* that do not cancel but complement the real. “[As a non-referential and nonsensical unit in the text] the magic can take on any meaning, or rather, it creates its own sense within the system of the text,” remarks Aldea (34).

The inventions that were Rosa’s tablecloth embroideries and Blanca’s baked crèche figures will be followed by Alba’s bedroom frescoes, also featuring invented animals, “much like those Rosa had embroidered on her tablecloth and Blanca baked in her kiln. [Alba] painted all the wishes, memories, sorrows, and joys of her childhood” (310). There is also mention of a “starving artist” who paid for his stay at the house by

painting a portrait of Clara. The picture does not represent the reality of the house where it was painted, but that of the painter:

The picture captures precisely the reality the painter witnessed in Clara's house. [...] Clara's communication with wandering souls and extraterrestrials was conducted through telepathy, dreams, and the pendulum she used for that purpose, dangling in the air above an alphabet she had arranged in proper order on the table. The pendulum's autonomous movement pointed to the letters, forming messages in Spanish and Esperanto, which proved that these, and not English, were the only languages of interest to beings from other dimensions. (306–307)

In this particular instance, while genuine, reality (the aforementioned wildcard of theories exploring the real and the virtual) is anything but mind-independent; it is built up with all of its constitutive details in the mind of the artist. By authenticating its events, “[the magical realist text] continues to produce the illusion of representation...” writes Aldea (35) while underscoring that the dominant realist narrative in magical realism only pretends to represent non-textual reality (fake mimesis); instead, it reshuffles the real and creates (genesis) a new, virtual reality.

The creative power of the mind is again foregrounded in the episode where Colonel Esteban García, a former tenant farmer of Esteban Trueba's (Alba's grandfather) whose lustful advances, spurred by a deep hatred toward the landowners' class, were previously rejected by Alba, has her thrown into the doghouse, a sealed cell like an airless tomb (Allende 468–69). While Alba's first reaction is to let go and die, she remembers her grandmother Clara's advice that the point is to survive, not to die (469). Clara gave Alba the idea of “writing in her mind, without paper or pencil, to keep her thoughts occupied and to escape from the doghouse and live,” in fact, to bear witness to the atrocities she is being put through. “... [A]s soon as she began to take notes with her mind, the doghouse filled with all the characters of her story...” (Allende 470). At the end of the novel, Alba acknowledges her story's indebtedness to her grandmother Clara's notebooks mentioned in the opening lines. “At times I feel as if I had lived all this before and that I have already written these very words,” muses Alba, “but I know it was not I: it was another woman, who kept her notebooks so that one day I could use them” (490). Alba ponders Clara's words as they make her reevaluate the importance of memory, and question the viability of believing in accounts of the past, the present, and the future:

I write, she wrote, that memory is fragile and the space of a single life is brief, passing so quickly that we never get a chance to see the relationship between events; we cannot gauge the consequences of our acts, and we believe in the fiction of past, present, and future, but it may also be true that everything happens simultaneously.... (490)

The concept of the simultaneity or nonlinearity of time is reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges's 1941 story "The Garden of Forking Paths," in which the plot of a murder is presented as a preordained event. Similarly, Alba's – and implicitly Allende's – narrative has a circular structure: Clara's copybook "begins like this: *Barrabás came to us by sea...*" (491). Textual circularity frames the entire novel as a closed, virtual time-space recorded by one of its main characters. Intertextuality also seems to be at play if one takes into consideration what Gabriel García Márquez's narrator calls "hereditary memory" (154) in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). In such a context, Clara's copybook encapsulates the history of the del Valles similarly to the wandering gypsy Melquíades's parchments that have recorded the history of the Buendías; the former is "quoted" by Alba, Clara's granddaughter, and the latter is read by Aureliano, the last of the Buendías, before the end of the novel. Their history was written "one hundred years before it happened" (García Márquez 255) not as a result of some mystical prescience but as an act of genesis – the creation of a virtual textual reality.

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The shared ontological ground of the real and the magic finds a dark, eerie expression in Toni Morrison's 1988 novel *Beloved*. Sethe's, a former slave's daughter reincarnates and comes back to haunt her mother and siblings. Sethe picked her name, Beloved, after seeing it on a headstone and falling in love with it. She cut Beloved's throat when she was still a two-year-old infant in order to spare her a life of infinite pain and heartbreak as a slave. In fact, Sethe tried to kill all her children because she loved them, and only tried "to outhurt the hurter" (Morrison 234).

In the beginning of the novel, Beloved's spirit comes to torment Sethe's entire household including Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law, her two younger brothers, who eventually run away, and her sister, Denver. Consumed with guilt, Sethe puts up stoically with the baby girl's angry tantrums, and devotes her entire time and money to her. The ghost's presence, however, gradually drains Sethe of all her strength,

making her life miserable until, in the middle of a climactic scene, Beloved disappears.

The dead child's presence throughout a realist narrative full of graphic details portraying the physical violence and mental anguish that slaves were subjected to, creates what Chalmers calls a virtual world, or virtual realism. In the overall economy of the text, Beloved's virtual reality is genuine reality because none of the characters doubts whether she is a real presence at any point of the narrative – in accordance with Chalmers' fifth definition of reality (113). A dream world may also be a sort of virtual world, and in order to underscore its fickleness, Chalmers recounts the parable of the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi's butterfly dream (300 BC):

Zhuangzi once dreamed he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuangzi. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakably Zhuangzi. But he didn't know if he was Zhuangzi who had dreamed he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi. (4)

Borges's story "The Circular Ruins" (1941), in which a wizard who dreams up a complete human being ultimately realizes that he is also someone else's dream, would be the modern example closest to Zhuangzi's parable. The similarity between Zhuangzi's dream and Beloved's virtual reality, however, is limited. Unlike Zhuangzi's butterfly, the murdered child's ghost is a flesh-and-blood presence that interacts with Sethe and her family in a physical way. Her realness is not contested in the reality of the text because what feeds her presence is her mother's guilt, which and the action that caused it are genuinely real.

The novel abounds with supernatural occurrences, which the characters – even though tormented by them – take into stride, without questioning their improbable nature. For example, the sideboard "took a step forward but nothing else did" (Morrison 4); the dead girl's spirit "picked up Here Boy [the dog] and slammed him into the wall hard enough to break two of his legs and dislocate his eye, so hard he went into convulsions and chewed up his tongue" (12); "the floorboards were [shaking] and the grinding, shoving floor was only part of it, the house itself was pitching" (18). Real, tangible objects are made to behave in strange ways by the enraged spirit of a murdered two-year-old girl. When finally "a fully dressed woman walked out of the water" (50), the daughter, whom Sethe killed in a desperate act of protection, reincarnates

and starts interacting with the other characters. Instead of fazing readers, the narrator's casual remarks on unnatural phenomena and events such as "the miraculous resurrection of Beloved" (105), keep the audience aware of the difference and, at the same time, non-disjunction between the real and the magic (see Aldea 18, above).

The repetition of "disremembered and nameless," "disremembered and unaccounted for" or "It was not a story to pass on" in the last pages of the novel (274–75) suggest the importance of framing a traumatic history by storytelling, which, however, may sometimes prove futile because of the magnitude of the human experience and the depth of the inflicted pain. Morrison has indicated that she wants her writing to speak the "unspeakable," and "many critics have interpreted the character of Beloved as this unspeakable, thus reading the magic of the novel as a way of articulating horrors that have been repressed" (Aldea 67). Imagination, and especially what in an older study I called "the traumatic imagination," is a cognitive process by which consciousness "translates an unspeakable state – pain – into a readable image [...]. The traumatic imagination uses the sublimative power of language in order to turn that which resists representation into a new, tangible reality. [...] Between pain and imagination [...] can be mapped the whole fictional strategy of the magical realist writing mode..." (Arva 93). In *Beloved*, storytelling and story diverge because the former is imbued with magical elements (unnatural or supernatural events or phenomena), whereas the latter is steeped in a traumatic historic reality. "The signs of involuntary memory introduce a break in the text by showing up the difference between the narration and the narrated, shattering the illusion of representation" (Aldea 68). The narrator deliberately substitutes (non-textual) reality representation, *mimesis*, with a new (textual) reality (*genesis*) by the creative power of imagination. "To Deleuze, the unique power of art lies not in its representing the world, but creating a world anew, and by doing so revealing the very conditions of any world. This unique power can be found in the magic of magical realism" (Aldea 146). As laid out in a previous study (*The Traumatic Imagination*, 2011), the concept of reality reproduction at the core of nineteenth-century realism has become incompatible with the magical realist writing mode, which relies on constant *re*-presentations or reworkings of reality that paradoxically undermine its own realist foundation. The *mimesis-genesis* disjunction occurs exclusively on the level of the text – implicitly, in both the writing and the reading experience: the virtual X in the text is not

a simple look-alike of a real Y, but the artistic construct of an infinite strings of X-Y-Z's.

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Notably, the turn-of-the-century English philosopher R. G. Collingwood remarked that “[a] society which thinks ... that it has outlived the need of magic, is either mistaken in that opinion, or else it is a dying society, perishing for lack of interest in its own maintenance” (qtd. in Irwin 3). So, is simulated reality real? Are we, indeed, losing interest in our own maintenance or rather reinventing ourselves through simulated versions of reality? The textual inventions of Allende’s del Valle women, Morrison’s former slaves, and Safran Foer’s traumatized nine-year-old prodigy seem to offer an answer in the affirmative. Accepting the thesis that virtual reality is genuine reality, Chalmers contends that “virtual objects are real and not an illusion” (107). Illusion, however, might not stand in such a stark contradiction to virtuality after all, but quite on the contrary. As Baudrillard warns in one of his later works, *The Vital Illusion* (2000), “we must grant both the poetic singularity of events and the radical uncertainty of events” (68). In his opinion, not questioning reality is what may ultimately lead to its demise, as made evident in this sweeping conclusion: “Illusion is the general rule of the universe; reality is but an exception. If the same were identical to the same, we would be faced with an absolute reality, with the unconditional truth of things. But absolute truth is the other name for death” (*The Vital Illusion* 72). The same is not identical to the same, of course, and there is indeed no absolute reality, as also revealed in the aforementioned ontology of Gilles Deleuze, according to which, “the real consists of the actual and the virtual together” (Aldea 19).

Stories have continually brought meaning into our lives, imparted knowledge on generation after generation, and entertained us since the dawn of history, or, specifically, since we started encoding, recreating, and storing reality in words. “Our hunger for meaningful patterns translates into a hunger for story,” writes Gottschall in *The Storytelling Animal* (104). There is an argument to be made, however, particularly in favor of the magical realist writing mode, that, given the chaos and lack of meaning surrounding us (the extra-textual world), storytelling does not seek so much to represent the tangible, verifiable part of our reality as it does to create a new, virtual reality. While mutually exclusive, the real

and the virtual are two sides of one Being, as demonstrated in Deleuzean ontology, and as such they determine the *modus operandi* of magical realism. The lines of demarcation are as sharp as they can be, so that the magical realist storytelling act generates a reality real enough for readers to both believe in and learn life-saving coping skills from.

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Mobility, Exchange and Ecology in Pacific Theatre

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Abstract: How and why are the Pacific Islands depicted in the theatre of Aotearoa/New Zealand? In his famous essay “A Sea of Islands,” Epeli Hau’ofa critiques the colonial perception of the Pacific islands as small, remote and insignificant compared with the largeness of the Western/colonial world. Hau’ofa demonstrates that, in the past and the present, Pacific islanders create and participate in a large exchange community and that this “sea of islands” is distinguished not by isolation, but by mobility. This essay examines ways these mobilities have been represented in the theatre, with particular attention to case studies from three different Pacific cultures: Niue, American Samoa and the Solomon Islands. *My Name is Pilitome* (2014) by Vela Manusaute depicts the efforts a young New Zealand-born Niuean man makes in order to adjust to life in Niue. *Girl on a Corner* (2015) by Victor Rodger is inspired by the true story of an American-Samoan transgender sex worker Shalimar Seiuli who was arrested and charged with prostitution in Los Angeles, after having been caught in the company of movie star Eddie Murphy. *Marama* (2016), produced by leading Pacific Theatre Company The Conch and directed by Nina Nawalowalo, examines deforestation in the Solomon Islands from the perspective of Pacific women. These works differ radically in form and themes, yet each play empowers Indigenous performers to represent the Pacific as a place of strength and diversity. From the transcultural comedy of *My Name is Pilitome*, to the transgender tragedy of *Girl on a Corner*, to the eco-theatre of *Marama*, the view from the Pacific is critical, self-reflexive and ironic. Pacific theatre has contributed to an ongoing decolonisation process in the Pacific where creative works function alongside political and social movements to shake up inherited ideas and colonial mind-sets in their audiences.

Keywords: Pacific Island theatre, New Zealand, Pacific diaspora, eco-theatre, de-colonisation

There are more than 25,000 islands in the Pacific Ocean, which occupies over one-third of the earth's surface. Teresia Teaiwa highlights the "immense diversity within the Pacific Islands region ... demonstrated by its more than twelve hundred languages, more than seven million people (excluding the populations of Australia, Timor Leste, Hawai'i, New Zealand and West Papua) and fourteen independent or self-governing nations" (13). As historian Greg Denning once observed, the Pacific is "a hard place to identify with – so much ocean, too many islands. Who can claim authenticity for their history in their connection to something so amorphous and so divided?" (134)

How and why are the Pacific Islands depicted in the theatre of Aotearoa/New Zealand? In his book *Island Time*, Damon Salesa argues that New Zealand has found it hard to consider itself as a Pacific nation, even as demographic statistics indicate that "with more than one in four babies born in Auckland being Pacific, New Zealand is becoming 'more Pacific'" (27). Salesa argues that "Pacific people and communities are already great sources of innovation, and there is potential for even greater innovation in the future" (32). This cutting edge quality is exemplified in theatre by playwrights, performers and directors whose cultural roots lie in the islands to the north of New Zealand within the vast expanse of Te-Moana-nui-a-Kiwa – the Pacific Ocean. Pacific theatre has significantly contributed to performing arts and literature in Oceania over the past four decades. The three theatrical case histories discussed in this essay highlight the power structures in the Pacific region, and foreground issues of mobility, exchange and ecology among Pacific cultures.

In the 1990s Pacific theatre moved from the fringe to the centre of theatre culture in New Zealand due to the rapid rise of high-profile playwrights like Oscar Kightley (who was born in Western Samoa), the programming of Pacific plays in major arts festivals, critical acclaim and awards for plays like *Think of a Garden* by Samoan writer John Kneubuhl. As a popular public artform, Pacific theatre has been central to bringing new perspectives from the Pacific Islands.¹

A staple feature of Pacific theatre is the first encounter with New Zealand of a new migrant from the Pacific Islands. From the first full-length Samoan play, Samson Samasoni and Stephen Sinclair's *Le Matau* (1984), to Tongan Lolo Fonua's *Sai ē Reunion* (2013), the sound

¹ For a history of the first 30 years of Pacific theatre, see Warrington and O'Donnell.

effects of planes and the arrival of “fresh” young islanders project images of the Pacific diaspora and suggest the process of adjustment to what Courtney Sina Meredith described as “Urbanesia” (Meredith). Diana Looser suggests that “[a]s an elastic cartography that takes the modern city as its common ground, Urbanesia emphasizes Pacific identities shaped by expansive, mobile cultural fields and counters the artificially imposed and colonially restrictive geocultural categories of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia” (216). The industrialised metropolitan maze of South Auckland (home to many Pacific migrants to New Zealand) is a geographical and cultural opposite to the rural, subsistence lifestyle on many Pacific islands. Oscar Kightley’s first major play (co-written with Simon Small) *Fresh off the Boat* (1993) mines the comic potential of taking the mickey out of the FOB (the “fresh off the boat” new arrival). The airport greetings from relatives highlight the vast cultural gap between the FOB and their streetwise city cousins, while the largeness of the New Zealand city contrasts with the smallness of the home island for comic effect.

It is relatively unusual, however, for Pacific theatre staged in New Zealand to be set in the Pacific Islands themselves. In this comparative essay, I focus on three plays created in New Zealand, but not set in New Zealand. These plays are set in three different Pacific Islands – Niue, American Samoa and the Solomon Islands – and privilege islanders’ views of the world. Vela Manusaute’s *My Name is Pilitome* (2014) unsettles the new migrant template, as the play focuses on a New Zealand-born Niuean’s fraught attempts to adapt to life in Niue. Victor Rodger’s *Girl on a Corner* (2015) blends fact and fiction in its retelling of the true story of Samoan fa’afafine Shalimar Seiuli, who was arrested in Los Angeles and charged with prostitution after being caught in a car with movie star Eddie Murphy. The Conch’s *Marama* (2016) concentrates on the logging of native forests in the Solomon Islands. Each of these plays uses Pacific languages as a dramatic strategy to contrast with the dominance of English in the anglophone Pacific, and to empower and celebrate the specificity and uniqueness of each culture represented.

In looking at the theatrical representation of three Pacific island cultures, I am inspired by Epeli Hau’ofa’s famous essay “A Sea of Islands.” Hau’ofa critiques the colonial perception of the Pacific islands as small, isolated and insignificant compared with the largeness of the Western/colonial world. He contests what he calls the “Belittlement” of Oceania (“Our Sea of Islands” 149) and argues “there is a world of

difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea' and as a 'sea of islands' (152). Hau'ofa contests this Eurocentric view of Pacific islands as small by stressing traditional cultural connections, the central role of the ocean in trade, navigation and daily life of Pacific Islanders and the sheer expanse and diversity of the region. He demonstrates that islanders formed a large exchange community and that this sea of islands is distinguished not by isolation, but by mobility. The theatre productions discussed in this essay are artistic expressions of many of Hau'ofa's theories, particularly in juxtaposing the sense of large and small and the power structures that this opposition implies.

Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues for a "tidalectic methodology of reading island literatures [bringing] together the rooted discourse of terrestrial belonging with the fluidity of transoceanic migration, foregrounding the process of diaspora and highlighting the complex relationship between national and regional identities" (96). The plays discussed here illustrate the tensions and relationships between the island "roots" of Pacific cultures and the "routes" Pacific peoples travel across the ocean, highlighting tensions between Indigenous and diasporic identities.

In discussing plays by Indigenous Pacific writers I acknowledge my position and limitations as a *Pākehā/Palagi* (European settler-descendant) academic and theatre practitioner. I was born in Nelson, New Zealand and my parents were descended from migrants from England, Ireland and Germany. I trained as an actor at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School and have degrees in drama from Victoria and Otago universities. As a writer, director and teacher I have had a deep investment in the production and study of New Zealand theatre for the last 40 years, but have limited knowledge of the cultures represented in the plays I discuss in this essay. My long-standing interest in Pacific theatre stems from my interest in theatre that engages strongly with the wider community, with political theatre, and theatre at the cutting edge of contemporary practice. Pacific theatre has clearly pushed the boundaries and introduced significant new themes and performance styles into New Zealand theatre. Furthermore, Pacific theatre has contributed to an ongoing decolonisation process in the Pacific where creative works function alongside political and social movements to counter the negative impact of colonialism and globalisation. Here I follow the proposition by Māori scholar Ocean Ripeka Mercier (Ngāti Porou) that "decolonising does not mean the removal or withdrawal of colonial occupiers so much as a fundamental shift in the ideas, knowledges and value sets that underpin

the systems which shape our country” (51). Can a theatre work make a productive contribution to shifting ideas and inherited colonial mind-sets in its audiences?

In comparing these plays, within the limitations of my *Palagi*-settler perspective, I have attempted to avoid what Chadwick Allen refers to as “a frustrating history of settler-driven, colonial comparisons” between creative texts (xiii). I have been motivated by Allen’s concept of trans-Indigenous literary studies. They reflect what Allen refers to as “the productive interpretation of a continually expanding body of contemporary literatures that place Indigenous histories and politics, cultures and worldviews, and multiple realities at their vital center” (xvi). I also acknowledge Diana Looser’s use of the term “transpasifika,” an approach that acknowledges an Indigenous view through use of an Indigenous word for the Pacific, as well as emphasizing the common concerns and mobilities of Pacific Islanders. Pasifika is an Indigenous collective term for people from what Teresia Teaiwa calls, “the island Pacific” (70). These plays reflect Looser’s contention that “transpasifika” performance “embeds movement in its content, form, production, and circulation [and] centers the concerns, perspectives, knowledge structures, and aesthetics of Pacific Islanders” (32).

The View from Niue: *My Name is Pilitome*

Vela Manusaute’s play *My Name is Pilitome* presents a view of the Pacific diaspora from the perspective of a small Pacific island. Niue is a self-governing island nation of 260 km² with a population of approximately 1,600, but more than 30,000 people of Niuean descent live in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand). Manusaute was born in Niue to a Niuean mother and Samoan father, migrating to New Zealand in 1979 (Warrington and O’Donnell 168). He became the first Niuean to graduate from Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School as an actor, and has built a prolific career as an actor, playwright, comedian, director, producer and filmmaker, but *My Name is Pilitome* was the first play he set in Niue. It premiered in Auckland in 2014, was performed in Niue in 2015 in the Niue Arts and Cultural Festival and published in 2017. Manusaute is well-known for using humour to explore serious issues such as racism and inter-Pacific tensions in plays like *The Taro King* (2002) and *Once Were Samoans* (2006), and uses a similar strategy in *My Name is Pilitome* to consider the impact of migration from Niue since

the 1970s. I have based my analysis on the published play script and on viewing extracts from the production online (*My Name Is Pilitome*).

My Name is Pilitome reverses the premise of those Pacific plays like *Fresh off the Boat* where the humour is at the expense of the naïve Islander newly arrived in New Zealand. Rather, the play makes fun of a diasporic Niuean-New Zealander who has never visited the island where his culture originates from. Filimoana (Fili), the protagonist of *My Name is Pilitome* is a New Zealand-born Niuean visiting the island nation for the first time. His parents migrated to New Zealand in 1976 and he firmly identifies with his Urbanesian “hood” in Mangere, South Auckland. On arrival in Niue, he is relentlessly teased by a chorus of mischievous Niueans led by his Auntie Leta, a bearded man described in the text as “*a drama queen in a red hibiscus dress that goes with her afro wig*” (5).² In the video of the production filmed at the Niue Arts Festival, the arrival scene is punctuated by the roars of laughter from the audience as they enjoy the conflict between the urban diasporic youth and his island relations. Dressed in black jeans, t-shirt and a baseball cap and making Americanised “wannabe gangster” movements, Fili’s westernised clothing makes a strong contrast with Auntie Leta’s bright dress and the colourful lavalavas³ of the chorus. Fili initially has a condescending attitude towards the Indigenous chorus. He complains about the heat, demands something to drink, and asks if they speak English (6). In some ways, Fili’s arrival echoes early European experiences in Niue. When Captain James Cook arrived in Niue in June 1774, he encountered fierce opposition from the inhabitants. As a result, Cook named Niue “Savage Island,” a name which persisted into the twentieth century (Cook, qtd. in Smith 82). Niuean historian Margaret Pointer explains that this name was “enough to instill fear into many a whaler’s heart” and cites a Nantucket whaling master as saying “that at Savage Island ‘the natives are warlike; great caution is necessary in landing’” (Pointer 39). Fili does not display the same degree of caution as those nineteenth-century whalers when he lines his island cousins up for a photo with his cellphone and says “What a wonderful time I’m having with the natives” (9). They respond curtly, “We are not natives mate, we are Niueans” (9).

² Auntie Leta represents the fiafiine, Niuean biological males who identify as women. See Schmidt.

³ A lavalava is a piece of cloth worn as a wrap-around skirt.

Language becomes an issue right from the outset. Fili can clearly only speak English, whereas Aunty Leta and the chorus code-switch between English and Niuean language throughout. Through the raucous comic routines, the scene effectively underlines Fili's unease at being welcomed into his own culture:

- FILI:** My name is Fili G, old lady!
- AUNTY:** Your full name is Filimoana Pineneloa Sagapine Hakemai e Maama Maka Fitu.
- FILI:** OMG! Please don't tell me I have one of those freshie names!
- AUNTY:** You were named after the great missionary Peniamina who brought the gospel to the island of Niue. (7)

Aunty Leta persistently questions Fili's westernised assumptions and prejudices, challenging him to acknowledge his Niuean identity and genealogy. The comedy in the play results from this urbanite's struggles with the heat and mosquitos and his inability to cope with island customs such as eating bats and killing pigs.

Constitutionally Niue has a close relationship to New Zealand. The island was annexed by New Zealand in 1901 and although gaining self-government in 1974 it continues to be governed in association with New Zealand, retaining the Queen of England as head of state and the New Zealand dollar as its currency. Niueans are New Zealand citizens and this immediate relationship is referred to in the play when a Tongan character is accused of using his residency in Niue to gain a passport to New Zealand (16). Despite these close links, Filimoana – who would be identified as Niuean in New Zealand – feels like an alien in Niue. This sense of the diasporic islander being an outsider in his own culture is dramatically reinforced in a dream sequence in which Filimoana experiences a nightmare scenario recalling Captain Cook's arrival in 1774 and the legacy of "Savage Island" (35). This sequence features disco-style flashing lights and Napoleon Manetoa's Niuean language song "Poi Poi Poi," which tells the story of why Captain Cook was not able to land on Niue because of the hostile reception (Manetoa). In Fili's nightmare, his ancestors chase and catch him, finally offering him as a sacrifice:

Aunty Leta enters, waving a meat cleaver towards Fili He tries to escape but the savages hold him down as Aunty Leta walks towards him with the cleaver. The savages pull his pants down to his undies. Just as the cleaver falls between his legs, the lights go out. (35)

In this castration nightmare, Manusaute provocatively and ironically uses the word “savage” to describe Fili’s perception of his Indigenous relatives. Captain Cook is regarded with deep antipathy among Pacific peoples because his voyages opened the floodgates of colonial oppression in the Pacific. Filimoana’s nightmare parallels his experience as a migrant distanced from his home culture with Cook’s Eurocentric assumption of cultural superiority. Like many Pacific playwrights, Manusaute has a deep engagement with history and its impact on present perceptions. As an expression of Fili’s sub-conscious mind, the nightmare aligns him with colonial and western mind-sets, in opposition to his “savage” heritage. When he wakes, he finds Aunty Leta and his cousins laughing at him because he’s wet the mattress (36). This humiliation is exacerbated when his cousins taunt him for not being circumcised and give him the nickname “pilitome” (foreskin) (36). Up to this point, the play highlights Fili as being completely different to his Indigenous relatives, spiritually, culturally, emotionally and even physically.

Filimoana’s relatives attempt to persuade him to migrate back to Niue but he repeatedly insists that “I’m just here for a holiday” (19). Thus, Manusaute exploits the tension between two senses of “home” – the ancestral home and the diasporic home. This tension contrasts with Hau’ofa’s view of a collective, Pan-Pacific identity, that “the sea as home can also be real” (Hau’ofa “A Beginning” 136). This is expressed most strongly in the scenes between Filimoana and a ghost character who represents the spirit of Peniamina, Filimoana’s great-great-grandfather. While Filimoana insists that his home is in Mangere (Auckland), Grandfather pleads with him to return to the island home:

This is your land ... this is our home... I bless you my son, with all the knowledge of this land. May you use it to bring our people back home. For here is where we need them, here is where they will learn the ways of the old and embrace the knowledge of our people. (47–48)

Through his conversations with Grandfather, Fili begins to assert himself and grow his mana. Fili decides to clean and re-build the derelict family home (48). When Grandfather refers to Fili’s uncircumcised state and urges him to get his foreskin cut off, Fili responds, “But it’s not our ways. It was brought to us by the missionary to get cut” (49). By pointing out to his ancestor that the practice of circumcision was introduced by Christian missionaries, Fili demonstrates that he does have a knowledge of history, that his island relatives must acknowledge the degree to which

they have been colonised as well. Grandfather wryly recognises this as he wittily combines Fili's given name and his nickname, dubbing him "Fili-tome" (49). Thus, Manusaute draws out some of the complexities of history and cultural identity, showing that culture is not a one-way street. By connecting with his ancestors through this symbolic character (Grandfather), Filimoana recognises his Indigenous relationship with Niue in a moving poem:

Everything, from my roots to my soul, is Niuean, from this earth that I stand on, the ground that I walk on, every step towards the future guided by the hula of my family ... I am home. (50)

Although the play ends with him returning to New Zealand, Filimoana finally reconciles his diasporic status with his Pacific Island heritage. From the farcical cultural conflict of the opening scene to the poetic tone of the climax, Filimoana's journey in the play symbolically enacts a movement from Niuean culture ruptured by colonialism, diaspora and economic disparity towards a more unified stance. Hau'ofa argues that such divides between Pacific islanders must be resolved for the collective benefit, proposing a "real regionalism," a united identity for Pacific peoples: "the onus is on us to commit ourselves not to particular states or places, but to all our peoples as members of the community of Oceania" (Hau'ofa "A Beginning" 138). Filimoana can thus "belong" both in Niuean culture and in the diasporic Pasifika culture of New Zealand and the wider Pacific.

A significant portion of dialogue in *My Name is Pilitome* is in the Niuean language, demonstrating the value of live theatre as a channel for the visibility and rejuvenation of Pacific languages. Reviewer Sharu Delilkan praised the "clever" interspersing of languages, which allowed "access to all," apart from one scene in Niuean between Aunty Leta and a Minister. Delilkan commented that the scene left her feeling like "an outsider due to its protracted nature, without any translation at all" and that she felt left out because "the Niuean audiences [were] in stitches around me" (Delilkan). I suggest that this "lost in translation" moment for the reviewer, along with an awareness of being an outsider, is entirely appropriate for the complex themes of the play, where English-speaking audiences can be put in the place of the displacement felt by a New Zealander of Niuean heritage in the culture that he genetically "belongs" to. Creative New Zealand's 2018 Pacific Arts Strategy emphasizes that "Pacific arts practice can be a key driver for the revitalisation and

inter-generation transmission of Pasifika culture through languages” (Creative New Zealand 17). Manusaute’s bi-lingual play gives the Niuean language equal status with English, highlighting the role that language plays in defining and refining cultural identity. He gives a voice both to those who have stayed in Niue, and those who have left, bringing them together with a sense of reconciliation, reinforcing Niuean cultural values through the language, chants and songs of Niue that pepper the narrative.

In *My Name is Pilitome*, Vela Manusaute economically and entertainingly dramatizes the complex relationships between expatriate Pacific Islanders and their homelands, emphasizing the cost of mass migration on the social systems and infrastructure of islands like Niue, along with the possibilities for reconciliation and unity. He uses humour very effectively to reverse the usual juxtaposition of “large” Western nation (New Zealand) with “small” island (Niue), deliberately marginalizing and “othering” New Zealand and placing Niue at the centre.

The View from American Samoa: *Girl on a Corner*

My Name is Pilitome re-orientates the audience to a view *from* an island, from Niue towards New Zealand. In Victor Rodger’s *Girl on a Corner*, the view is across the Pacific in a different direction, from American Samoa towards the United States of America, specifically Los Angeles and Hollywood. Rodger draws parallels between the power imbalances in gender and in the Pacific region by focussing on the true story of fa’afafine Shalimar Seiuli, who was born a boy (Saoaumaga Atisone Kenneth Seiuli) in American Samoa but lived as a girl. My discussion of this play is based on a script kindly supplied by the author, and my experience of attending a rehearsed reading directed by the author at Te Hau Kāinga Indigenous arts centre in Wellington on 18 March 2017. Even without lighting and with the actors in street clothes and scripts in hand, the performances were dynamic and the fluidity of the storytelling was compelling.

Victor Rodger, self-described as a Samoan-Scottish playwright, has become one of the most acclaimed and awarded Pacific writers and one of New Zealand’s leading playwrights on LGBTQIA+ issues. His 2013 play *Black Faggot* – his most commercially successful play – explores variations on queer identity within Samoan culture through irreverent

and sexually explicit comedy and the poignant coming-out story of a young Samoan man.

The fa'afafine is the Samoan equivalent of the Niuean fiafifine, a biological male who identifies as female and lives as a woman. Pamela Stephenson Connolly observes that “the level of acceptance for biologically male, gender-liminal people in Samoa is exemplary compared to that in most western countries” (208). Transgender or drag characters are common in Pacific theatre, like Aunty Leta in *My Name is Pilitome*, contributing entertaining and often subversive camp humour. The first in-depth theatrical exploration of fa'afafine identity was in *A Frigate Bird Sings* written by Oscar Kightley, David Fane and Nathaniel Lees, and produced by the 1996 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts. *Frigate Bird* has become a classic of New Zealand theatre with its sensitive portrayal of Vili, a fa'afafine who struggles for acceptance within her own Samoan family as well as within mainstream New Zealand culture (Kightley, Fane and Lees). In analysing *A Frigate Bird Sings*, Niko Besnier writes:

As in most other Polynesian societies, the fa'afafine, or man who behaves in the fashion of a woman, is a ubiquitous and integral part of Samoan society ... Neither complete men nor full women, fa'afafine waver back and forth between male privilege and the covert authority of women, between status degradation and social visibility.

(Besnier 43)

In *Girl on a Corner*, Shalimar is highly visible, confident in her identity, witty and outspoken. In the play's first scene, she speaks directly to the audience:

SHALIMAR:

At 16 I was the captain of my high school cheerleading squad.

At 17 I was a beauty queen.

At 19 I was hooking in Hollywood.

At 21 I was dead.

(Rodger 6)

In performance, this speech came across as shocking and disturbing, but it also accurately sums up the key turning points of Shalimar's life. The real-life Shalimar dreamed of moving to LA to become a fashion

designer, but instead became a sex worker and the subject of media sensation when she was arrested in the movie star Eddie Murphy's SUV in May 1997. A year later she died at the age of 21 under tragic circumstances by falling from a high-rise building. The mystery of her death – whether accident, murder or suicide – has never been resolved. In focussing on a trans-gender protagonist in *Girl on a Corner*, Rodger explores different dimensions of Pacific sexual identity, in the context of the relationship between a Pacific Islander and the most powerful Western nation.

What view from the Pacific is Victor Rodger depicting in *Girl on a Corner*? Indo-Fijian scholar Subramani argues that colonisation resulted in Pacific Islanders wanting to escape from their remote islands and to adopt the more desirable lifestyle of the coloniser:

The coloniser's perception of space ... gave the islander the spatial notions of distance, difference, discreteness and isolation. The diminishing of the region and the diminishing of the self ... convinced the islander of the small, dependent nature of the islands life was thought to be elsewhere, not in the oppressive, narrow-minded, dependent islands, but in the language and culture of the coloniser.

(Subramani 26)

Girl on a Corner dramatizes an islander's desire to participate in and belong to American culture. The play is saturated with American references, full of colonising language and culture, expressed in popular songs and Hollywood movie references of the 1990s. Thus, it explicitly reflects what Subramani calls the "diminishing of the self" of the islander in relation to colonial power.

Rodger structures the play as a series of short scenes, played in an ensemble style on a bare stage, where the actors rapidly switch between characters and locations as in a movie. Rodger uses film language to show action replays of Shalimar's story from different perspectives, with each scene prefaced by an actor announcing the name of the scene and a take number: "Girl on a Corner. Shalimar's version. Take One." "Girl on a Corner. Eddie's version. Take One." Repeating different versions of the story suggests that Shalimar's life could have turned out very differently if she were not oppressed by larger power structures in the Pacific that almost predestine her tragic story. The play emphasizes the power imbalance between Murphy and Shalimar. When Shalimar is caught in Murphy's car, it is she, not Murphy, who pays the penalty. Murphy's

claim that he was merely offering Shalimar a ride home is accepted over Shalimar's claim that he has been exposed as a "tranny fucker" (29). Shalimar is at first validated by other transsexual sex workers but they are paid off by Murphy's minders.

The relationship between Shalimar and Eddie Murphy could be seen as a parable for the exploitation of the Pacific by colonial power structures. Growing up in American Samoa, Shalimar's references are mostly to American culture and her identity is intertwined with globalised influences. She names herself Shalimar after a perfume created by a Frenchman in homage to gardens in India where Shah Jahan met his true love who later inspired him to build the Taj Mahal. However, recalling Epeli Hau'ofa's thesis that the Pacific is vast and interconnected, not small and isolated, Rodger interrogates the notion that Shalimar is a victim or that her story is a tragic example of the exploitation of the Pacific. Throughout the play, Rodger empowers Shalimar as a strong, high status, independent character, secure in her identity and deliberately making her own life choices. She is sassy and witty. At one stage she announces to the audience: "Enough about Eddie Murphy. There's more to my story than Mr Beverly Hills Cock" (14). While not avoiding the tragic circumstances of her death, Rodger empowers her through the play to give a more balanced view of her story.

The most moving and powerful scene in the play is about the culture of the Samoan family. The real-life Shalimar was buried by her family in a white mask – to conceal her face which was disfigured from the fall – and a man's suit. Rodger shows the actor being dressed in the mask and her ill-fitting suit, a horrific denial of her transgender identity by her Mormon family. Her brother David's protests are disregarded as her family go ahead with the burial. In a published interview the Tongan transgender (fakaleiti) actor Amanaki Prescott-Faletau who played Shalimar explained what this scene meant for her:

It reminds me, I need to tell my sisters to make sure I'm in a dress when they bury me. ... What a waste – going through life trying to convince the world I'm a female and then have my family bury me in a suit.

(Rodger "Just a normal girl" n.p.)

This scene reminds us that the values of Samoan families were irrevocably altered by Christianity. Shalimar's father persists in calling

her “son” till the end, and her family attempt to erase her gender identity in death.

Girl on a Corner, however, always comes back to Shalimar’s point of view, giving her a voice which contradicts and contests her family’s unease and the unsympathetic media representation of her story. Rodger refuses to portray Shalimar as a victim. The climax of the play is an alternative ending which depicts Shalimar not falling to her death, but flying. She flies over significant places in her life: Los Angeles, Pago Pago and the Shalimar Gardens in India. Through this liberating image of flight, Rodger leaves the audience with a positive view of Shalimar as symbolic of a free and empowered Pacific, escaping the traps of colonial perceptions and prejudices.

The View from the Solomon Islands: *Marama*

“We sweat and cry salt water, so we know that the ocean is really in our
blood.”

Teresia Teaiwa (qtd. in Hau’ofa “The Ocean in Us” 391)

This quote by the eminent Pacific scholar and artist Teresia Teaiwa (1968–2017) poetically evokes the symbiotic relationship between Pacific peoples, the ocean and the environment. This connection is a central theme in New Zealand/Fijian theatre company The Conch’s *Marama*, which features an all-female cast, intersecting with an eco-critical perspective on commercial exploitation of Pacific islands. My discussion of *Marama* is based on seeing the production at the 2016 Auckland Arts Festival and conversations with the Conch’s Artistic Director Nina Nawalowalo and Creative Producer Tom McCrory.

Nawalowalo and The Conch specialise in creating Pacific island environments onstage. They have consistently used natural materials from the Pacific in their designs to reflect an eco-critical perspective on their storytelling. In The Conch’s first show *Vula* (2002), the stage was covered with a pool of water suggesting a lagoon in Fiji. On this liquid stage, fans and brooms made from natural materials were animated by unseen performers to represent birds and fish in the lagoon. Thus, everyday objects were aestheticized, and the audience imaginatively transported into a poetically staged Pacific island. In *Masi* (2014) the physical environment of Fiji was brought onto the stage through decorating the space with

masi – the Fijian cloth made from the bark of the paper mulberry tree – and having masi made live onstage by a traditional masi-maker from Fiji.

Nina Nawalowalo was born in Wellington to a Fijian father and British mother – both recent immigrants to New Zealand, trained in mime with Robert Bennett at Wellington Teacher’s College, then moved to the U.K. where she undertook further training in mime, mask, movement and devised theatre and became a professional magician. On her return to New Zealand in the 1990s Nawalowalo blended her European training with her Fijian heritage to create a unique form of physical theatre blending Pacific performance forms with Western devised theatre techniques and her skills as a magician. With her husband and creative partner Tom McCrory, she created *The Conch* to develop this work (*The Conch Website*). Her significant contribution to Pacific Arts was recognised when she won the Senior Pacific Artist Award at the 2017 Arts Pasifika Awards.

Eco-criticism is broadly defined as the study of the relationship between the arts and the physical environment, and, as Däwes and Maufort observe, Indigenous playwrights in the Pacific region have used multiple strategies for negotiating their “ecological interconnectedness with the natural world, whether in the shape of the land, rivers, animals, or plants. As a genre, Indigenous theatre seems particularly apt to spatially configure the relationships between humans and their environments” (Däwes and Maufort 18). The interconnectedness between people, their environment, and the theatrical artform is explicit in Nawalowalo’s writing about her own creative practice:

[A]s a Pacific storyteller, I ask myself what is *needed*? Necessity is the mother of my invention.

The answer grows from my culture and my art form, theatre. Culture, because in the Pacific the essential story weaves me into the land, to an unbroken thread of people. Following back, I become trees and animals, forces of nature, gods and finally the first darkness itself. Theatre, because the story is never severed from the teller, who meets you face to face, on a real patch of ground, in real time, and has the courage to breathe the same air, to tell their truth.

I need theatre’s silence and stillness and its listening

(Nawalowalo 53)

The notion of breathing the same air has taken on new connotations since the worldwide COVID pandemic, which has forced *The Conch*,

along with all other theatre companies, to cancel or delay their new productions. But Nawalowalo's inspirational statement also highlights the centrality of live performance to Pacific cultures, and what people have been missing during the pandemic, namely opportunities to collectively experience live art as a profoundly social, community event.

In *Vula* and *Masi* the interplay between the performers and the natural environment represented by natural materials such as water, masi, shells, wood and feathers created a symbolic representation of the natural world in the highly artificial world of the theatre. In highlighting the symbiotic relationship between humans and their environment, both *Vula* and *Masi* could be said to have an eco-critical focus, but *Marama* has more explicit political and eco-critical themes.

The themes of *Marama* originated from a previous project by The Conch. In 2013, Nawalowalo and McCrory established a women's theatre company in the Solomon Islands in partnership with the British Council. The company created a show entitled *Stages of Change* to address the problem of violence against women (The Conch *Stages of Change*). When Nawalowalo was directing *Stages of Change* in the Solomon Islands she was shocked by the logging of native forests on a giant, commercial scale. She saw islands and landscapes stripped of vegetation, leaving them desolate. International concern about the unsustainable logging in the Solomons has continued since the premiere of *Marama*, with the *Guardian* newspaper reporting in May 2021 that “[a]lmost 7 % of the country's tree cover has been lost since 2000, and the Ministry of Finance says that if logging continues at its current rate, natural forests will be exhausted by 2036” (Gwao n.p.).

Marama made a powerful political statement by questioning and contesting the continued exploitation and ecological destruction created by multinational companies in the Pacific, especially at a time when some of those same islands are suffering from the impact of climate change.

The title *Marama* is a play upon different Pacific meanings of this word. In Fijian, *Marama* is a high-born woman, in Māori *Mārama* is light, *Te Ao Mārama* is the world of light, the natural world, in which all of the flora and fauna, including people, are inter-related (Royal). *Te Ao Mārama* was also the title of one of the first anthologies of Māori literature, edited by Witi Ihimaera in 1996. This play on the words *Marama/Mārama* foregrounds the interrelationships between women and the ecology of the Pacific region, between knowledge and the environment.

In *Marama*, the natural world of the Pacific was represented as female, by five women from different Pacific cultures: Awhina Rose-Henare Ashby (Aotearoa), Tupe Lualua (Samoa), Susan Galutia, Gloria Konare and Grace Tiba (from different parts of the Solomon Islands). Galutia, Konare and Tiba first worked with Nawalowalo on the *Stages of Change* project. In bringing these women to Aotearoa to perform a new show, Nawalowalo initiated a symbolic creative journey to bring Indigenous Pacific women together to address crucial environmental issues. This range of different ethnicities in the cast created a sense of Pacific solidarity and unity across Pacific cultures. The women are all introduced in the show wearing the traditional clothing from their part of the Pacific, designed by Seraphina Tausilia. Their clothing was made from natural materials and fibres that come from the earth (gathered in a sustainable way), from the vegetation of their islands, reinforcing their natural connections with the ecology/environment.

The scenography of *Marama* is central to its dramaturgy, creating the environment of a Pacific Island rainforest onstage. The women dance and sing in a stylised forest designed by Nicole Cosgrove and John Verryt, and lit by Fabiana Piccioli. As the show begins, the stage is dimly lit, misty, as we make out the forms of branches, vines, ferns, the suggestion of trees reaching up into the grid. A giant puppet spider crawls onto the stage, and like the bird puppets that appear later, these are also made from natural fibres. The women interact with their environment, performing *waiata* (songs) and culture-specific dances, creating a sense of harmony and environmental connection. Sharon Mazer observes that “the female performers embodied the forest: its poetics, its primordial stirrings, its exploitation, and its enduring fertility ... it was a beautiful, transcendent performance” (18).

Towards the end of the show, however, Nawalowalo and the designers stage a coup de theatre, a radical transformation in the stage space. The natural environment that has been so painstakingly and imaginatively represented, is violently disrupted. A dazzling light blinds the audience, we hear the sound of trucks approaching. One of the women, now dressed in contemporary western clothing, staggers across the stage holding one red high heeled shoe. She looks back in fear. Her contemporary appearance disrupts the sense of natural order where humans exist in harmony with their environment. Her disarray suggests some kind of violence or violation. We hear the deafening sounds of trucks, machinery, chainsaws. The forest floor starts to peel back, rolling up. The forested

backdrop falls to the ground. The entire set falls, tears and is destroyed before our eyes. The world of light is replaced by darkness and smoke. The beautiful forest transforms into a devastated landscape, smoke rising. One woman, her clothing now in tatters, stands amongst this defoliated landscape softly chanting. The other women join her holding machetes and staring out into the audience, a striking image of strength and resistance.

In this view from the Pacific, the unseen commercial forces are a source of violent and rapid destruction. I have never witnessed such a visceral scenographic transformation. The destruction of the set is an alienation effect which forces the audience out of the comfort of our seats, it disrupts our pleasure in viewing the pleasing and almost hypnotic images of grace, beauty and harmony throughout the play up until that point. In 2000 Stewart Firth wrote that the Pacific Islands are particularly vulnerable to the aggressive nature of globalization and multi-national corporations, because "Globalization has shifted the balance of power between markets and states in markets' favor" (180). Firth argues that "the new rules of a globalizing world are set by people who have little interest in small places or special cases" (191). The view from this island sees globalisation as a malevolent, apocalyptic force, an environmental disaster, incompatible with human and natural ecologies of the islands. The play economically and boldly illustrates the catastrophic economic exploitation of the Pacific Islands, an invasion which has systematically encroached upon human beings and the natural environment since the eighteen century and continues to this day. The play reflects what Epeli Hau'ofa refers to as the "despoliation of much of our terrestrial environment" ("A Beginning" 138).

While praising the aesthetics of the first part of the production, Sharon Mazer has critiqued *Marama* for not showing us the cause of this destruction:

What we didn't see in *Marama* were the agents of capitalism, the presumptively male bodies that violate forest and women alike. ... as in the current historical moment when climate change is being wrought from deforestation, we were made blind to the causes and our role in creating, or at least acquiescing to, the disaster with which we have been left. (19)

Mazer groups *Marama* with some other community-based productions performed in New Zealand around the same time to suggest they share "a rather Platonic propensity in refusing representation to the antagonistic"

(19). Mazer clearly wishes that *Marama* and these other productions would fit into the Aristotelean dramaturgical model of protagonist and antagonist, of agon and conflict, of cause and effect. But is this tried and true western dramatic model appropriate or even useful in Pacific theatre? In my experience of viewing the play, The Conch's refusal to show the aggressor ignites my imagination in a way that I experience as highly theatrical. The antagonist is represented by lighting, sound, scenographic transformation. From an eco-critical perspective, the natural world – represented by the interactive scenography – has taken on the qualities of a character in the play. We gain some understanding how the forest itself experiences the invasion of the alien machinery. We gain a sensuous experience of the point of view of the environment itself. I don't need to literally see the bulldozers or the men in hi-vis jackets. I have seen these images in the media over and over again, but *Marama*, with its female-centred performative strength offers me something that is quite different: poetic, suggestive and with enormous emotional power. Denying visibility to these destructive forces signifies how impersonal, distant and anonymous multinational corporations appear to the local communities on whom their activities impact. Does the lack of conventional dramatic conflict de-politicize me or make me complacent or blind to the capitalist exploitation of the Pacific? I don't think so. In the darkness and stillness of the theatre, I understand what Nina Nawalowalo has written about her desire to create work "in which change becomes possible. People walk back into the night with a different story, a shifted perspective. And maybe, just maybe, this can change our environment. ... Create a quiet and stillness in which listening is possible, and share the stories that *need* to be told" (64). The production invites contemplation and jolts any complacency the well-heeled arts festival audience may feel about the Pacific as an unspoiled paradise. We are left with the spectacle of the wrecked stage as a warning, a call to action.

The final image is one of a vine slowly rising from the forest floor. The vigour of the growth of this vine provides an image of hope, suggesting that the natural environment is resilient, that nature is more powerful than the forces of economic power that destroyed it, that the forest will grow again. In assessing the politics and aesthetics of hope in Pacific literature, Teresa Shewry argues that "hope is important as a mode of engagement in environmental struggles in the Pacific and elsewhere" (5). Shewry suggests that hope is not passive, that hope contests the pessimistic notion that environmental destruction is inevitable, and that hope could "be a

mode of facing rather than of mollifying or forgetting environmental loss” (4). The vine is a vital and organic symbol of hope, but its significance goes beyond that. The vine was hand-made by the family of one of the Solomon Island performers who travelled to Aotearoa to perform in the work. The play’s eco-critical project is thus expressed through her family’s connection to the natural environment, reconstructed as a stage prop from materials that grew from the earth, symbolically re-staged as an act of empowerment, recuperation and resistance.

Conclusion: Navigation and the Trans-Indigenous

These three plays illustrate the diverse ways in which Pacific theatre makers in New Zealand are presenting views from the Pacific Islands. All of the texts involve travel and reflect the emphasis Hau’ofa places on navigation as a key marker of Pacific identity. Characters travel from the islands to the mainland or vice versa, or experience encounters with travellers. Rather than navigating by winds, currents and stars, the contemporary Pacific artist navigates by contrasting cultural signifiers, customs, hybrid traditions in a sometimes confusing but also creatively exciting mix of cultural codes.

These plays are all characterised by what Hau’ofa refers to as the “international mobility” of the islander (“A Beginning” 134), by the patterns of movement and exchange between islands. In *My Name is Pilitome* and *Girl on a Corner* the protagonist’s character journey in the play is defined by their travels across the Pacific. By contrast, in *Marama*, it is the unseen travellers, the industrialised corporate loggers, who provoke the major dramatic action of the play. In *Marama* the sense of mobility and exchange exists at a meta-theatrical level: in the different cultures represented among the cast; in the journey of some of the actors – the Solomon Islands women – across the Pacific to Aotearoa to perform in the play, in the use of organic materials, costumes and artefacts from different islands, in the linguistic wordplay of the title itself. The action of the play also implies the shipping of the felled timber to the global marketplace. Hau’ofa evokes the “trade routes” which have existed since ancient times and which continue in new forms in the present. Pacific theatre artists trade ideas and artistic methods like others trade currency and goods. The Pacific social networks that Hau’ofa refers to are reflected in the theatre, which is one of the most social artforms, because of its liveness, because of the live exchange

between artists and audience who meet together in the same space for acts of communal imagining.

Hau'ofa's "Our Sea of Islands" has also been criticised for presenting a Utopian view of the Pacific. In 1993 Joeli Veitayaki wrote that Hau'ofa's perspective is "mostly superficial and unrealistic," arguing that he "is romanticising the past and has offered no real solution to how we should look at the disadvantaged position of Pacific Island countries" (116). However, I interpret Hau'ofa's article not as a practical manual for political change, rather as a vision that is aspirational and inspirational, and includes creative work as a productive means towards positive political change. The production of Pacific plays in Aotearoa is a public and effective form of advocacy, activism and provocation. Pacific playwrights Oscar Kightley and Victor Rodger are among the most outspoken, high profile commentators on Pacific political events in New Zealand. For example, in 2019 Oscar Kightley used his newspaper column to mount a critique of broadcaster Heather du Plessis-Allan who referred to the Pacific Island as "leeches" on New Zealand in her radio show. This resulted in du Plessis-Allan's employer being fined by the Broadcasting Standards Authority and a ruling that she must apologise for the harm she had caused to Pacific Islanders on her show (Robertson). Pacific theatre is part of a wider network of media, literature and cultural production that is working to educate and re-shape public perception of the complex socio-political forces at work in the contemporary Pacific.

The plays discussed in this paper are both literary and performative. Following Chadwick Allen's concept of trans-Indigenous literary studies, I have attempted to make "purposeful juxtapositions" of the texts, suggesting that the prefix trans- contains the promise of transformation of the contemporary Pacific, of positive connections and change between Pacific people, like the vine starting to grow again at the climax of *Marama*.

From the transcultural comedy of *My Name is Pilitome* to the transgender tragedy of *Girl on a Corner* to the eco-theatre of *Marama*, the view from the Pacific is critical, self-reflexive and ironic. These Indigenous Pacific views embrace some of the largest political issues in the Pacific today, from cultural identity to gender identity, to climate change and the exploitation of natural resources in the Pacific Islands by international entities. While *Marama* is most explicit in its environmental themes, the other plays also have an ecological dimension. Although we never see the city in *My Name is Pilitome* the tension between rural and urban environments is

palpable. Fili's journey of reconciliation with his cultural identity links to his gradual integration into the island ecology. In *Girl on a Corner*, once Shalimar departs American Samoa, her world is relentlessly urban, yet the final liberating image shows her flying over the ocean, at one with the environment. Each play empowers Indigenous performers to represent the Pacific as a place of strength, of diversity. All are connected in that they de-colonise the stereotypical, simplistic perceptions of the Pacific as an unspoiled paradise, still familiar from Western artworks and tourist brochures. These plays are a potent illustration of Damon Salesa's argument that "the Pacific influences the New Zealand imagination, its understanding of New Zealand's place in the world, and its self-understanding" (22). In their experiments with form, and provocative subject matter, each play reflects Subramani's interpretation of Hau'ofa's "Our Sea of Islands" that "decolonisation is not only recovering the geographical territory but also reinventing the cultural space" of the Pacific Islands (26).

The use of comedy in *My Name is Pilitome* and *Girl on a Corner* contributes to the critical function of Pacific theatre. In summarising the purpose of comedy, Magda Romanska and Alan Ackerman write, "The point of laughter and the goal of comic plots, according to some theories, is to effect a transition from habitual behaviour, arbitrary laws, obsession, hypocrisy, and fixed social arrangements to a state that is self-aware, more fluid, honest and creative" (12). In these plays the comedy opens up audiences to an awareness of the politics of diaspora, identity and de-colonising attitudes in the Pacific.

Each play dramatizes some form of trauma in the contemporary Pacific, but each ends with some form of hope. In *My Name is Pilitome*, the second-generation migrant moves towards reconciling and blending his conflicting diasporic and Indigenous identities. In *Girl on a Corner*, fa'afafine identity is celebrated and empowered through re-playing the life story of Shalimar, seen by the media as a helpless victim. And in *Marama*, a vine begins to grow again after the complete destruction of the natural environment. These glimmers of hope are necessary for the ongoing process of de-colonising the Pacific.

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ESSAIS CRITIQUES / REVIEW ESSAYS

Où en est la théorie littéraire ?

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Dans la formidable série américaine mettant en scène la transformation contemporaine d'un département d'études littéraires, *The Chair*, l'héroïne interpelle en ces termes l'un de ses enseignants dont elle trouve le travail sur Beckett un peu vieillot :

- Il s'est passé beaucoup de choses ces 30 dernières années.
- Comme quoi ?
- Comme la théorie des affects, l'écocritique, les humanités numériques, le nouveau matérialisme, l'histoire du livre, les développements dans les études de genre, et la théorie critique de la race. C'est quand la dernière fois que vous avez ouvert un journal académique ?

Manifestant le poids des *cultural studies* dans les départements de lettres américains, mais aussi celui des approches matérialistes et empiriques, la formule est un beau résumé des transformations du champ américain, qui a vu le socle de la théorie littéraire poststructuraliste et formaliste (et son canon moderniste) céder place à une théorie critique culturaliste et à un renouveau original de l'histoire littéraire et de la philologie. Le constat est vrai *mutatis mutandis* pour la théorie littéraire francophone dont le rôle d'inspirateur pour la théorie anglo-saxonne semble avoir disparu avec la mondialisation des problématiques américaines comme référence et qui manifeste un éclectisme méthodologique inédit. Pourtant, malgré la tentative d'Antoine Compagnon pour enterrer la théorie au profit de l'histoire littéraire en la renvoyant à ses questions abstraites et à ses apories (*Le Démon de la théorie*, 1998), l'exigence de formalisation et de déploiement d'un vocabulaire descriptif et interprétatif organisé et exogène au texte n'a pas quitté la critique littéraire : elle s'est au

contraire démultipliée en des courants très variés, de la philologie ludique aux travaux sur les intermédialités en passant par la zoopoétique. Malgré les invectives parfois lancées contre les théories critiques et la tentation d'un nouveau scientisme remplaçant l'approche théorique par des épistémologies empiriques, des cadres interprétatifs puissants accompagnent ainsi une littérature perçue non plus comme un en-soi et un champ d'analyse autonome, mais comme un fait culturel et anthropologique multidimensionnel. Pour reprendre l'opposition proposée par Antoine Compagnon entre les définitions internes et externes de la littérature (30), les méthodes externes voire extralittéraires, de la littérarité ont triomphé. C'est au jeu difficile consistant à synthétiser les transformations de la théorie littéraire en théories du littéraire à l'heure de la « dé-essentialisation » de notre idée de la littérature¹ que cet article voudrait s'attacher.

De la théorie littéraire aux théories critiques

La théorie littéraire a désigné un cadre explicatif universel issu du « tournant linguistique » du XX^e siècle, plaçant de cette manière les théories du texte à la base de l'arbre des connaissances et faisant de leurs analystes universitaires les maîtres du savoir. Le critique littéraire était au centre du jeu idéologique et politique puisque le décryptage des récits exigeait une méthode universelle pour comprendre un monde social perçu comme une construction textuelle. Lorsque régnait en maître un paradigme linguistique pour lequel la pensée et l'action pouvaient se lire comme des codes et des syntaxes, la compétence spécialisée du critique lui conférait une légitimité quasi universelle. Aux USA, avec la *French Theory*, théorie du texte, théorie de la narration, rhétorique et sémiologie furent employées dans un sens politique pour déconstruire les faits sociaux les plus variés, qu'il s'agisse de comprendre le langage amoureux chez Barthes, de déconstruire la philosophie par l'écriture chez Jacques Derrida, de repenser le récit historique chez Hayden White ou d'analyser la poétique de la science chez Fernand Hallyn. La théorie littéraire avait amené les catégories et logiques textuelles à une prétention universelle et hégémonique : tout était langage, tout constituait un discours, tout faisait signe. Aux USA en particulier, la théorie littéraire était devenue sous le

¹ Je renvoie ici à mon essai *L'Idée de littérature*.

nom de déconstruction plus qu'une théorie de la littérature, plus qu'une épistémologie et qu'une « critique de la critique », mais une « critique de l'idéologie » (Compagnon 13) indissociable d'une pensée critique du social foucauldienne et fréquemment marxiste. Le constructivisme textualiste a nourri des critiques aussi bien idéologiques (l'accusation de relativisme) qu'épistémologiques (le déni de la « nature » humaine). Depuis le débat ouvert par un article ravageur, « Against Theory », de Steven Knapp et Walter Benn Michaels dans les années 1980 (voir aussi Mitchell préface, 3 et *sq.*) qui suscita une contre-attaque de Richard Rorty et Stanley Fish, jusqu'à l'anthologie *Theory's Empire : An Anthology of Dissent* de Daphne Patai et Will H. Corral (2005), on a reproché à cette théorie littéraire critique de servir des discours d'affirmation identitaire ou des doctrines anticapitalistes à travers les *cultural studies* qui s'en sont nourris, critiques dont on a retrouvé tardivement l'écho en France, notamment dans des débats et polémiques publiques débordant largement le champ des études littéraires (voir p. ex. Potte-Bonneville) lorsqu'il s'agit d'aborder des concepts comme ceux d'intersectionnalité ou de décolonialisme. Dans celui-ci, les études culturelles sont triomphantes et se sont substituées largement aux approches formelles et historiennes, même si la France, avec les disciplines traditionnelles liées à ses concours de recrutement imposant par exemple le maintien d'une épreuve de stylistique à l'agrégation, résiste à cette tendance. Si elles favorisent un projet de déconstruction critique des dominations comme dans le postcolonialisme ou le féminisme, les *cultural studies* sont désormais d'une pluralité étourdissante : qu'elles s'intéressent aux handicaps, aux cultures urbaines ou encore aux homosexualités, les études culturelles témoignent d'une approche volontiers interdisciplinaire par thème et sujet, favorisant les angles originaux, car culturellement minorisés, en allant jusqu'à un horizon posthumaniste. Elles se complètent par des *studies* situées par rapport à des aires géographiques (*area studies* ou *ethnic studies*) ou des problématiques larges et originales de recherche, comme les très importantes *trauma studies*. Cette pluralisation fait la richesse d'approches encloses dans des thématiques, mais participant toutes d'une vision volontiers pragmatique du texte littéraire, conçu dans la relation étroite qu'il a avec une question culturelle ou politique. Quitte à renoncer par des discours situés à la mise à distance promise par la théorie, à procéder par cette sympathie humaniste dont Antoine Compagnon a fait l'opposé du geste théorique (19), elles ont permis aux USA de défendre le rôle des humanités en général et la littérature en

particulier face à une critique néo-libérale de leur prétendue inutilité en mobilisant fortement des communautés interprétatives qui se retrouvent dans leur questionnement. Éparpillées, mais toujours tributaires du geste critique hérité de la *French theory*, elles proposent autant de vocabulaires souvent très originaux.

Le tournant pragmatique de la théorie littéraire

Ces études culturelles sont indissociables de plusieurs tournants que l'on pourrait baptiser à l'américaine comme l'*ethical turn* et le *pragmatical turn* de la théorie littéraire. Ces deux tournants marquent bien ce qui est la tendance déterminante de la théorie littéraire au XXI^e siècle et que l'on retrouvera dans l'importance nouvelle de la psychologie et des sciences cognitives : l'intérêt de la critique ne se porte plus comme au XIX^e siècle sur l'auteur et le geste de création, ou comme au XX^e sur le texte lui-même considéré dans son autonomie, ni même sur la réception considérée comme une question théorique abstraite comme l'avait proposé l'école de Constance, mais sur le lecteur concret, incarné et socialisé. Désormais ce sont les effets du texte, conçus comme bénéfice moral potentiel (pensons aux théories de Martha Nussbaum sur l'éducation démocratique à la différence par la lecture) ou comme profit cognitif, comme entraînement à la « théorie de l'esprit » (c'est-à-dire les savoirs par lesquels nous sommes capables d'inférer l'état mental d'autrui) ou comme outil de connaissance pratique ou même philosophique. Non seulement la littérature est une représentation qui enregistre le présent, le dévoile, mais elle peut le dénaturiser en devenant un outil de transformation (réparation individuelle ou collective, de transformation politique et sociale). D'où nombre d'essais faisant en France l'éloge de la « puissance » (Bouju et Gefen), du « pouvoir » (Bouju *et al.* ; Triaire et Vaillant ; Jouhaud) de la littérature, ou aux États-Unis de sa capacité à équiper les individus et les communautés à produire de l'agentivité et de l'*empowerment*. D'où une approche du langage littéraire soulignant sa capacité à modifier les cadres d'intellection en déconstruisant le *storytelling* médiatique par l'ajout de complexité, de polyphonie et d'alternatives narratives, et en modifiant par le travail du style les préconstructions et les lieux communs véhiculés par les mots de la tribu. D'où une vision de la fiction faisant de celle-ci un agent, voire un virus capable de disséminer des concepts : dans cette approche, influencée par les théories latouriennes et les « nouveaux réalismes » philosophiques contemporains, et que l'on peut nommer

praxéologique (en reprenant une opposition faite par Philippe Descola avec les approches sémiotiques traditionnelles [Descola 23]), la fiction n'est pas un rapport de représentation de ressemblance au réel ou une « attitude épistémique » (Schaeffer *Troubles*), mais la source d'entités agissant et existant en tant que telles et constituant des événements avec lesquels se tissent des relations réelles et souvent fortes. Dans cette approche pragmatiste (Coste) où se trouve mise en avant la notion de performatif (Culler) et les théories de la perlocution (Laugier et Lorenzini), ce sont les effets empiriques de la fiction, sa puissance d'action, qu'ils soient existentiels ou politiques sur le lecteur qui importent.

De telles perspectives autorisent la littérature à devenir un champ d'importance pour la médecine et le droit et l'on sait l'importance désormais prise par le champ des « *law and literature studies* » et celui de la « médecine narrative ». Considérées comme une source d'exemple et un exercice réflexif pour le jugement juridique ou comme une forme de connaissance de l'histoire du patient et du soignant, les œuvres littéraires sont supposées organiser et configurer les modes et les cadres de la perception. À ce titre, elles portent une responsabilité nouvelle, entraînant le retour d'un risque que l'autonomie du champ littéraire semblait avoir écarté, la censure. D'un côté, le texte est investi d'une puissance d'agir nouvelle par la théorie : la psychologie des personnages de fiction d'intérêt, les histoires racontées de valeurs cognitives multiples ; le travail herméneutique des textes, que ce soit le *close reading* des *cultural studies* qui en révèle les enjeux pour une communauté, ou la philologie inventive telle que la pratique en France un Pierre Bayard, change le lecteur, elle est un réservoir de remédiation et d'actions et non seulement le jeu d'hypothèses abstraites. Le texte, qui a perdu tout effet d'intimidation avec la désacralisation de l'auteur, devient manipulable par l'interprétation, il peut être réinventé par une philologie créative travaillant en parallèle avec les ateliers d'écriture qui investissent peu à peu les universités en substituant au mystère de la création la démocratisation de l'écriture. D'un autre côté, le texte par sa puissance même peut troubler le lecteur, qu'il faudra avertir (c'est le rôle des fameux « *trigger warnings* »), les représentations qu'il véhicule peuvent être dangereuses parce que par exemple racistes, et sa légitimité peut être en permanence interrogée, entraînant une représentation nouvelle de l'auteur, responsable et imputable de ses textes, couramment assigné en justice, et astreint à une exigence d'authenticité tout à fait nouvelle après des décennies qui avaient distingué avec Proust l'homme de l'auteur.

L'émergence des sciences cognitives

À cette théorie des effets du texte, la contribution des sciences cognitives est essentielle et il importe d'en évoquer l'originalité. Dans une très large mesure, je l'ai dit, les théories de la littérature dominantes jusqu'au poststructuralisme étaient littéraires parce qu'elles reposaient sur le substrat de la linguistique ou de la rhétorique et donc endogènes. Non que les théories explicatives exogènes des mécanismes littéraires aient été absentes (la philosophie de l'histoire du XIX^e telle qu'elle a survécu au XX^e, la théorie du pouvoir foucauldien ou encore la pensée bourdieusienne de la distinction, par exemple), mais elles relevaient des sciences humaines et de leur mode d'administration de la preuve. Ces théories avaient la puissance descriptive du structuralisme, au fond mathématique lointain ; elles pouvaient offrir dans certains cas des préconisations ou des prescriptions, en particulier littéraires, mais la réalité biologique et physique des phénomènes qu'elles évoquaient restait totalement hors d'atteinte. Or depuis deux décennies, les sciences cognitives se sont proposées au contraire comme paradigme explicatif total des faits psychologiques et même des faits sociaux, suscitant un mélange de fascination et de répulsion et engendrant des répercussions indirectes en dehors même de leurs propositions – l'intérêt appuyé de ces dernières années de la théorie littéraire pour la lecture et de manière générale pour les effets de la littérature n'est pas isolable des prétentions du cognitivisme à penser « les neurones de la lecture » pour prendre le titre d'un essai célèbre du neuroscientiste Stanislas Dehaene.

Les neurosciences sont un ensemble hétérogène où l'on peut distinguer trois grandes directions : l'analyse neurologique des processus cognitifs, la psychologie expérimentale et l'anthropologie cognitive, qui, pour simplifier, ont ouvert plusieurs grands champs en littéraire : la poétique cognitive, la psychologie littéraire et l'évolutionnisme littéraire. Fortement appuyées sur la linguistique cognitive, les poétiques cognitives se sont développées à partir de l'essai de Lakoff et Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), et les travaux de Reuven Tsur centrés sur la perception de la poésie. Parties de la stylistique et de la rhétorique cognitives, elles se sont enrichies d'une narratologie cognitive, qui travaille par exemple sur la notion de suspense (Baroni) ou revient sur la théorie de la fiction à partir d'une approche nouvelle de la théorie des mondes possibles fondée sur la deixis. Fondée sur une théorie psycholinguistique, la poétique cognitive redéfinit la littérature comme une défamiliarisation et une manipulation de nos structures d'attention. Elle ambitionne également

de repenser les genres et les catégorisations littéraires non comme des systèmes structuraux, mais comme des dérivés de prototypes cognitifs (des structures radiales ; Stockwell 29 et *sq.*) rassemblés par des ressemblances de familles en s'autorisant pour cela de la *gestalt psychologie*. La notion de champ déictique (*deictic field*) et la théorie du déplacement déictique (*deictic shift theory*) se veulent particulièrement utiles à comprendre notre situation d'immersion dans un récit, immersion qui prend en compte à la fois des éléments qui nous « aspirent » (*push*) dans une histoire et ceux qui nous réfèrent au monde réel (*pull*) en suivant les stratégies de repérage des contextes que nous menons au cours de notre implication dans la fiction (Duchan *et al.*) : l'imagination, qui permet d'entrer dans la fiction, produit des « déplacements déictiques » et la psychologie cognitive essaie de modéliser l'expérience subjective du lecteur dans ses déplacements, dans ses rencontres avec les subjectivités fictionnelles du narrateur et des personnages, tâche vraiment nouvelle qui n'avait intéressé la théorie littéraire qu'à travers la phénoménologie et qui se trouve ici pensée en termes de traitement de l'information. Le cognitivisme s'adosse ici à une volonté de modélisation cybernétique consistant à faire comprendre à un programme informatique la situation narrative et s'avance à la rencontre du projet de l'Intelligence Artificielle.

Ces poétiques cognitivistes s'appuient sur l'idée issue des neurosciences que le langage n'est pas un module spécifique pour affirmer qu'il est nécessaire de penser le rapport des phénomènes linguistiques au corps et à la société (Brône et Vandaele 6 et *sq.*), en refusant à la fois la distinction corps/esprit et l'opposition nature/culture. Décentrant la théorie de la question du texte ou de son auteur vers celle du lecteur, le cognitivisme littéraire est empirique et naturalisant, au double sens du mot : il fonde lui aussi le fonctionnement de la littérature sur des faits naturels et banalise la littérature, conçoit comme une activité mentale comme une autre et non plus comme un régime d'exception. Si ces propositions restent parfois encore à la marge de la théorie littéraire *mainstream*, malgré le travail patient d'un Jean-Marie Schaeffer pour les faire connaître et l'émergence des théories des émotions qui s'en nourrissent, elles pourraient en constituer au XXI^e siècle l'un des paradigmes dominants.

Le fait littéraire vu à distance

Les sciences cognitives touchent par rebond l'histoire littéraire qui devient l'exploration de dispositions mentales communes : on est loin de

l'idée d'une autonomie de la sphère culturelle et son historicité propre. On peut évoquer ici le pendant diachronique du cognitivisme, l'anthropologie évolutionniste ou évolutionnisme cognitif, qui consiste à analyser la cognition, au sens large, grâce au schéma darwinien (sélection naturelle des aptitudes et comportements permettant la survie et l'expansion de notre espèce). Partant de l'idée que tous les faits humains, y compris les faits d'imagination, sont inclus dans un processus d'évolution, la conception évolutionniste des mécanismes esthétiques consiste à écarter les interprétations métaphysiques, sociologiques, économiques, formelles, psychologiques (au sens non évolutionniste du terme), pour se demander en quoi les représentations esthétiques illustrent, exemplifient ou modélisent le jeu de forces biologiques « codées en dur » (*hard-wired*, Max n.p.) : la survie, la reproduction et l'expansion de l'espèce, la compétition et la coopération entre les hommes, les familles et les communautés, la parenté, l'affiliation sociale, les efforts pour acquérir ressources et influence, la domination, l'agression, enfin le besoin d'imagination (Carroll 30). On a pu railler ces entreprises réductionnistes, mais il n'en demeure pas moins qu'elles sont congruentes avec cette préoccupation fondamentale des théories littéraires d'aujourd'hui (et des départements de littérature lorsqu'ils doivent justifier leur existence et leurs financements) : voir dans la littérature non un divertissement ou une activité sérieuse, marginale et désintéressée, mais une nécessité universelle de l'espèce humaine, présente dans toutes les cultures et ayant un rôle fonctionnel dans les sociétés.

Dans sa tentative de « naturalisation de l'être humain », la pensée « sociobiologique » pour reprendre un concept très utilisé par les « darwiniens littéraires » tend à réfuter l'interprétation (du moins l'interprétation internalisante), la spéculation sur la valeur particulière et individuelle des œuvres ou sur la personnalité de l'auteur, au nom de la logique de la très longue durée ou de la logique quantitative. Cette mise à distance des textes, c'est aussi celle du *distant reading* et l'on ne saurait en effet sous-estimer le saut épistémologique promis lui aussi par les humanités numériques, qui est de nous proposer des possibilités numériques de vérifier des hypothèses, en rendant les recherches littéraires falsifiables, puis de passer de l'ordre descriptif (mesure et classement) à des explications causales, en proposant des inférences par régression qui rendent caduques les méthodes déductives traditionnelles. En transformant un texte ou un corpus en données, nous le mettons en effet à la portée d'une vaste gamme d'instruments de mesure. Les méthodes

des humanités numériques offrent une « lecture à distance » (*distant reading*) pour reprendre le concept célèbre de Franco Moretti (*Graphs*). Les instruments de la textométrie modifient notre approche traditionnelle de l'administration de la preuve en sciences humaines : avec la possibilité d'« opérationnaliser » (Moretti « *Littérature* » n.p.) c'est-à-dire de vérifier des hypothèses théoriques ou historiques en les transformant en opérations quantifiables, les propositions des sciences humaines deviennent falsifiables – plus simplement dit, vérifiables. Les masses de données dans lesquelles est transcrite l'histoire culturelle permettent de vérifier des hypothèses avancées par le savoir de l'érudition, mais autrement difficiles à établir, car fondées sur une connaissance globale, une mémoire des œuvres, une synthèse intuitive, ardues à objectiver et donc à réfuter éventuellement. Ces approches empiriques laissent entendre que la simple lecture des données ferait sens et dispenseraient de théories préalables (voir Gefen « *Empirical* »), l'ère des grandes données entérinant la fin de la théorie en littérature comme d'ailleurs dans toutes les sciences.

Si les études littéraires contemporaines n'ambitionnent pas d'aligner l'épistémologie des sciences humaines sur celle des autres sciences, en s'interfaçant à l'extérieur des sciences humaines, la manière dont elles ont été renouvelées par les approches anthropologiques et sociologiques dans une interdisciplinarité interne aux sciences humaines et sociales est tout de même considérable : elles sont désormais marquées par l'anthropologie culturelle, l'histoire matérielle du livre ou celle des pratiques de lecture. Qu'il s'agisse de ressaisir la littérature dans l'histoire longue du livre comme le propose par exemple *l'Histoire du livre et de l'édition* de Yann Sordet ou de jeter des focus plus ponctuels sur sa matérialité (pour prendre deux exemples parmi mille : le travail sur la presse de Marie-Eve Thérenty² ou les essais sur l'histoire de l'oralité de Françoise Waquet), la littérature est considérée dans sa dimension économique, technologique et médiatique, ce qui la conduit notamment à être observée dans ses croisements sémiotiques, ses formulations hors du livre (performances, littérature exposée, œuvres littéraires numériques, interactives ou hypertextuelles, etc.). Alors que les approches anthropologiques font voir des continents littéraires inaperçus hors de l'Occident et du modèle du livre, elles ouvrent, à la suite des approches anthropologiques de Nicole Loraux et Florence Dupont, des perspectives rétrospectives inédites sur

² Voir notamment Kalifa *et al.*

la littérature occidentale ancienne. Parallèlement, la vieille sociologie littéraire trouve de renouvellements inédits, avec en France la nécessité de penser des circulations et des échanges globaux et des rapports de force aussi bien internes qu'externes aux champs littéraires, en s'enrichissant d'une pensée de la traduction (voir les travaux de Pascale Casanova, Gisèle Sapiro ou Tiphaine Samoyault) et aux États-Unis d'une réflexion interdisciplinaire, possiblement économique, et volontiers postcoloniale sur la circulation et la mondialisation de la littérature.

L'écocritique, un cadre herméneutique influent

Ces gestes de mise à distance de la littérature se poursuivent et se démultiplient dans les approches écologiques, qui mobilisent de nombreuses interfaces méthodologiques pour renouveler des questions littéraires aussi essentielles que celle des genres, des personnages et du point de vue : à ce titre, l'écocritique est une vraie rupture épistémologique, qu'elle consiste à produire une théorie éconarratologique du personnage (Caracciolo) ou de nouvelles *studies* prenant en compte l'anthropocène. Les effets d'« estrangement », pour transposer la belle expression de Carlo Ginzburg, y sont potentiellement considérables : pensons à ce qu'on appelle l'écocritique matérialiste qui s'appuie sur les ontologies néo-réalistes et qui, avec les philosophies attentives à la variété des modes d'existences et de communication, souligne l'intentionnalité et même l'agentivité de chaque entité terrestre et sa potentielle narrativité pour étendre à la nature, dans une pensée multiespèce de la relation (voir Iovino et Oppermann) inspirée notamment par Donna Haraway, les capacités humaines d'auto-organisation, de vitalité, d'affectivité, de production d'actions et de communication. En considérant la littérature comme participant d'un ensemble étendu de modes de communications naturels, une telle théorie tend à naturaliser la littérature, à la faire participer aux phénomènes de la « nature première », celles des relations écologiques (par opposition à la « nature seconde » qui se réfère aux transformations capitalistes de l'environnement³) : la littérature se trouve biologisée, englobée dans une épistémologie déterminée par une écologie pensée comme science. De cette proposition de naturalisation découlent des méthodes qui ne sont plus seulement écocritiques, mais biocritiques

³ Je reprends cette opposition à Anna Tsing, dans son ouvrage *Le Champignon de la fin du monde* (22), qui l'emprunte à William Cronon.

parce qu'elles génèrent des concepts biomimétiques ou bioinspirés : ainsi la biolinguistique qui étudie la communication humaine dans le cadre des interactions biologiques, ou la biosémiotique, approche qui fait de chaque être vivant un producteur de messages et d'interprétations (Wheeler) – ou encore la bionarratologie naissante (Prince). Ainsi, par de fréquents transferts métaphoriques, l'écologie en tant que science a commencé à s'imposer comme cadre épistémologique possible pour la littérature : c'est le cas lorsque l'on souligne l'importance de la question relationnelle pour penser la littérature, lorsqu'on utilise le concept d'environnement et de milieu pour élargir la notion de contexte, lorsque l'on parle de la viralité d'une fiction pour souligner dans une perspective praxéologique son agentivité,⁴ lorsque l'on utilise les notions de biome, d'écotone (Arnold *et al.*), d'écodiversité, de cycle, de point de basculement, de boucle de réaction pour décrire le fonctionnement de l'histoire littéraire, et lorsque l'on devient sensible à l'approche systémique qui est celle de l'écologie, science des flux et sciences des conséquences, recourant à l'interdisciplinarité comme à des compétences de terrain pour penser des systèmes complexes et interdépendants, et dont, comme le suggère Hubert Zapf, la connectivité et la diversité sont deux concepts épistémologiques clés (*Handbook* 18). On pense ici aux fréquentes analogies entre genre littéraire et espèces naturelles, qui datent de Brunetière, mais qui ont été renouvelées récemment par les hypothèses de Franco Moretti (*The Novel*), mais avant tout à des approches systémiques de la littérature comme l'essai novateur d'Alexander Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, qui analyse l'écosystème littéraire comme un biome, et auquel font écho des approches des langues comme écosystèmes – emprunt métaphorique que l'on retrouvera dans la *Petite écologie des études littéraires* de Jean-Marie Schaeffer, dont on sait à quel point l'auteur a contribué à résorber en philosophie l'écart entre nature et culture. Comme l'écologie linguistique ou l'écologie de l'attention, ces modèles s'inspirent de l'écologie culturelle, promue en littérature par Hubert Zapf, qui à partir de Julian Steward et Peter Finke en fait la base d'une théorie de l'imagination et de la représentation littéraire⁵ et qui conçoit les modes de représentations littéraires comme des réactions à la situation de l'homme dans son environnement culturel au sens très large,

⁴ Voir, mais dans un sens plus large, Marchesini.

⁵ Voir Zapf *Literature as Cultural Ecology*, et à sa suite par exemple Sutton et Anderson.

comprenant aussi bien le rapport à l'environnement que les paysages intérieurs nés de l'interaction avec les techniques.

Quoi qu'on en pense, l'écologie critique réveille le pouvoir d'alerte et de résistance de la littérature, rappelant à la critique l'importance d'une étude des fonctions politiques et éthiques des lettres ; l'écologie convoque le pouvoir d'agentivité et de relation de chaque élément de l'ordre naturel, tel que viennent le ressaisir les approches néo-matérialistes et néo-réalistes et leurs ontologies accueillantes ; l'écologie fait résonner les émotions propres à notre relation à l'environnement, rappelant l'importance d'une critique attentive à la corporalité et les émotions⁶ ; l'écologie met en avant l'intérêt d'une analyse située, soulignant dans la géocritique et les études culturelles écologiques l'importance des lieux et des contextes (Tally et Battista) ; l'écologie signale la puissance d'éducation sémantique et la richesse des expériences de pensée et de déplacement dont les jeux de l'énonciation et de la narration sont capables, invitant à ne pas sous-estimer la productivité épistémique et philosophique de la cognition fictionnelle.

Conclusion

Quelques mots pour conclure : les modèles d'analyse issus de la théorie de l'information, de la pragmatique de la fiction, de la psychologie évolutionniste, de la sociologie, voire désormais de l'écocritique⁷, cadres aussi divers qu'externes au champ littéraire, me semblent offrir des méthodes originales dont le principe même est le décentrement et l'extériorité. Elles rejoignent la manière dont des disciplines plus proches comme la sociologie, l'anthropologie, la philosophie ou même l'économie s'autorisent désormais à ressaisir le fait littéraire. Elles s'accompagnent d'une modification profonde des canons au profit d'une version étendue de la notion de littérature, le geste de théorisation n'étant pas dissociable du geste de classement – la plus évidente démonstration étant la manière dont la littérature francophone française, qui constituait il y a quelques décennies le cadre de référence quasi unique de l'étude des littératures d'expression française, est devenue, hors de la métropole, une part très minoritaire par rapport aux autres francophonies. Elle postule si ce n'est

⁶ Sur l'écocritique sensible, voir Bladow et Ladino.

⁷ Ce qu'Eileen A. Joy nomme « critique littéraire réaliste et spéculative » (n.p.).

un moment « post-théorique » (voir Leitch 16), du moins un éclectisme et un pragmatisme méthodologique en « désessentialisant » la littérature sans nier la spécificité de son médium et sans renoncer à la décrire dans sa puissance d'action. Reste à savoir si les communautés académiques littéraires accepteront de troquer le cadre unifié, mais coupé des autres savoirs de la théorie littéraire contre des approches pluralisées.

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Translanguaging Comparative Literature

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Context: Translation and Translationality

In a video from the inaugural Itũika Writing and Translation Workshop, held in the outskirts of Nairobi in 2021, Doseline Kiguru stresses “the fluidity of the languages that are spoken in Kenya ... the multilingual nature of Kenyan communication in informal setups and the challenges of formal presentation and representation in which one language is favoured over others and also standardised” (9’ 32” – 50”). She directs attention especially to Sheng, an urban language which has absorbed elements mainly from Kiswahili and English, but also from Kikuyu, Luyha, Dholuo, Kikamba and elsewhere (Ferrari 29). Sheng, Kiguru notes, is ever-changing, porous, and varies from place to place; and she asks: “what spaces are available for translation into such languages?” (13’ 38” – 42”).

The question is urgent, not only in Kenya, but everywhere, for all languages vary, change and intermingle (albeit to different degrees). What is obvious in Kenya is also true in Europe, even though centuries of printing, standardization and national ideology have pressured languages to seem separate from one another, and internally homogeneous, and have created a corresponding “representation of translation” (in Naoki Sakai’s words) as bridging that separation by the discovery of equivalences (5–6). This is why Kiguru feels there to be a tension between translation and linguistic fluidity. Translation – in alliance with print, standardization and nationalism – can develop an aura of fixity, of inscription, of being right or wrong. So how then can translation be done

into a language – or rather, into a complex continuum of usage – that does not have standardised spelling, grammar or vocabulary?

In Translation Studies, and in the overlap between Translation Studies and Comparative and World Literary Studies (itself a translation zone!), much recent work has built on Sakai, and set about reconfiguring the picture of translation as discovering equivalences between separate standard languages (for instance: Adam; Emmerich; Göransson; Kiaer, Guest and Li; Reynolds *Translation*; Reynolds *Prismatic Translation*; Scott *Work*; Young). Now, translation is more widely understood as one of the means by which the continuum of language difference is organized. In this perspective, it can operate in a range of ways. It can collaborate with the forces that separate and standardise languages, reinforcing those norms and divisions with its choices – I have called this “Translation Rigidly Conceived” (*Translation* 18). It can, therefore, help to create those very borders between languages which, in the earlier picture, had pre-existed it, and which its task had been to bridge. But it can also be anarchic, inventive or simply pragmatic: dissolving boundaries, making language new, or just discounting conventions and going with what works best in the given circumstances (I call this “translationality”, *Translation* 18).

A brief example from Dickens can illuminate these generalisations. About halfway through *Oliver Twist*, one of Fagin’s boys, Charley Bates, is chatting about Oliver to the Artful Dodger. Charley says: “What a pity it is he isn’t a prig!” At which, the Artful turns to Oliver:

“I suppose you don’t even know what a prig is?” said the Dodger mournfully.

“I think I know that,” replied Oliver, looking up. “It’s a th—; you’re one, are you not?” inquired Oliver, checking himself.

“I am,” replied the Dodger. “I’d scorn to be anything else.” Mr. Dawkins gave his hat a ferocious cock, after delivering this sentiment; and looked at Master Bates, as if to denote that he would feel obliged by his saying anything to the contrary.

(Dickens 116)

Why does Oliver “check himself”? Why does he not go through with the translation? Because, if he did, he would impose what Lydia H. Liu calls the “trope of equivalence” (7) between the boys’ word “prig” and the Standard English term “thief”; and by doing so he would create a boundary between what would thereby at once be constructed as two

separate sets of values, two cultures, two languages. For the Dodger, a.k.a. Mr. Dawkins, to be a “prig” is a brave, free and glorious condition. The word excites his body into a kind of priapic exorbitance (“gave his hat a ferocious cock”) which spreads into Dickens’s word choices, with “cock” and “masturbates” both winking lewdly in the text. But for Oliver, and for Standard English, a “thief” is someone who needs to be verbally and physically controlled: sentenced and imprisoned – or transported, which is what eventually happens to the Artful. The socio-political violence that would be conjured up by the act of completing the translation of “prig” into “thief” is palpable, and Oliver does not yet feel able to commit it.

So, the character Oliver, in his imagined social situation, does not translate. He opts instead for a different mode of translanguaging practice, ostensive definition (“you’re one”). On the other hand, Dickens’s text does give us a translation: it translates “prig” as “th—.” In the theoretical terms I established a moment ago, we can say that Translation Rigidly Conceived – with its assumption that a translation must deliver equivalence in a standardized language – is refused. But something else comes in its place: translationality, that freer mode of re-writing which has the energy to mess with the standard forms. As an instance of translationality, “th—” registers “prig”’s disruptive power. It suggests that a prig is like a thief but cannot wholly be captured by the standard term. It breaks open – or breaks into – the word “thief” so as to reveal its *bien pensant* and disciplinary assumptions. Instead of establishing a legal and linguistic boundary with “prig” on the one side and “thief” on the other, “th—” creates a fracture within a term from the standard tongue. This instance is a long way from the context described by Kiguru, distant in time, location, and in the social and political issues at stake. But in making visible the pressures of standardization, and at the same time inventively circumventing them, it suggests one possible response to Kiguru’s question. You can create a space for translation into languages such as Sheng by rebuffing the claims of Translation Rigidly Conceived, and giving free rein to translationality.

Once translation is seen as operating within language difference, rather than between separate languages, several theoretical consequences ensue. One is that the binary of “foreignizing” and “domesticating,” once such an effective battle cry for the politics of translation, becomes very visibly inadequate as a theoretical and descriptive tool, since it relies on, and in fact reinforces, the picture of languages as separate. In Venuti’s words: “foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail

in the target language” (20). Scholars such as Saussy (12) and Kiaer, Guest and Li (2–3) have put pressure on the rigidity of the foreignizing / domesticating dichotomy, noting also its particular inappropriateness to translation practices in East Asia (see also Reynolds *Likenesses* 138–42). What is needed instead are theorizations, and modes of description, which can fully recognize the motley, fluidity and inter-permeation of languages, while also tracking the power dynamics involved in standardization and (as Kiguru put it) the favouring of one language over others. In Sociolinguistics and Translation Studies, the term “translanguaging” has recently become a focus for such thinking.

Translanguaging, in Conversation with Multilingualism and Translingualism

“Translanguaging” has evolved from “languageing,” a term defined by A. L. Becker in 1991: “there is no such thing as Language, only continual languageing, an activity of human beings in the world” (34). Using “language” as a verb alters the picture of its relationship to people. The idea of language as a system that can be stored in grammar books, dictionaries and the mind becomes secondary – an abstraction from the endless, ever-changing, interactive process which is what is really going on. Individuals take on more agency: we are less “users” of language than “makers,” to echo the title of a book by Roy Harris which (back in 1980) foreshadowed some of these developments. Or, in a snappy formulation from the recent *Creative Multilingualism: A Manifesto*: “we create language every day” (Kohl *et al.* i).

Grafting “trans-” onto the word brings in more considerations which have been elaborated by Li Wei. “Translanguaging,” he explains, “better captures multilingual language users’ fluid and dynamic practices”; it also points to the “variety of cognitive, semiotic, and modal resources” which inextricably interact with “language in its conventional sense of speech and writing”; and – crucially – it recognizes that “multilinguals do not think unilingually in a politically named linguistic entity, even when they are in ‘monolingual mode’” (Li 18). The key theoretical step here is to adjust the conception of multilingual communicative competence. In the situations discussed by Li, speakers do not choose components from different languages and patch them together. Rather, they draw on a linguistic repertoire which could be described as possessing elements from different named languages, but which is used, and experienced

by them, as a single expressive medium. For instance, in an exchange between two people in Singapore, recorded by Ng Bee Chin, Li identifies words that could be said to “belong” to Hokkien, Teochew, Mandarin, Malay, Cantonese, Singlish and English. But he comments: “whilst I have tried to mark what I can identify in terms of nameable languages and varieties, there seems to be little point in asking what languages or varieties they are speaking or counting how many languages are being spoken here” (14).

“Translanguaging” is useful in describing many contexts. It might help articulate the relation between fluidity and standardization in the Kenyan linguistic environment described by Kiguru. It also throws light on the scene I have described in *Oliver Twist*. Oliver possesses a translinguistic repertoire: he knows perfectly well what “prig” means; it is a word that he could use, even though he chooses not to, and to hold his own utterance to the norms of a “monolingual mode.” In fact, “translanguaging” is an illuminating perspective to bring to any instance of language, anywhere, for even people who think of themselves as monolingual move across languages or varieties in one way or another: there is always some play somewhere, some individual idiosyncrasy, group idiom or bit of technical jargon, some family language, with charming onomatopoeias brought into the repertoire by toddlers, some distinctive habit of gesture or intonation. It is true of everyone – in the words of Don Mee Choi – that “my tongue and your tongue are already an aggregate, a site of multiple and collective enunciation” (7); or, as Mike Baynham and Tong King Lee have put it, “*difference is threaded through the entire social fabric and incorporated into the repertoire*” (9). No-one is monolingual, not even a “monolingual.”

Thinking along these lines, one reaches an intersection with the considerations about translation with which I began. Now that I have introduced translanguaging, I look back at my descriptive language in the first section of this essay and wonder if it may not have been too tidy. My talk of a “continuum of language difference” might seem to suggest a regular gradation, whereas in fact – as the example from Li Wei suggests – the reality is much more knotty, more like a coral reef than a rainbow. For Baynham and Lee, whose book is called *Translation and Translanguaging*, the two terms are to some extent opposites: “the tendency of translation is to keep languages apart, working across borders (thereby acknowledging their presence), while that of translanguaging is to bring them together, dissolving borders” (183). But they can also

overlap and interact. Nuggets of translation can pop up in the midst of a translanguaging interaction, while – as Baynham and Lee see it – translanguaging is part of translation because, in the process of generating a translation, boundaries between languages evanesce and the whole linguistic repertoire comes into play: “the translator draws on their multilingual repertoire moment-by-moment in constructing the translation” (183). This sounds a bit like my own distinction between Translation Rigidly Conceived and translationality, but in fact the perspective and direction are different. If translation is a boat arriving at a shore, and translationality a wave (or wave after wave) breaking on that shore, eroding it, then translanguaging is the gathering of pebbles, weed and flotsam from several different shores to build a set of walkways that converge on a new shared island.

Translanguaging also joins in conversation with two terms that have been at the heart of recent, large research projects: “multilingual” and “translingual.” “Multilingual Locals and Significant Geographies” (2015–20), based in SOAS, University of London, has explored “the numerous and often fractured worlds of literature from the perspective of multilingual societies” (MULOSIGE Team n.p.), through three case studies: modern North India, the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa. This work “takes multilingualism within society and literary culture as a structuring and generative principle and holds both local and cosmopolitan perspectives in view,” valuing the fact that “a multilingual approach is inherently comparative and relativizing” (Orsini 346). Meanwhile, “World Literatures: Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Dynamics” (2016–21), based in Stockholm University, has seen world literature as being constituted by “the always situated negotiation of cosmopolitan and vernacular orientations in the temporal unfolding of literary practice” (Kullberg and Watson xiii). Translingualism is the medium of this negotiation: “we do not see translingualism as a quality that certain texts have and most do not but rather as a primary condition that literary texts can either work with or disavow and – by the same token – that reading practices can choose to highlight or ignore. The prefix “trans-” draws attention both to the boundary of named languages and to the constant crossing of the boundary” (Helgesson and Kullberg 137). To connect “translanguaging” to these formulations is to highlight an issue already implicit throughout this detailed and nuanced research: not only how boundaries are crossed but at what points – mentally, socially, politically, historically – they are brought into

being; not only the value of recognizing multilingualism, but the need to trace where and how divisions assert themselves, fracturing what might be a shared complex repertoire into something experienced instead as a multiplicity of different tongues.

Translanguaging Comparative Literature

Together, all this recent work on translation, translanguaging, multilingualism and translanguaging has answered, and moved on from, Emily Apter's calls, starting two decades ago, for "a 'trans to trans' comparatism" (*Against World Literature* 71). As she foresaw, it is now possible to practise "a literary comparatism that has no national predicate" (*The Translation Zone* 243); indeed, one which, as Xiaofan Amy Li has argued, quoting S. E. Larsen, "no longer needs to emerge from the comparison of two or more texts (or comparanda) from different nations but is already inherent in a single text that potentially engages with 'several textual and cultural contexts'" (Li 231; Larsen 318). The linguistic borders that have been dislodged were also the lines that organised comparative literature's relationship to and difference from national literary study – so that, too, has changed. Just as, on one side of our discipline, advances like the SOAS and Stockholm projects have scotched any conception of world literature as somehow floating above linguistic particularities and specific geographies, thereby drawing it back into the domain of comparative literature, so, on the other side, the recent developments in translation and translanguaging have perforated the distinction between comparative and national or monolingual modes of teaching and research. As Franca Sinopoli has written, "acquista sempre più spazio l'attenzione per la dimensione multilingue delle singole culture e letterature" ("ever more attention is being paid to the multilingual dimension of individual cultures and literatures") (233). As shown in our brief example from *Oliver Twist*, texts can be internally comparative, and no monolingual is monolingual.

In harmony with these perceptions, several recent studies have taken material that could have been subjected to a nationalist or monolingual treatment, and instead have unfurled it via comparative approaches. Among them, a book by Daniel Dewispelare, *Multilingual Subjects: On Standard English, its Speakers, and Others in the Long Eighteenth Century*, focuses on a period of vehement standardisation, and yet demonstrates the importance of "(1) heteroglossic diversity among disparate versions

of the English language and (2) polyglossic interaction between these varied forms of English and other languages encountered on the global stage of travel, commerce, and empire” – their importance, that is, even to texts in which they are not at all evident (1). Dewispelare urges his colleagues in Eighteenth-Century English Studies to recognise “that the term ‘English’ language is insufficient,” and to think “more creatively about how the always-existing multiplicity of language is a dimension of identity that influences literary representation and reception” (2). Meanwhile, in *Strange Cocktail: Translation and the Making of Modern Hebrew Poetry*, Adriana X. Jacobs observes that “placing translation at the center of a reading of modern Hebrew poetry allows its borders and branches to extend and multiply” (205). What follows, she notes, is that, far from fitting into a monolingual or national story, the set of literary connections she traces is just one of many possible configurations (206). More than “a thorn in the side” of national literatures, as Franco Moretti put it in “Conjectures on World Literature” back in 2000 (68), Comparative Literature has now become a parasite, infiltrating the corpora of national literary study and altering them to our likeness. If things continue in this vein, the victory of Comparative Literature will also be its vanishing, for all literary study will become comparative.

Translanguaging Comparative Literature, then, means starting from a place before or beyond the establishment of the borders that are taken for granted by the terms “translation,” “translingual” and “multilingual,” so as to ask where, to what end, and in what ways (how securely or flickeringly) they come into being, both in communities of usage and in the mind. In my view, translanguaging Comparative Literature also entails something more. We need to ask the same questions of the boundaries around the language that we use as scholars, theorists and critics: for instance, the language in which this essay is written. Auerbach’s famous worry, in 1952, that life the world over was becoming homogenized, or standardized (“vereinheitlicht sich”) (39) seems less pressing today, as globalization provokes endlessly inventive and particular forms of cultural resistance. But what certainly is becoming more homogenized is the language of comparative and world literary criticism. Professional English is ever more pervasive; and, while of course there are strong critical cultures in other languages, it is possible to discern what David Gramling has called “translational monolingualization” (10): different “languages” may be used, in the sense of vocabulary and grammar, but the “language” in play, in the sense of issues, concepts and the structure

of discourse, is increasingly uniform. The discipline of comparative and world literary study is becoming paradoxical: ever more interested in the linguistic variety and particularity of its objects of study, while its own linguistic production becomes ever less various and less particular.

Of course, there has always been a disparity between the language of literature and the language of literary criticism; and so there should be. Criticism is defined by that difference. It takes literature and translates it into a contrasting genre of discourse: from a language of imagination to one of reason, from poetic function to communicative function, from performance to statement, from ambiguity to clarity, and so on (of course, imagination, performance, etc. are all present to some degree in criticism too; but the broad-brush genre distinction still stands). Nevertheless, there are questions to be asked about this process of wholesale critical translation – all the more so in our discipline, and now. Periodized, national structures of literary study have obvious shortcomings, but one aspect of the linguistic environment they create still poses a challenge to our practices. If I were talking about Dickens to the British Association of Victorian Studies, the assumption would be that everyone in the room had had their own aesthetic encounter with the texts under discussion, and preserved the traces of it in their own memories and identities. So, my standardized critical discourse would be in conversation with those other traces of the distinctive language of the literary text, which could resist it. The speech act situation would be generically and linguistically dialogic.

But in a Comparative or World Literature conference it is likely that few if any members of the audience will know the literary texts under discussion. Certainly, we cannot assume that they will. Pierre Bayard's cheeky book, *Comment parler des livres que l'on n'a pas lus?*, has a distinctive oblique relevance to our discipline, since we spend so much of our time absorbing discussion of books we have not read. This means that critical discourse, with us, is more dominant than in the period-specific national forum. So, it is all the more important that we think carefully about how we translate into our discourse the texts we are discussing: how we represent them and put them across. Sounak Das has recently re-emphasized, from a Heideggerian perspective, the conflict between the singularity of a work of art and the critical frames we bring to bear on it: "if we are to find one word for what appears in a work of art, it must be something that always eludes our desire for encapsulating it within a framework" (103). How, then, can we register, point to, or bring

into our discussions an awareness of that which eludes our explanatory frameworks? How can our necessarily standardized critical discourse be kept open to, and in conversation with, the particularity of the literary texts that are its object?

In my view, we need, not only to talk about the translational innovations that I have been sketching, but to adopt them in our own writing – to recognise, with Clive Scott, that translation can be “a mode of reading which gives substance to reader response” (*Literary Translation* 10), and to realise that in our own translational critical practice: perhaps we could even make use, as he does, of graphic art and inventive typography. We need also to think about how our critical discourse as a whole relates to the multilingual, translingual and translanguaging existence of the literature and other arts that we discuss. Our language does not have to adopt the notions of correctness and professional decorum that have been inherited from national modes of study. English as a medium for comparative and world literary discussion does not have to be the same as English as a medium for the discussion of English literature. We can change it to suit our purposes; we can draw in the terminology of more diverse epistemologies; we can recognise ourselves as addressing a varied readership (as Sakai recommended two decades ago with his theorisation of “heterolingual address” (4)); we can revel in the multimodal and dynamic possibilities of online publication; we can foreground translingual dialogue and multilingual collaboration; we can activate our plural repertoires; we can translanguage our critical field.

The questions “What is Comparative Literature?” and “What is World Literature?” endlessly bedevil and energise our disciplines, which is all to the good. The only answer that is obviously true is: they are what is represented in all the Comparative and World Literature journals and associated academic books. It is for us to invent a language – or translanguage – of criticism that really does represent them.

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Ressorts de l'écriture réaliste

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Guy Larroux. *Le Récit réaliste et ses lieux.*

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Territoires du roman réaliste, tel aurait pu être le titre de l'essai de Guy Larroux, tant y est présente, explicite et filée, l'influence du sociologue et linguiste Erving Goffman (1922-1982). *La Mise en scène de la vie quotidienne* (*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1956/1959), la notion de *territoire* et la métaphore du *rituel*, chères à ce représentant de la seconde École de Chicago, hantent en effet de manière stimulante les quelque trois cents pages consacrées aux lieux du roman réaliste français et qui, d'Étienne de Jouy à Guy de Maupassant, passent au crible nombre d'œuvres et de séquences d'Honoré de Balzac, de Victor Hugo, d'Émile Zola, de Gustave Flaubert, des frères Goncourt, de Léon Cladel et d'Alphonse Daudet.

En empruntant la perspective de l'inscription du lieu dans la trame fictionnelle, la spécificité du roman réaliste-naturaliste n'est plus à démontrer : roman du *milieu* au sein duquel le personnage est « complété », dans une relation métonymique-synecdochique, « par son vêtement, par sa maison, par sa ville, par sa province » (*Zola Roman* 1299, cité par Larroux 12), il est aussi roman *expérimental* au sens où l'entendait Zola, qui en défalquait cette dimension de la médecine moderne d'un Claude Bernard. Si les topographies ancrent et orientent la fiction romanesque par « un fort contenu figuratif » au point d'en cristalliser le sens, elles biaisent aussi la lecture et jouissent d'une « inscription mémorielle » (10–11) qui n'est pas du simple fait de l'enseignement du littéraire. Elle serait plutôt le fruit d'un héritage poétique et rhétorique consommé qui

enjoignait les écrivains réalistes à renoncer au disparate de l'errance pour rallier les prescriptions d'un Flaubert – « Toute œuvre d'art doit avoir un point, un sommet, faire la pyramide » (720, cité par Larroux 11, n5) – ou pour renouer avec l'admiration paradoxale éprouvée par Zola à l'égard du Stendhal du *Rouge et le Noir* :

C'est un petit drame muet d'une grande puissance [...]. Or, le milieu n'apparaît pas une seule fois. Nous pourrions être n'importe où, et dans n'importe quelles conditions, la scène resterait la même [...]. Donnez l'épisode à un écrivain pour qui les milieux existent, [...] [e]t cet écrivain sera dans la vérité, son tableau sera complet.

(Zola *Romanciers* 75–76, cité par Larroux 13)

Cette « règle associative persistante » qui lie le récit réaliste et le lieu, Guy Larroux entend l'explorer à l'écart des *géographies littéraires* et en marge du *spatial turn* qu'a pris le champ des sciences humaines et sociales. Aussi, l'étude suggère-t-elle d'aborder « la mimésis du lieu et sa mise en discours » (10), la spatialité narrative, à partir de filiations somme toute assez attendues, pour ne pas dire classiques, dans les domaines de la poétique et de la sémiotique (Mikhaïl Bakhtine, Henri Mitterrand, Philippe Hamon, Denis Bertrand, Jacques Fontanille,...), un chœur auquel s'ajouteront les voix de Roland Barthes, d'Erich Auerbach, de Roman Jakobson, Tzvetan Todorov et Gaston Bachelard, tandis que l'analyse mobilise la critique génétique sur « les questions de construction de l'espace dans les fictions » (10) – e.a. les travaux qu'Oliver Lumbroso a réservés aux croquis de Zola (Lumbroso *Plume ; Dessins ; Zola Manuscripts*).¹

Pour mesurer l'apport de l'école réaliste-naturaliste, il s'agira dès lors ici de « mesurer l'empan de la représentation spatiale », de dresser « le répertoire des lieux » qui entrent « dans le calcul romanesque », de mesurer les effets de cadre ou de cadrage, qui donneraient plus de substance à la représentation et à la « machinerie du roman » qu'à la présentation proprement dite (14–15).

D'emblée, signale Larroux, plusieurs constats s'imposent. En étendant le répertoire des lieux, le roman réaliste a élargi sa palette, révélant toute une « combinatoire spatiale » qui commande « rigoureusement la structure profonde du récit » (18). Les espaces disjoints y ont appelé les

¹ Voir également, *ArchiZ*, le site des Archives zoliennes.

figures récurrentes de « marcheurs », *agents de liaison* entre les lieux et entre les milieux et qui, insiste l'auteur, ne sont pas les flâneurs (17, 267). Le roman a décrit les assommoirs, épinglé les trottoirs de la prostitution, baladé le lecteur dans le Paris-chantier laborieux du Second Empire, ouvert les hôpitaux, étalé les chambres borgnes où fleurit l'adultère. Il était logique qu'il prêtât sévèrement le flanc à la critique au point de voir ses auteurs taxés de « bas fondmanie » (Guy de Maupassant) selon une équivalence symbolique « mauvais lieux/mauvais goût » que l'on serait tenté d'étendre sociologiquement à une autre équation bien connue : mauvais genres/mauvaises lectures/mauvaises gens (voir Rosier). Mais, rappelle Larroux, « au temps du roman réaliste, il ne s'agit [plus] [...] de tenir une balance morale entre mauvais lieux et lieux plus élevés ou relevés, mais d'observer une nouvelle déontologie en matière de mimésis », de « s'astreindre à une nouvelle cohérence en matière de semiosis » (18).

L'étonnante diversité des milieux, leur exploration verticale et horizontale, les traversées de l'espace matériel et social ne restent donc pas sans effets poétiques. Elles participent à l'affinage de (sub) (di)visions (*cadres, galeries, scènes, mondes, coins...*) dont la polysémie, comme chez Zola, décante plusieurs connotations ou sont le résultat de sédimentations progressives : le « coin » sert tantôt à désigner la trivialité de l'endroit concret, tantôt à préciser une sphère sociale, tantôt encore à désigner l'œuvre d'art elle-même – ce « coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament » (Zola « Les réalistes », cité par Larroux 19). Elles élargissent aussi, selon le mot des Goncourt, le « droit au roman » pour des topographies médiocres, des lieux *du* commun, démocratiques, du quelconque, du vulgaire, traditionnellement maintenus à l'écart de l'espace fictionnel. Obéissant à un mouvement diastolique et systolique d'ouverture et de concrétion, l'inscription du lieu dans le roman réaliste implique d'envisager les lieux de croisement, de rencontre, les oppositions larges et classiques (villes vs. campagnes, ...) mais aussi de descendre aux ramifications des chroniques de mœurs et des physiologies (quartier, ménage, chambre, lit, ...). Elle invite à glisser vers les menus objets ou les « images objets » et leur manière de « faire système » (Jean Baudrillard). Elle encourage à ne négliger ni leurs couleurs, leurs odeurs, leurs ancrages polysensoriels, ni, surtout, leur prétention à s'incarner comme une « concentration du sens » (20–21), à glisser d'un rôle indiciel à une fonction iconique ou symbolique. Bref, leur capacité à devenir médiateurs, en trahissant le rapport de l'individu romanesque au monde.

Restait à Guy Larroux à empoigner les « lieux du discours », tant « sociotextes », perçus comme l'ensemble de ces représentations où affleure l'idéologie, que « socio- » ou « idiolectes » qui entérinent la diversité des idiomes, confortent la réalité dépeinte et l'altérité représentée par les ruses et diversités du langage qui ont d'ailleurs élevé la fiction moderne au rang du « roman parlant » (Jérôme Meizoz). Le roman réaliste-naturaliste superpose ainsi à l'observatoire des manières de vivre et à son intérêt ethnographique pour le quotidien, le « conservatoire du patrimoine linguistique » (Hamon 112, cité par Larroux 28), désormais ouvert à d'autres usages de la langue.

La lecture ethnocritique, ici prudemment forclose à l'intérieur des œuvres et à la spatialité du texte, insiste sur la conviction que « la découpe d'espace à laquelle se livre le romancier en élisant telle ville, tel quartier, telle rue possède son correspondant dans la forme de l'œuvre, au niveau de la conception générale (Balzac : 'Mon ouvrage aura sa géographie...') comme à celui des divisions particulières » (30). Paragraphes des romanciers, épisodes des feuilletonistes ont leur architecture signifiante comme, à une échelle supérieure, l'œuvre comprise dans sa globalité. « Bien coupé, mal cousu » titrait l'un des chapitres des *Misérables* : la métaphore peut servir à exemplifier, dans le récit réaliste, la prégnance des scènes, descriptions, portraits, paysages, intérieurs, digressions, natures mortes... qui endossent une fonction mimétique et symbolique, qui dessinent les contours « d'une poétique générale des dispositifs » (31). S'il fallait retenir un formidable raccourci où l'espace social se fait à la fois *lieu-image* et *lieu-discours*, ce serait assurément, énonce Larroux, celui de la pension Vauquier qui viendrait le premier à l'esprit, soit celui d'une pension bourgeoise, « donc médiocre », celui d'une résurgence linguistique étrangère incarnée dans la langue « accusatrice » (32) de ce Vautrin, « fameusement beau à dessiner » (Balzac 267).

Fort de cette synthèse théorique et de ces précautions méthodologiques, qui entendent dessiner les contours d'une nouvelle poétique et qui permettraient d'enchaîner les chapitres en faisant simultanément office de conclusion à l'ensemble, l'auteur souligne l'impossibilité à « désatialiser la littérature ». Et, il engage son lecteur à le suivre au gré de quatre parties, comportant chacune presque autant d'études de cas : *Lieux du texte*, *Territoires*, *Lieux de parole* et *Lieux de la morale*.

Le premier volet s'adosse directement à la méthode de Goffman. Il applique cette microsociologie du quotidien, empreinte d'éthologie (étude des rites d'introduction et des relations aux territoires) et de

linguistique (dans l'examen des interactions), à deux microscènes balzaciennes : la bourde d'Eugène Rastignac mentionnant le père Goriot lors de sa première visite aux Restaud ; un attroupement trivial sous un porche pour échapper à l'averse, dans *Ferragus*, mais qui permet *in fine* de mesurer les interactions sociales tandis que le romancier, en faisant se coudoier les personnages, se plie à un « exercice de démocratie fortuite » (43). Ici le *micro* vient discrètement épauler le *macro* et Larroux entend, à travers le changement d'échelle, restituer aux termes de mœurs (la comédie de mœurs balzacienne) et aux types (qui permettent d'embrasser la « multiplicité sociale ») toute leur épaisseur ethnographique. La dissection « grammairienne » du verbe flaubertien, de l'*aspectualisation* de l'espace et de la perversion d'un rapport attendu à la langue et à la description restituent, ensuite, à la promenade de Frédéric Moreau sur les Champs-Élysées, et à la première partie de l'*Éducation sentimentale*, toute leur dimension de « laboratoire » de l'écriture réaliste. L'enchaînement vers la considération du cadre énonciatif des récits de Zola paraissait tout indiqué à ce stade. Elle opère à partir des seuils « empoisonnés » de *Nana* (63). Seuils, perçus comme autant d'opérations d'ouverture et de fermeture, par lesquels transitent corps, regards et affects, mais sans qu'ils s'incarnent toujours explicitement. Car les seuils se manifestent également dans les *vides* du roman (blancs, ellipses, éclipses, digressions). Ces dispositifs non-parlants contredisent la réduction du « roman canonique (dramatique) » à « une succession de temps forts de nature scénique et de temps faibles de nature non-scénique » (65–67). À la *Sapho* de Daudet, Larroux réserve le rôle d'interroger la fonction et le(s) lieu(x) du portrait, explicite ou en creux, en regard d'une lignée d'écrivains naturalistes pour lesquels l'enjeu était bien de parvenir à dévoiler « les dedans par les dehors, sans aucune argumentation psychologique », selon la formule consacrée de Maupassant (79, n8).

Renouant avec les acquis de la sociologie des circonstances de Goffman, greffée des réflexions de Durkheim sur les rites, la deuxième section de l'ouvrage – *Territoires* – envisage la *déspatialisation* de cette notion, étendue des territoires fixes à des « objets non spatiaux mais territoriaux », tels la place temporaire d'un individu, la « territorialité égocentrique » de l'enveloppe corporelle de celui-ci ou l'ensemble des faits le concernant et dont il entend contrôler l'accès en présence de tiers, les « domaines réservés de la conversation ». Sous la loupe de ces « territoires du moi » (96), qui procèdent par cercles concentriques autour de l'individu, apparaît l'enjeu territorial de la trilogie des

Célibataires de Balzac qui permet de descendre aux derniers degrés de l'intérêt ethnologique des fictions. Le récit « plantigrade » de *Madame Bovary* étale, par ce même biais, la prédilection de l'artiste pour « le bas », le « terre à terre » dont Flaubert traduit les expressions idiomatiques dans la syntaxe du roman. Les portraits – que l'on serait tenté de dire « en pied » – y sacrifient au fétichisme de la bottine et révèlent leur empire sur les esprits et la narration (115). L'attache au réel par le « bas » engage tout autant l'étude contrastive du bouge Jondrette dans *Les Misérables* avec celle de la chambre des Maheu dans *Germinal*. Si « la notion de territoire repose sur l'individu », explicite Larroux, « ce qui touche en profondeur l'individu et qui le dénature, comme la misère, retentit nécessairement sur le choix d'un lieu et la manière de l'habiter » (131). L'auteur propose alors d'envisager ces deux lieux à partir d'une poétique spécifique de l'espace. Celle-ci a pour ambition d'articuler la topo-analyse de Gaston Bachelard, afin notamment de capter les effets affectifs des lieux, à ces tentatives de typologie – de cadastre –, comme celle proposée naguère par Henri Mitterrand afin de faire émerger une « syntaxe qui s'attacherait au parcours des personnages et au système des lieux » (121). À condition toutefois, rappelle Larroux, de ne pas négliger d'identifier ce qui se joue, au plan symbolique et idéologique, au cœur de ces agencements, organisations, transformations... De l'opposition du haut et du bas chez Hugo au mouvement inverse, du bas vers le haut, chez Zola, se déploie ainsi toute une « politique du roman » : une *politique* dont la teneur, selon Jacques Rancière, « ne se confond pas avec les idées de l'auteur ou de quelqu'un de ses représentants dans la fiction » dans la mesure où « elle est inséparable des structures littéraires et se trouve même incorporée à l'espace de la fiction » (Rancière 29, cité par Larroux 135).

La saisie kaléidoscopique de la rue de la Goutte-d'Or (*L'Assommoir*), à travers ses tracés, son chromatisme, son atmosphère sonore aide à comprendre comment les écrivains inventent des lieux et découpent un espace qui deviennent à la fois combinaisons symboliques et supports de la fiction... Et, pour saisir la relation qui peut exister entre le lieu proprement dit et la question de sa représentation artistique, l'auteur nous invite à quelques incursions en forêt, parties des considérations de Robert Pogue Harrison (*Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, 1992) et de la contribution de Baudelaire – « Le paysage » – au *Salon de 1859*, qui explicitent combien « les modes de présence de la nature dépendent grandement de la conscience de l'homme » (167).

Les lieux de parole revient sur la prétention et la motivation des naturalistes au roman « vrai », sur les présupposés qui sous-tendent encore à tort l'expression du « droit au roman » et sur ce qu'elle a éclipsé des discours sociaux tenus préalablement sur la classe ouvrière et dans les marges, au cœur de la littérature prolétarienne. La haute idée dans laquelle les écrivains réalistes-naturalistes tenaient le roman « documentaire », qu'ils estimaient capable d'annexer tous les savoirs et tous les langages pour le disputer de fait aux sciences sociales qui se constituaient seulement (173–174), n'écartait pas pour autant les questions de déontologie. Elles transparaissent notamment dans le jugement de Hugo sur *L'Assommoir*. Hugo et Zola ont beau partager une même justification médicale de l'écriture (174), l'auteur des *Misérables* motive sa position de « moraliste » mais rejette fermement l'indécence de la curiosité ou de l'indifférence qu'il lit chez le second. C'est que la méthode zolienne se veut en définitive surtout ethnographique, argumente Larroux, favorisant l'emploi du roman comme un « instrument de connaissance » où la représentation du peuple est rendue incontournable par le contexte socio-économique qui est celui du romancier. Mais, la connaissance va-t-elle forcément de pair avec l'aplanissement des différences (177–178) ? L'écrivain ne reste-t-il pas tributaire d'un racialisme qui l'enjoint à parler en fin de compte de manière assez similaire de l'altérité de l'« étranger du dedans » – le peuple – et de celle de « l'étranger du dehors » ? Les classes populaires sont-elles si différentes pour lui de ces populations qui conservaient encore pour les Goncourt tout l'attrait de l'exotisme ? Ces questions, Larroux, les resitue à partir des bases de l'ethnologie dessinée par Zola en préface à *L'Assommoir* et en explorant son « travail philologique ». Il y répond à travers l'exploitation que l'écrivain réserve à la thématique olfactive en lien avec la perméabilité redoutée des milieux sociaux et des territoires, pour souligner l'originalité et la nouveauté du contenu et de la méthode qui n'ont pas manqué de provoquer l'irritation de la critique. Une acrimonie qui s'est manifestée contre le style : le style, écrit Louis de Fourcaud dans *Le Gaulois*, « je le caractériserai d'un mot de M. Zola, qui ne pourra se fâcher de la citation : 'Il pue ferme' » (cité par Larroux 185) ! Et, une critique qui s'est scandalisée de l'usage d'un discours indirect libre, « mode particulièrement impur » avec tout ce que l'échange des opinions, « de bouche en bouche », « peut inspirer de suspicion et d'allergie pour qui veut préserver son corps social, et par conséquent son corps parlant » (187). À plus d'un titre la posture du romancier évoque donc celle de l'ethnologue (189) en prise avec les

difficultés d'une « observation participante », avec la volonté de *se mettre à la place de* la collectivité qu'il étudie pour la comprendre de l'intérieur et la traduire à l'extérieur.

Voilà le lecteur de Guy Larroux désormais aguerri pour aborder ensuite le travail de Léon Cladel, lui à qui Zola reconnaissait le mérite de tenir (décidément) « tout un *coin* de notre littérature » en rendant la *voix* à l'« humanité d'en bas » et « à tous ceux que la vie sociale écrase » (cité par Larroux 193). Avant de le convier à une approche chronotopique des *Misérables*, l'auteur applique aux dialogues fictifs et au rôle du malentendu dans l'*Éducation sentimentale*, les maximes élaborées par les conversationnistes (H. Paul Grice, ...). Il insiste sur l'importance du cadre situationnel dans le détressage des actes de langage et des actes de langage non verbaux et couple cette dimension à la sociologie interactionniste de Goffman – celui, cette fois, des *Façons de parler* (*Forms of Talk*, 1981). Ainsi ressort avec justesse la position délicate du héros, privé de « territoire de parole » mais paradoxalement disposé au romanesque, dans son rôle de détenteur de secrets et de *go between*. À parcourir les « paysages sonores » (Alain Corbin) de *La Fortune des Rougon*, Larroux délaisse progressivement la parole pour construire une sémiotique du son. Une fois démontés, les jeux d'échos et les procédés de saisies sonores entre « corps-source » et « corps-cible », souvent lointains, permettent de faire affleurer, non sans analogie avec les cadrages visuels, les réglages particuliers qui opèrent entre « la visée (à partir du sujet sensible) et la saisie (à partir de la source sonore) » (245).

L'Hermitte de la Chaussée d'Antin ou observations sur les mœurs et les usages français au commencement du XIX^e siècle, paru d'abord en articles (1811-1823) puis en recueil, trouve sa réhabilitation dans l'ultime division de l'étude – *Les lieux de la morale*. Par cette œuvre, située à la charnière des époques, rejetée par la postérité dans l'ombre de l'œuvre monumentale de Balzac, Étienne de Jouy contribua à l'éclosion d'un genre qui entendait réconcilier une « tradition » nationale – qui transparait dans sa dimension intertextuelle (Duclos, Lesage, Mercier, ...) – avec les entreprises de la presse anglaise (*The Spectator*, *The Observer*, ...). Une telle relation force à considérer étroitement l'intermédialité qui fonde ces « petits tableaux », « bulletin moral de la situation de Paris », « articles de journaux », « feuilletons », et la mise en abyme du journal lui-même, selon les formules privilégiées par l'écrivain pour désigner l'hybridité générique de sa production. L'ambition de la chronique des mœurs consistait à transposer, en France, cette « espèce de lanterne magique au moyen de

laquelle un moraliste, plus ou moins sévère, [pouvait reproduire] chaque semaine quelque partie du tableau fidèle [des] vices, [des] travers, [des] ridicules » (Jouy, cité par Larroux 258). Elle favorisa plusieurs épigones à l'origine de la « littérature panoramique » (conformément à l'expression de Walter Benjamin), des séries du type *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, ou des physiologies... Si l'analyse de cette vaste production en termes de genres littéraires laisse ici perplexe (259), la synthèse des éléments qui la fonde (la sérialité, la rubricité, le rapport au marché, la spécificité du support, la concurrence entre « matrice littéraire » et « matrice journalistique ou médiatique ») (259–262) prend toute sa pertinence dans la perspective des multiples procédés de « littérisation du journal » (jeu sur les intertextualités, fictionnalisation, ...) dont Marie-Ève Thérénty a montré l'ampleur et que Larroux, dans le cadre de son approche de la spatialité et selon une démarche médiologique, voudrait envisager à rebours ou sous l'angle de la réciprocité :

[...] cette chronique ramenée dans le giron de la littérature pourrait faire le chemin inverse. [...] il est possible et sans doute souhaitable de « rechroniciser » ces textes. Comment ? En leur rendant leurs milieux, leurs observatoires [...], leurs véhicules et routes concrètes [...]. Il conviendrait en somme de retremper la chronique de mœurs dans la matérialité et dans le réseau de communications qui la rend possible.

(266)

Les postures de l'Hermitte, tour à tour *promeneur, parleur* et *commensal*, ramenant le monde dans son espace privé, ouvriraient, dans ce continuel balancement entre « ouverture au dehors et enfermement au-dedans », la voie aux romanciers ultérieurs (Hugo, Balzac, Zola) (267). La médiation journalistique s'y révélerait dès lors capitale à la chronique, non pas seulement comme « cadre temporaire » ou « cuisine du genre », mais bien comme la « condition même de la communication et du sens » (269).

Vie et mort hanteront conclusivement la fin du volume de Larroux. D'abord à travers l'absence de vie dans les dénouements des récits des Goncourt qui cristallisent l'intention de l'œuvre mais se veulent aussi « une opération conjuratoire à l'endroit de la mort » ou de sa traduction pour l'artiste (défaite de l'orgueil, aphasie) ; ensuite dans *Fécondité*, inclassable texte agonique zolien, où la vie se bat contre les vices du temps tandis que le récit se déploie sur un fond personnel d'angoisses et de « vieilles phobies » que viennent griffer l'ironie et le rire (287). Une étude réservée à « La place du mort » chez Maupassant explicite,

une fois encore, la dimension ethno-sociologique que revêt la nouvelle réaliste. Elle jauge, dans le voisinage avec le-la mort-e, moribond-e, mort-e apparent-e, cadavre, leur sphère d'influence sur les vivants, en prise avec les croyances et l'évolution des connaissances médicales. Rites, calculs, égoïsme, simagrées ne suffisent pas à occulter la soumission « de l'homme aux lois et processus de la nature » mais en ressort toute une topologie inscrite dans le langage, les « jeux de places », « les distances que les humains observent par rapport à cette force d'attraction et de répulsion qu'est le mort » (301).

Au terme de ce parcours, se dégage du volume une impression de foisonnement qui découle de l'exploitation la plus polysémique des notions de *lieux* et de *territoires* que l'on appréciera de voir enfin se côtoyer. L'application, comme en photographie, d'une distance focale longue, pour un grossissement plus important – grâce à un parcours qui suit au plus près le texte dans ses séquences brèves, ses thèmes, ses motifs, sa syntaxe, sa langue, ses microstructures, ses vides ou ses représentations polysensorielles –, offre ainsi une mosaïque d'approches et une vue kaléidoscopique. Il reviendra au lecteur, guidé par l'introduction, de conférer à cette bigarrure et à l'ensemble, un plus large angle de vue auquel invite la coexistence, la complémentarité et l'imbrication des chapitres, de façon à dresser ainsi un panorama complet des ressorts de l'écriture réaliste, d'en tirer des leçons aisément transférables à d'autres opus, à l'exploration des mécanismes d'autres mises en espace. Une conclusion ramassée aurait toutefois pu aider à tracer de nouvelles perspectives pour ne pas reporter le lecteur vers l'incipit de l'étude et ne pas terminer aussi abruptement une longue traversée sans ménager un seuil à la sortie de l'ouvrage.

À plusieurs reprises, le livre semble encourir le risque du disparate, de la transition légèrement forcée, voire le reproche de la répétition. L'on est parfois volontiers tenté, mais, avouons-le, de manière subjective, de lui suggérer une autre géographie. Globalement, c'est néanmoins l'impression d'unité qui domine la richesse d'une analyse généreuse et jamais prolixe ou rhapsodique. L'on pointerait tout au plus quelques inégalités : les dernières sections n'ont peut-être pas la même assise théorique que les premières, et procèdent par endroits d'une intention bien différente (réhabilitation de l'œuvre ou de l'écrivain, emprunt de biais critiques plus délicats). Si l'explicitation du classicisme de Maupassant (307–316), par exemple, peut se comprendre au sein de la définition serrée qu'en donne Larroux, en dépassant Brunetière pour rallier

Sainte-Beuve (314–315), fallait-il pour autant la produire en marges des acquis de la sociologie littéraire ? Convenait-il de tenir à distance ce que toute esthétique porte d'idéologie et ce que toute réception suppose de hiérarchisation, d'autant que le terme *classique*, dès son étymologie, n'est porteur d'aucune neutralité sur le plan social ? La sociopoétique, grande absente ici – celle d'Alain Montandon ou, dans le champ des études de réception, de Georges Molinié et d'Alain Viala, référencé en note pour son appréciation des fonctionnements du champ littéraire précisément en lien avec la *fabrication* des classiques² – n'aurait-elle pas pu apporter plus d'irisations à cette contribution, en élargissant le point de vue et, peut-être, en se faisant elle-même médiatrice, au long de l'ouvrage, entre d'autres approches disjointes ? Ce positionnement expliquera sans doute également le silence sur la sociologie littéraire de Pierre Bourdieu et son apport à l'étude des effets de champ ou des violences symboliques répercutées dans le langage. Ces orientations disciplinaires devaient-elles être éclipsées par une microsociologie du quotidien ?

L'essai aurait ensuite assurément gagné à tempérer la déférence souvent trop marquée envers l'outillage critique et quelques figures tutélaires, péché véniel certes, mais qui voile l'originalité de la somme que présente Guy Larroux et qui met en sourdine les apports plus novateurs d'éclairages interdisciplinaires, jusqu'ici diffus – dans le temps et dans l'espace de la critique littéraire. La luxuriance et la diversité des sources et références ne sont pas étrangères au fait. Elles n'empêchent cependant de regretter l'absence de quelques titres. Les *Postures littéraires. Mises en scène modernes de l'auteur* (2007) de Jérôme Meizoz n'auraient-elles pu nourrir encore la réflexion ? L'étude – *Fictions à la chaîne. Littératures sérielles et culture médiatique* (2017) – que Matthieu Letourneux a consacrée à la sérialité dans le sillage de la poétique du support de Marie-Ève Thérénty n'aurait-elle pu nourrir l'examen de l'écriture de Jouy et démentir au passage certains automatismes laissant croire que l'illustration graphique du lieu ou du personnage colle au plus près à sa représentation littéraire (11) ? *L'effet-personnage dans le roman* (2015) et *Poétique des valeurs* (2001) de Vincent Jouve n'auraient-ils pas été de nature à orienter les volets plus anthropologiques de l'enquête de Larroux et à influencer la recherche menée sur les voix narratives en prenant du recul par rapport aux figures

² L'on ajoutera à la note de l'auteur (314, n19), citant l'article de Viala « Qu'est-ce qu'un classique ? », le numéro thématique « Qu'est-ce qu'un classique ? » dirigé par Viala.

d'« autorité », soit en se détachant un peu plus des déclarations d'intention des écrivains ?

Enfin, nous rejoignons l'auteur sur l'incontestable « force iconique » (11) qui accompagne le lieu romanesque et qui fait cortège aux écritures de mœurs, aux formats presse et aux représentations physiologiques (31). Et, nous constatons combien *in fine* cette dimension en vient à constituer un axe qui traverse tout le livre. N'aurait-il pas fallu dès lors réserver une partie ou un chapitre spécifique à l'*iconicité* de l'écriture réaliste ? Cela aurait pu se concrétiser en suivant l'invite timide de l'auteur à convier plus amplement à l'étude « graveurs, caricaturistes et autres faiseurs d'images » (31, 35, 41). La notion d'*iconotexte* aurait pu s'ajouter à celles de *sociolecte*, *sociotexte*, etc. La contribution de Guy Larroux aurait assis là plus solidement une approche intermédiaire qui, bien qu'inéluctable et présente, s'explique tardivement dans le déroulé de l'analyse. L'attention portée à d'autres fonctionnements médiatiques auraient notamment permis de rapprocher la perception des « seuils » (65–66, 70) des fonctions des vides intericoniques présents dans d'autres médias. Elle aurait aussi pu fédérer plus étroitement une série de pans de son approche : la découpe graphique du texte et ses signes, les jeux de regards, les parentés entre écriture séquentielle et procédés cinématographiques (41–43, 54–55, 64, 70, 137, 216), photographiques ou topographiques (127, 249, 303), l'inscription de la physiognomonie dans l'écriture (127), la prégnance du regard du peintre et la fonction du paysage (141–148, 155, 277, 306), au-delà du réalisme de Courbet et sur fond de bouleversements culturels (155). En convoquant Philippe Dufour – *La littérature des images* (2016) –, Larroux est loin d'ignorer les développements où l'exploration des fonctions de l'image l'aurait ainsi entraîné. Reconnaissons donc que la question mérite un traitement indépendant. Il demande à s'épanouir ailleurs, sans appesantir un ouvrage soigné et déjà suffisamment fécond.

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Re-assessing Romantic Visions of Nature?

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Phenomena beginning with the letter “r” appear to be endowed with unusual and mysterious longevity: if rock’n’roll supposedly never dies, a similar slogan might very well have to be coined for romanticism and its astounding capacity for rebirth and morphing. Likewise, the quest for realism, be it in its strict philosophical or more aesthetic sense, is alive and well too, a renewed speculative turn being its latest incarnation.

In these ecologically perilous times now commonly referred to as the Anthropocene, romantic and realist energies most certainly seem very much *of* the moment, as provocatively shown throughout the volume edited by Chris Washington and Anne C. McCarthy: besides reminding us that romanticism and realism were never homogeneous to begin with, this rich and stimulating collection of challenging and unorthodox essays repeatedly shows us that contemporary realist and romantic resurgences are not unified either in how they invite us to reconsider the biosphere and our place in it.

As is well known, if the romantic phenomenology of mind and its aesthetics actively redefined the link binding the human to the non-human “o/Other,” the resulting reading of nature unfolded on a spectrum ranging from Blake and Byron’s dark ecological distrust of the lumpish, undifferentiated material to the downright eco-mystical

and proto-ecological vision of Wordsworth. However, differences aside, most aficionados of romanticism, myself included, have commonly assumed that the romantic engagement with the material world refuses to let go of the perceptual equation: from Blake to Keats, what makes the different versions of romantic nature converge is their shared interest in the degree to which the perceiver's faculty of Imagination¹ *co-constitutes* or is *co-constituted* by the material universe perceived. As foregrounded by Washington and McCarthy in their brief introduction, it is indeed *correlation* over *contingency* that fundamentally underpins the romantic streams of incipient environmental awareness (2–3).

This explains why, again and again in their book, this foundational “correlationism” comes under attack, for it allegedly imprisons romanticism in both anthropocentrism and a marked resistance to the possibility of a world without humans (1).² Supposedly, thus, its correlationist bend undermines romanticism's ability to deal with the very catastrophism that the Anthropocene requires us to contemplate and that speculative realism willingly embraces. The same correlationist refusal to sever the perceiver from the perceived also justifies why romanticism's philosophical bedfellow is commonly thought to be some variety of idealism – i.e., very roughly speaking, a philosophy which, in both its multiple Western and Eastern forms of expression, does not consider that reality exists entirely independently from the mind.³ In other words, to many, associating romanticism with any form of philosophical realism would amount to trying to fuse opposites like water and fire, since taken at its most basic level of definition, realism corresponds to “a theory that objects of sense perception or cognition exist independently of the mind” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/realism>). Yet this is the bold, inconceivable leap and wager that the contributors to *Romanticism and Speculative Realism* precisely attempt. The essays collected here re-interpret various iconic romantic voices and works in the light of speculative realism and its rejection of “the so-called anti-realism of

¹ As a faculty both filtering the material world and capable of transcending its mere empirical surfaces, Imagination often deserves a capital “I” in romantic studies.

² A typical case in point is, for instance, Byron's “Darkness” (1816) and how an actual volcanic eruption in the Indonesian archipelago fuelled its imagining of a painful and final apocalypse for humankind.

³ A simple glance at the Wikipedia page for “idealism” will reveal that this is indeed a very summary definition of a term coming in an infinite number of shades and variations.

Immanuel Kant,” but they aim to do so “without returning therefore to naïve and simplistic forms of materialism” (2).

Speculative realism does certainly not come across as a unified paradigm in the book. Though other representative figures are also enlisted – such as, for instance, British thinkers Ray Brassier (b. 1965) and Timothy Morton (b. 1968), as well as the American philosophers Levy Bryant⁴ and Graham Harman (b. 1968) – it is, however, the realist speculation engaged in by French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux (b. 1967) that in the main supports or gets challenged in the readings offered here.

Amongst others, Meillassoux is known for *Après la finitude: Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence* (2006) and *L'Inexistence divine*, the doctoral thesis he defended in 1997 and has continued to rework ever since (95).⁵ In a nutshell, Meillassoux

asks us to consider the status of statements about ancient events predating the relatively recent appearance of human beings [...] the correlationist will not admit that a being actually *exists* prior to being given to humans, but only that it is *given to humans* as existing prior to such givenness.

(Harman 106)

In his attack on correlationism, Meillassoux seeks to

re-activate a philosophy of the absolute by re-asserting the absolutizing capacity of thought. This shall be made possible by thinking a being which is absolutely independent of thought, that is, a being unaffected by our mode of apprehending that being in subjectivity. [...] That is, what turns out to be absolute is not the correlation between thought and being but the very *fact* of the correlation's necessarily contingent existence.

(Niemoczynski loc. 957–64)

Meillassoux's readiness to accept a world of entities existing outside the human presence and filtering of the human mind not only implies a distancing from the linguistic turn taken by philosophy in the last few decades, but also involves a materialist acceptance “of a universe that is fundamentally unfinished [...] and open to radical change” (21). This universe of “infinite possibility” not only supposes a “hyper-chaos”

⁴ Date of birth nowhere specified.

⁵ Many parts of it remain unpublished to this day.

doing away with “eternal natural laws” (21), but curiously also generates a materialism still making room for “a God who is no longer the first and necessary cause, but rather the last contingent effect—a God who is no longer absolute ... but who is nevertheless ultimate” (Meillassoux, qtd. 94).

It is in his refusal to embrace atheism pure and simple that Meillassoux’s system parts ways with other voices of object-oriented ontology (abbr. OOO), a contemporary form of materialism with which it, otherwise, has much in common. Indeed, even if Meillassoux does not share Graham Harman and Timothy Morton’s axiom of “the self-contradictory status of objects as fundamental” (3), Meillassoux’s thought too appears to call for “an upgraded theory of the sublime, which deals in scary and unknowable things” in an age of ecological crisis that renders visible “hyperobjects” or objects beyond our grasp because so “massively distributed in time and space [...]” (Morton 207–208).

Washington and McCarthy’s collection thus provides a wealth of original, thought-provoking re-interpretations of romantic culture often read through or against the grain of Meillassoux’s brand of speculative realism. Though all the essays to some extent decode aesthetics via the prism of speculative realism, the thirteen contributions fall, roughly speaking, into three main categories: (1) pieces in which the recognition of agentiveness in the non-human “o/Other” bridges speculative realism and material ecocriticism; (2) essays which specifically discuss narratological and aesthetic questions in the light of some of the potentialities and limitations of speculative realism; and (3) analyses more specifically focusing on the re-assessment of philosophical voices through the prism of speculative realism.

Chapters two, three, six, and eight belong to the first group. In the second chapter, “Affect and Air: The Speculative Spirit of the Age,” Michele Speitz enlists both John Keats and Charlotte Smith to explore the air-related, protean energies of non-human physical creation. Leaning on the “pneumatics” and “aerography” outlined by scientific discourse in the romantic age, Speitz proposes a physically-embodied form of the sublime that moves away from Kant and “privileges material relation and transformation—not transcendence” (41). In direct continuity with Speitz’s analysis, the third chapter likewise centers on affect: in “Feeling as Hyperobject in Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*,” Joël Faflak re-interprets through object-oriented ontology this iconic poem teeming

with mysterious, quasi autonomous surges of emotion and epiphanic gushings of the Imagination.

Chapter six, “Surfing the Crimson Wave: Romantic New Materialisms and Speculative Feminisms,” foregrounds the danger of doing away with “relationality” in both object-oriented ontology and new materialist readings of the impersonal agentiveness of the physical world. In this sixth chapter, Kate Singer chooses to bridge Jane Bennett’s notion of the “assemblages of things that are both matter and energy” with Karen Barad’s “attention to the entanglements of language and materiality.” For her argument, Singer leans on Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, and William Wordsworth to unravel the assumed anthropocentrism of the poetic form of address known as *prosopopeia*. Singer shows how “the materiality of the nonhuman infects the speaker’s own body” (113) in a relational “new material fluidity” that runs counter to the isolationist approach to objects as “the basic unit of materiality” that object-oriented ontology privileges. Singer also highlights the extent to which, ironically, OOO appears unaware of its built-in masculinist anthropocentrism (119–20).

Again revolving around the impersonal agentiveness of non-human organisms, chapter eight substitutes endured relationality for welcome forms of it. In “Astral Guts: The Nemo-centric Self in Byron and Brassier,” Aaron Ottinger reads *Don Juan* through the work of Elizabeth Wilson, “who espouses a scientific approach to the gut and its role in determining the human psyche and behavior” (158). In discussing how the Byronic protagonist is “[e]aten by his own dinner,” Ottinger considers that Byron’s diminished autonomous subject anticipates Brassier and Meillassoux’s attack on the correlationist self (159–61).

Less preoccupied with human permeability to the agentiveness of the material non-human, a second group of analyses (in chapters one, four, five, ten, eleven, twelve, and thirteen respectively) links speculative realist thought to narratological and aesthetic questions. In chapter one, “Of Meillassoux’s Contingencies and Scott’s Plots: Rethinking Probability in a World of Unreason,” Evan Gottlieb uses the Frenchman’s theorisation of “hyper-chaos” to challenge Georg Lukács’s dialectic materialist reading of Scott’s narratives in terms of “supposed commitments to historical progress and narrative causality” (22).

Moving from historical to apocalyptic types of narrative, Allison Dushane contributes a fifth chapter that is a must-read for Blake

scholars: the author here re-interprets Blake's unorthodox Christian eschatology through the paradoxical one developed in Meillassoux's counter-intuitive kind of religious skepticism (one which, as explained earlier, refutes the pre-given existence of the divine, whilst not denying its possibility as an ultimate contingent effect). In establishing a dialogue between Blake and Meillassoux, Dushane highlights how "affective transformation is a key component of revolutionary radicalism" for both (106).

Chapter twelve takes the reader from eschatological to (post-) colonial narrative. In "Objects Taken for Wonders: Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*," Alexander Dick applies the prism of hyperobjects and contingency to the 1789 autobiography of the former slave turned "leading figure in the English Evangelical abolitionist movement" (238). Dick not only shows how Equiano's narrative subverts the correlationist turn inherent in eighteenth-century scientific discourse, but also how slavery and empire actually operate as hyperobjects for the colonised subject. In his discussion of how Equiano revives a sense of "wonder in knowledge" akin to the one that material contingency inspires in speculative realism (238), Dick's chapter is one of the rare ones to shine a welcome light on the challenges opposed by speculative realism to the epistemological value of empirical science (239–42).

What differentiates chapter eleven, "Poe's Black Cat," from the others preoccupied with narratology is that Graham Harman, one of the foundational voices of object-oriented ontology, does not focus on a specific genre of narrative, but rather concentrates on the basic strategies for "capturing a reader's attention" (231) in all narratives, a central question when it comes to opening aesthetics to biocentrism. According to Harman, "there are two and *only* two basic ways" of spellbinding the reader: "We either *create* a new bond between one thing or another, or we *sunder* an already existing bond" (231). To understand how to trigger "fusion" or "fission," Harman relies on the "four *tensions* between the different kinds of objects and qualities" identified by object-oriented ontology (219).⁶ By way of demonstration, he scrutinises the prose of Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft to reveal how these tensions between "real objects," "real qualities," "sensuous objects," and "sensuous

⁶ As Harman explains, these are "RO-RQ, RO-SQ, SO-SQ, SO-RQ," in which R stands for "real," S for "sensuous," O for "object," and Q for "quality" (Harman 219).

qualities” allow the authors to modulate distance and closeness, eeriness and terror.

Next to the string of essays exploring how speculation and contingency modify our understanding of extended narratives, three essays focus more narrowly on the aesthetics of condensed poetic expression. The fascinating chapter four turns to the sonnet and its underestimated biocentric potential. In “Blank Oblivion, Condemned Life: John Clare’s ‘Obscurity,’” David Collings examines in close reading the extent to which this particular sonnet borders on speculative realism and its querying of “how one can begin to apprehend real things or events that take place without our apprehension” (77).

An equally interesting pendant to Collings’s contribution is chapter ten, in which Greg Ellerman turns his attention to the ode as a form encapsulating the “plasticity” of poetry. More specifically, Ellerman discusses how Keats’s “Negative Capability” operates in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” via the theories of Catherine Malabou (b. 1959). The latter, says Ellerman, looks “beyond the vantage of the finite subject to conceptualize the real” as speculative realists would (198), whilst offering “a corrective to speculative realist philosophies that are inattentive or hostile to the aesthetic” (197). Enlisting Malabou’s notion of “plasticity,” i.e. “the simultaneous giving and receiving of form – a process immanent in the real itself” (198), Ellerman brilliantly foregrounds how Keats’s ode “interiorizes or assimilates the urn,” but simultaneously “insists on its own material being” (210).

In a completely different vein, chapter thirteen proposes “An Object-Oriented Media Studies: The Case of Romantic Cookery Books.” Speculative realism and humour not exactly coming across as natural bedfellows, this chapter provides a welcome touch of comic relief at the end of a volume that sometimes makes for dry reading. With amusing relish and gusto, Brian Rejack explores “the fundamental objectness of the human subject” (257) by analysing the “embodied sensation” which cookery books “activate [...] in their users” (262) as artefacts that “more self-consciously acknowledge their connection to sensation than typically does a book of poetry” (262). As cultural and aesthetic products which, by definition, “make visible the particularities of mediation” (263), cookery books help Rejack to reflect on seminal questions like: “To what extent does a poem encode sensuous pleasure in a manner akin to a receipt? To what extent do romantic poets explore that process via reflection on the sensuousness of mediation itself?” (268).

Next to new materialist readings of romantic verse and to essays delving into the aesthetics of romanticism proper, a third set of contributions offers re-readings of a more purely philosophical kind. Chapter seven, “Romantic Postapocalyptic Politics: Reveries of Rousseau, Derrida, and Meillassoux in a World without Us,” insists on the political relevance of speculative realism and its foregrounding of contingency. Chris Washington interprets Rousseau as a thinker who “decenters and displaces humans from both the state of nature and the society that supposedly follows after” (135). Playing on the convergences and tensions between Rousseau, Derrida and Meillassoux, Washington understands Rousseau’s state of nature as an experiment in thought promising “a life-to-come based on a nonanthropocentric social contract” (13). For Washington, thus, Rousseau is anything but *passé* in the Anthropocene.

In a similar vein, chapter nine does not see romantic poetry as irrelevant to times requiring an emptying of the anthropocentric subject. In “A Perilous Change of Correspondence: Romanticism after [Nature],” Mary Jacobus reads Shelley’s “Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni” in the light of Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory. In so doing, she not only shows how “Mont Blanc” and its “Lucretian world of process and flow” in which “materiality moves” is “Latourian *avant la lettre*” (186). Conversely, she also uncovers the “persistence of romantic tropes” in Latour’s own writing (188).

As this survey of its contents readily suggests, *Romanticism and Speculative Realism* is definitely a collection whose originality will arouse the interest of even the most jaded reader. As such, it constitutes beyond doubt an important contribution to the re-assessment of romantic visions of nature. Far from being extinct, their rich complexities continue to offer an incontrovertible anchorage for any environmental thinking and positioning in the Anthropocene, as amply proved by the essays curated by Washington and McCarthy.

Despite its vital rejuvenation of the debate around the intricacies of romantic nature(s), is there anything that the volume could have done better? The answer is “yes” in view of the two types of readers the book hopes to reach: specialists in philosophy not necessarily having a matching expertise in romantic studies, on the one hand, versus romantic studies scholars not automatically acquainted with the subtleties of the latest contemporary philosophical schools, on the other. As someone well versed in romanticism and ecocriticism, but certainly not overly familiar with Quentin Meillassoux and related philosophical voices, I felt that,

best intentions to the contrary, the book definitely caters more to the first group than to the second.

As a reader discovering Meillassoux and his universe, I also think that these wonderful essays work better taken individually than the book does as a whole. The reason for this is simple: the editors have decided to privilege *contingency* over *pedagogy* as an overarching organising principle. Indeed, newcomers to speculative realism discover the philosophy of Meillassoux and related figures in a piecemeal manner, being offered *fragmentary* aspects of their approach in most essays. Yet, for pedagogy's sake, a *much more systematic* overview of speculative realism in a separate theoretical chapter at the beginning – other than the brief theoretical preliminaries developed in the “Introduction” – would have proved highly profitable to readers less trained in pure philosophy than in romantic studies.

In addition, a detailed theoretical chapter of this kind ahead of the essays – and perhaps even a summing-up coda – might have helped to address some important questions, which, in fact, are touched upon only obliquely. As an ecocritic, for instance, I would have liked greater clarity with regard to the convergences and divergences existing between Meillassoux's thought and the material ecocriticism fostered by new materialisms. One is left with the impression that material ecocriticism attributes a different, more co-constitutive kind of agentiveness to vibrant matter than Meillassoux does, but the important nuances between the two in their approach to the agentive potential of non-human actants are not sufficiently elucidated. Nor is there any word said about the reception of Meillassoux's thought and object-oriented ontology in general in the broader ecocritical community: how compatible does speculative realism prove with some forms of postcolonial and environmental justice engagement with nature? Beyond some of the intersections suggested by Alexander Dick in chapter twelve, we can only surmise.

Astonishingly too in view of the audacity otherwise characterising the book as a whole, two major questions, ones certainly requiring intellectual boldness and daring, hardly receive any attention. Apart from brief mentions of David Hume (23–24), Meillassoux and affiliated thinkers are not positioned with sufficient clarity as against previous forms of philosophical realism or speculative thought. In particular, given the environmental slant of the volume and its desire to engage with the Anthropocene and its multi-faceted crisis of extinction, I was

surprised to encounter so little reference to Darwinism and paleontology as major forms of speculative discourse in the hard sciences.

On a totally different front, I am also curious as to how Meillassoux and object-oriented ontology would (or not) require a re-assessment of the East-West connections in romanticism. As pointed out earlier in this review, idealism does not only exist in Euro-American but also in Asian philosophical discourse. Attacking correlationism and the perceptual equation does not just entail parting with Kant, but also means shooting fiery arrows in the direction of Buddhist and Hindu epistemologies. This is not of secondary importance given the intriguing confluences⁷ between romantic poetry and Asian forms of spirituality/philosophy or religious mythology.⁸ Nor is this insignificant when one remembers the long and rich history of scholarly exploration of romanticism in Asia, due precisely to how romantic verse at times resonates with the philosophical systems that have flourished in the East.⁹ So how do speculative realism at large, object-oriented ontology, and Meillassoux's version of both call for a re-evaluation of how East meets West in romantic verse?

As a reader cradled in ecocriticism and romantic studies more than in pure philosophy, I would thus have benefited from a more pedagogical and systematic cartography of Meillassoux's thought and today's speculative realism as a whole. Yet, such reservations aside, these fascinating essays and their power to refresh stale ideas have definitely convinced me of the potential of Meillassoux and others for deepening and extending the enquiries of a romantically-inflected ecocriticism. Thanks to this volume, therefore, my journey on the road of speculative realism is definitely just beginning ...

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⁷ The term "confluence" – as opposed to direct influence – implies fortuitous and not necessarily intentional parallels.

⁸ To take but two examples, Keats's "Negative Capability" intersects in more ways than one with Buddhist non-duality and its concept of "no-self," whilst the mythological universe of Blake's Prophetic Books presents a number of surprising parallels with the *Baghavat Gita*.

⁹ See, for instance, Clark and Suzuki; Okada; or Watson and Williams.

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COMPTES RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

Retraction

It was recently brought to the attention of *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research* that, despite our editorial vigilance, the review of Dr. Wallace's book authored by Manfred Engel and published in our 2019 issue: Manfred Engel, rev. Nathaniel Wallace, *Scanning the Hypnograph. Sleep in Modernist and Postmodern Representation*, Leiden and Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2016. *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research* 35 (Automne/Fall 2019): 201–205, contained factual errors and other issues that are inconsistent with our published policies and procedures. After careful review and consideration, the editorial team believes the appropriate remedy is to retract the review in its entirety.

**Eugene Eoyang, Gang Zhou, and Jonathan Hart,
eds. *Comparative Literature Around the World:
Global Practice.***

**Paris: Honoré Champion, 2021. Pp. 259. ISBN:
9782745354693.**

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There are several truisms surrounding the concept of comparative literature. For example, it at times seems inevitable that any collection of essays on the subject of comparative literature itself will turn into a discussion debating what, exactly, comparative literature *is* and *how*, exactly, it ought to be practiced. There is also the commonly-held narrative surrounding the emergence of comparative literature as a field of academic enquiry, in which the trajectory, beginning in response to Goethe's *Weltliteratur*, develops along a decidedly European line, only gradually spiraling outward in the latter half of the twentieth century. *Comparative Literature Around the World: Global Practice* seeks to sidestep the first and enrich the second, and it succeeds admirably on both counts.

Within this rather unassuming volume, we find fifteen essays centered around the question of how comparative literature is actually practiced throughout the world. Right from the start, it is clear that the editors have deliberately collected work with a global perspective in mind: the essays are groups regionally, with three from the Americas (both North and South), four from Europe, three from Asia, four from North Africa and the Middle East, and one from Oceania. This admirable effort at global balance presents a truly international perspective on comparative literature as it is practiced both individually and institutionally, academically and politically, historically and presently (and even

potentially, as several essays project possible trajectories for the practice in their respective countries or languages). To quote from the Introduction, penned by Eugene Eoyang and Gang Zhou, “[t]hese reflections on global practice have been revelatory” (16) – they quite literally cast new light upon the discipline, highlighting corners and contours that otherwise might remain unknown to those practicing in the field from a distinctive geographic or institutional position. While many of these pieces take the form of a survey or report on the history of the discipline within their own country, the effect of reading them together places these histories in a specific kind of dialogue: a conversation that is refreshingly non-combative, but rather one in which each speaker is able to present their perspective and praxis without the need for defensive posturing. The result is a book that is widely informative and useful to comparatists around the world, regardless of their location geographically or intellectually.

While it would be impossible to touch on every insight and contribution in a collection as broad and varied as this, there were several themes that appeared repeatedly, despite the differences in individual particulars. Many, though not all, of the contributions focused their efforts around a history regarding the practice of comparative literature within their respective countries. As a whole, these contributions depict a field in various states of realization and implementation. Reading these histories in succession foregrounds the larger geopolitical forces and historical currents within which comparative literature occurs and against which the field at times pushes. Policies of the state influence the shape and configuration of university offerings; publication venues and academic societies may arise via participant support or cultural policies; and the economic pressures facing the academy at large impact not only the shape and even existence of departments, but at a deeper level, the ability for comparative literature—when understood to require multiple languages—to continue as language programs are reduced to center on those languages deemed economically, rather than literarily, significant. I know I am preaching to the choir here – it is nothing new to note that forces exterior to literature such as politics, culture, economics, religion, etc. impact not only what gets produced within literature itself, but also impacts the academic study of that literature – but it truly is eye-catching to read through example after example of such forces at work within the field of comparative literature itself.

The give and take between the intercultural and intracultural impulses within the field also emerged as an important theme throughout the volume. There are multiple histories (primarily, but not all, in the European and American sections) in which comparison itself appears as a form of academic legitimization (following the trajectory of the European scientific revolution), and in these comparative literature is thus part of a larger project of knowledge production via collecting, sifting, and categorizing various literary artifacts. In these histories, comparative literature praxis conceives of the comparative act in terms of extension, reaching out beyond linguistic and national boundaries. This outward-facing comparative stance, however, is inherently problematized by an underlying and uneasy tension with the legacy of colonialism and the intercultural impulse must constantly interrogate its own assumptions of legitimacy and prowess. In contrast, there are also multiple histories in which comparison is depicted as arising inherently in a culture due to the presence of multiple languages and peoples interacting. The expectation of multi-lingual aesthetic exchange and fluency within a larger cultural identity cultivates a comparative literature that understands the comparative act in terms of reflection – a means of clarifying and enriching the inherent diversities within the larger cultural framework. This intracultural positioning of comparative work, however, is likewise inherently problematized by an underlying capacity for the kind of focus that occludes the ability to perceive and engage with broader, disparate literatures. At times, this choice is consciously made in reaction to another culture's failure to validate and engage (see, for example, Harish Trivedi's understandable reaction to René Wellek's dismissal of Sisir Das's concerns regarding the lack of Western engagement with the literatures of India: "If they don't, can't, and won't do us, why should we slavishly hanker to try and do them?" [167]). Setting the histories of the various intercultural and intracultural approaches to the comparative project together here aids in the construction of a more robust comparative practice able to benefit and balance both sides of this messy but ultimately effective equation.

The focus on the practice of comparative literature throughout the volume is structured around a notion of the global community as built primarily on national identity. The format here foregrounds the ways in which the current articulation of the field requires the specificity of national identity: we have Brazilian comparative literature, Georgian comparative literature, Swedish comparative literature,

Chinese comparative literature, Indian comparative literature, Turkish comparative literature, and Iranian comparative literature to name only a few of the examples discussed here. There are, of course, difficulties that arise from this particular configuration. When the comparative project is delineated nationally, the form of comparative literature is focused linguistically, culturally, and politically. Questions arise concerning who determines the shape and content of the field within each national space, and whether such determinations can be made without reifying colonial structures and Western narratives and valuations of knowledge. With so much diversity and difference within national identities themselves, is the category of a national comparative literature artificial in its essence, and if so, is that artificiality a problem or a solution that provides access and shape to an overlapping and mutagenic aesthetic production? The messiness of the field is, of course, in part evidence of literature's own messiness as part of humanity's continued aesthetic production. In reading these essays and admiring the way they effectively present the themes and tensions noted above, I was reminded of a line from Scottish author Ali Smith's *Artful* (2012): "Art is always an exchange, like love, whose giving and taking can be a complex and wounding matter" (Smith 167). While it may seem overreach to ascribe the power of complexity and wounding to the ostensibly cool academic work of the field of comparative literature, embedded within these essays lies evidence of such passion both for the various literatures themselves as well as for the institutional and theoretical structures that inform the comparative project.

That passion is on display particularly in the pieces that seek to add a level of theoretical depth to their presentation of practice. The first essay by Dorothy Figueira on comparative literature in the United States is particularly effective in its call for comparative literature in the US to resist the steady march of world literature, arguing that the shift away from multi-lingual fluencies strips the field of its force. Sibel Irzik and Jale Parla's piece on comparative literature in Turkey provides a strong theoretical counterweight to Figueira's work from the perspective of intracultural comparison as they problematize both the West's encroachment into Turkish literature "as symptoms of structural forms of inauthenticity and belatedness" while simultaneously suggesting the "need to develop comparison as a method of cultural self-reflection" (186). And Monika Schmitz-Emans's work on comparative literature in Germany is particularly useful not only for its adept handling of a

complex history, but also for its nuanced understanding of comparative literature's evolving relationship with interdisciplinary comparative structures.

The essays collected here succeed in conveying the histories of the field from a variety of national perspectives, as well as capturing the institutional and political forms, structures, and relationships that inform its current practice. What the future holds, of course, is impossible to tell, but if the past trajectories covered here continue, the field of comparative literature can maintain the structural flexibility and nuance necessary to navigate the shifting balance between the increasingly complex literary voices and identities.

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Dorothy Figueira et Jean Bessière, dir.
Mysticism and Literature / Mysticisme et
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L'ouvrage collectif *Mysticisme et littérature*, dirigé par Dorothy Figueira et Jean Bessière, se veut le prolongement de débats et discussions menés dans le cadre d'une table ronde organisée par la même Dorothy Figueira lors du XXI^e Congrès de l'Association internationale de Littérature comparée, à Vienne, en 2016.

Le titre de l'ouvrage souligne d'emblée la spécificité qu'il entend actualiser dans son traitement du mysticisme et dans les perspectives herméneutiques qu'ouvre un tel traitement. Ainsi, il ne s'agit pas ici de se livrer simplement à une caractérisation ou à une relecture de la littérature usuellement tenue pour mystique. En un geste critique plus ambitieux, l'objectif consiste plutôt à interroger l'alliance même qui s'établit entre, d'une part, la littérature et, d'autre part, le mysticisme ou la mystique. Tout en dotant l'ouvrage d'un objet plus large et plus général que la seule littérature explicitement – ou strictement – mystique, cette alliance dessine surtout un questionnement propre : elle impose une double lecture qui aborde le mysticisme au prisme de la littérature et qui, en un jeu de renversement, institue également le mysticisme comme un interprétant du statut et du pouvoir de la littérature.

Cette double lecture, et la double interrogation qu'elle porte, dessinent un fil rouge entre les différents essais présentés, qui se trouvent aussi unis par une série de références, tantôt explicites, tantôt implicites, à Michel de Certeau. Systématisant les enseignements qui se dégagent des diverses

contributions, l'essai conclusif de Jean Bessière précise d'ailleurs le sens et la portée de ces références : la caractérisation que Michel de Certeau livre du mysticisme se voit appréhendée comme l'exposé remarquable des paradigmes qui autorisent la double lecture – l'extraversion et le renversement. Il en résulte que, dans l'ouvrage édité par Figueira et Bessière, la littérature se voit ultimement envisagée selon la spécification anthropologique, cognitive et discursive du mysticisme, que l'on peut identifier dans les réflexions de Michel de Certeau.

Instaurée comme une espèce de socle commun, une telle spécification permet de penser un universalisme du mysticisme, qui ne défait nullement la diversité de ses expressions. Elle confère un même sens au mysticisme que les essais saisissent et analysent dans une grande variété de contextes. Il faut en effet reconnaître que l'une des grandes forces de l'ouvrage est de proposer un vaste panorama critique, à la fois transtemporel et transculturel, du mysticisme et de son alliance à la littérature.

Les contributions couvrent ainsi de nombreuses époques – le Moyen Âge, les XIX^e, XX^e et XXI^e siècles. L'essai de Gerald Gillespie s'attache même à fournir un exposé diachronique des expressions mystiques dans la littérature européenne, depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. En lui-même, cet exposé indique la possibilité de caractériser une importante part de la littérature occidentale sous le signe de l'expérience mystique qu'elle reprend en un jeu de prolongement ou d'ébranlement – *Illiade*, *l'Odyssee*, Dante, Lope de Vega, Calderón, Goethe, Shelley, Jean Paul, Nerval, Strindberg, D.H. Lawrence, Sartre. En démontrant qu'un tel jeu n'est pas uniforme au cours du temps, Gillespie souligne la variabilité qui entoure les formes du mysticisme et qui n'empêche toutefois pas l'identification constante de celui-ci – comme l'illustre la récurrence de certains motifs tels que l'ascension d'une montagne ou l'entrée dans un monde intérieur.

L'essai de Maria Korytowska interroge également l'alliance de la littérature européenne au mysticisme, qui, dans ce cas, se voit appréhendée à travers le cas spécifique du romantisme au XIX^e siècle. En effet, à l'instar du mysticisme, ce mouvement littéraire se fonde sur la possibilité d'entrer en relation avec une forme d'absolu. De ce fait, comme le révèle l'analyse des œuvres de Novalis, Ballanche et Słowacki, les paradigmes mystiques permettent de caractériser la propriété cognitive du romantisme : la figuration de la révélation ou du poète visionnaire traduit la recherche d'une connaissance autre ; l'énoncé

prophétique exprime le désir de partager cette connaissance. Exposé de cette figuration et/ou de cet énoncé, l'œuvre romantique se donne *ipso facto* comme un apport cognitif sur le monde.

Il convient d'ajouter que, contrairement à ce que pourraient laisser penser ces deux premiers exemples, l'approche transtemporelle du mysticisme ne se voit pas limitée au contexte européen ou occidental. Au contraire, dans une optique proprement comparée, elle se déploie à travers la prise en compte d'œuvres issues de bien d'autres cultures et littératures. La contribution de S Satish Kumar s'intéresse ainsi à la poésie des mystiques médiévaux d'Asie du Sud. Cette poésie est définie comme l'expression même du désir de l'Autre, du tout autre – il faut envisager en ce sens les notations qui portent sur l'assimilation du divin au bien-aimé, au « Beloved » dans les textes poétiques analysés. Sur cette base, S Satish Kumar peut identifier dans le mysticisme une éthique de l'altérité qui repose sur une poétique de l'ineffable – le langage, la poésie mystique permet d'approcher le divin, sans jamais le saisir pleinement. Par un jeu de références à Levinas, une telle éthique se voit rapportée à la perspective ontologique attachée au mysticisme, qui tout à la fois reconnaît et cherche à transcender la séparation avec l'autre – on est invité à lire l'expression mystique suivant une anthropologie du transindividuel.

À côté de l'Asie, l'ouvrage envisage aussi les formes que peut revêtir le mysticisme dans l'espace littéraire africain. Dans cette optique, Bernard Mouralis s'attarde sur le sens et la fonction des références à Teilhard de Chardin dans la pensée de Léopold Sédar Senghor. À nouveau, ces références sont analysées suivant une expérience spécifique et commune du mysticisme. L'usage que Senghor fait de Teilhard de Chardin lui est radicalement propre : l'auteur sénégalais mobilise le mystique français dans le but de conférer une cohérence à un parcours intellectuel qui inclut le rationalisme occidental, la négritude et la pensée de Marx. En même temps, dans sa reprise de Teilhard de Chardin, Senghor retrouve le mysticisme comme une éthique du rapport à l'autre, qui permet d'articuler la diversité des cultures et leur dialogue dans un absolu universel.

La littérature africaine se voit également abordée dans l'essai de Pierre Leroux qui propose une analyse du roman *Leopolis* de l'auteur congolais Sylvain Bemba. Le choix d'un tel roman se voit justifié par la réflexion que celui-ci autorise sur le rôle du mysticisme dans l'édification d'une mythologie et d'une symbolique autour de Patrice Lumumba, évoqué sous les traits du personnage fictionnel Fabrice

M’Pfum. La caractérisation de ce rôle revient une nouvelle fois à noter, dans le contexte spécifique de la République démocratique du Congo, la fonction cognitive du mysticisme, qui autorise à saisir et à exprimer ce qui se dérobe : le personnage de Fabrice M’Pfum est absent dans le roman – tout comme, par sa mort, Patrice Lumumba est une figure absente dans l’espace congolais contemporain. L’essai de Leroux amène ainsi à concevoir le mysticisme comme une façon d’énoncer les indicibles de l’histoire postcoloniale – que thématisent, dans le roman, le silence et l’oubli institutionnels.

Comme on vient de l’illustrer, l’ouvrage permet de dégager des constantes du mysticisme – la fonction cognitive, la poétique de l’ineffable, l’éthique de l’altérité – dans un large ensemble de cultures. Il faut toutefois noter l’absence de contributions dédiées à l’Amérique latine ou aux Caraïbes – ce qui peut paraître surprenant au vu de l’importance que revêt la composante mystique dans les cultures et les littératures de ces deux régions. Une telle absence n’amointrit cependant pas la portée du propos : les exemples présentés sont tellement nombreux et variés qu’ils garantissent le pouvoir critique large des constantes isolées – que des analyses sur les littératures d’Amérique latine ou des Caraïbes ne feraient que confirmer. L’amplitude même de ce pouvoir critique se voit d’ailleurs démontrée par l’application des paradigmes mystiques à des œuvres ou des auteurs qui ne relèvent pas explicitement du mysticisme – on pense ici aux contributions de Louiza Kadari et de Valerio Massimo De Angelis.

Chez Kadari, le mysticisme se voit convoqué pour appréhender un récit et un roman liés à la figuration du terrorisme ou du fanatisme – à savoir *Les Oranges* d’Aziz Chouaki et *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* de Salman Rushdie. Le rapprochement peut *a priori* surprendre : comme l’expose d’emblée Kadari, l’expérience religieuse du terroriste ou du fanatique est aux antipodes de la pratique mystique – le radicalisme est un discours de la vérité unique : il ne tolère ni l’altérité, ni le sens qui se dérobe. C’est pourquoi un tel rapprochement ne peut se comprendre qu’à partir du moment où le mysticisme est identifié dans l’esthétique même des deux textes, qui introduisent l’hétérogénéité et le questionnement comme des résistances aux discours radicaux. Assimiler le mysticisme à une esthétique constitue un exemple remarquable de la perspective herméneutique qui traverse tout l’ouvrage : Kadari illustre concrètement la possibilité d’instituer le mysticisme comme une pragmatique et une perspective anthropologique aptes à caractériser la

littérature – le mysticisme autorise ici à dire le roman et le récit comme des genres de la médiation qui mettent en rapport bien des temps et des espaces, bien des figures de l'altérité.

Des remarques assez semblables s'appliquent à l'essai de Valerio Massimo De Angelis, qui porte sur *The Scarlet Letter* de Nathaniel Hawthorne. L'auteur américain ne peut certainement pas être tenu pour un écrivain mystique. Il autorise néanmoins une lecture sous le signe de la perspective anthropologique et cognitive attachée au mysticisme. La lettre « A » constitue en effet un symbole mystique : tout le récit cherche à exprimer le sens profond de ce symbole, qui se dérobe en permanence – le roman se construit littéralement suivant une poétique de l'indicible, de l'ineffable. Rapporter le « A » à l'*agalma* de Lacan, comme le fait De Angelis, ne dénoue pas l'indicible, mais traduit simplement le désir de connaissance, toujours insatisfait, qui anime le roman de Hawthorne – et l'expérience mystique. Placé dans un contexte non religieux, ce désir de connaissance va encore selon une anthropologie du transindividuel : il dessine des rapports entre le sujet humain et les autres individus avec lesquels celui-ci partage l'inévitabilité du secret – on en revient au mysticisme comme éthique de l'altérité.

L'éthique de l'altérité, la poétique de l'indicible, la fonction anthropologique et cognitive du mysticisme trouvent toutes une formulation proprement théorique dans l'essai d'Ipshita Chanda, qui rapporte explicitement celles-ci aux propriétés de la littérature. Parce qu'il donne voix à l'indicible, à l'absent, le mysticisme se voit présenté comme une affirmation du pouvoir du langage, qu'il partage avec la littérature – on pense notamment aux positions de Mallarmé, justement rappelé par Bessière dans sa conclusion. Le mysticisme enseigne néanmoins qu'un tel pouvoir n'est pas nécessairement source d'intransitivité : le jeu de langage mystique constitue, au contraire, une entrée dans le royaume de l'Autre, du tout autre. Par conséquent, par l'alliance avec le mysticisme, il est possible de dire la littérature comme un langage qui met en relation avec les figures de l'autre, avec le monde toujours autre, et qui devient par là un mode de connaissance de ces figures de l'autre, de ce monde.

Comme le montre l'essai de Dorothy Figueira, la lecture croisée du mysticisme et de la littérature offre également des perspectives originales pour relire la théorie littéraire moderne et contemporaine. Des exemples évidents sont donnés. La World Literature, les études postcoloniales se présentent expressément comme des perspectives critiques sur l'altérité, comme des modes de connaissance de l'autre non occidental. Elles

peuvent dès lors être relues sous le signe du mysticisme, qui offre un paradigme particulièrement adapté pour penser la centralité que la World Literature ou les études postcoloniales confèrent à la transcendance de l'Autre. Figueira choisit néanmoins de se concentrer sur un autre discours critique : elle analyse comment, chez Derrida et Spivak, la théorie de la traduction se voit caractérisée dans des termes identiques à ceux que Michel de Certeau utilise pour spécifier l'énoncé mystique – les deux discours cherchent à approcher l'autre ou l'Autre par le langage.

Ainsi que le traduisent exemplairement les contributions plus théoriques que l'on vient de citer, l'ouvrage dirigé par Bessière et Figueira porte bien au-delà de la seule littérature mystique, du mysticisme. Il offre des perspectives innovantes pour relire des auteurs majeurs ou canoniques, qui ne sont pas nécessairement reliés au mysticisme – on a mentionné Novalis, Hawthorne, Senghor, Rushdie ; on pourrait appliquer un exercice critique similaire à Glissant, Fuentes ou Murakami. Il dessine également un cadre pour réexaminer les tendances actuelles de la critique littéraire – à la façon de Figueira avec Spivak et Derrida, on pourrait certainement reconsidérer les thèses d'Emily Apter sur l'intraduisibilité à partir d'une poétique de l'ineffable et d'une éthique de l'altérité. L'ouvrage se veut enfin, et peut-être surtout, une réflexion générale sur le statut et le pouvoir de la littérature qui, à l'instar de l'objet mystique, ne se laisse jamais pleinement saisir.

Erica Durante et Amaury Dehoux, dir. *Le double : littérature, arts, cinéma. Nouvelles approches.*

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Évoquer « le double » signifie tout naturellement et dans un même mouvement rappeler à l'esprit quelques grands classiques de la littérature mondiale, fantastique en particulier, entre autres *Le Horla* de Guy de Maupassant, *Le double* de Fiodor Dostoïevski ou *L'Étrange cas du docteur Jekyll et M. Hyde* de Robert Louis Stevenson. Toutefois, le « double » recouvre une foisonnante polyvalence. Comme le rappellent Erica Durante et Amaury Dehoux, les éditeurs scientifiques du présent volume, le double est à la fois un concept anthropologique, un thème ou un symbole et un phénomène psychopathologique susceptible d'être étudié par la psychiatrie et la psychanalyse. C'est dire la complexité de la réalité du double et la multiplicité d'approches, souvent croisées, dont il peut et dont il doit faire l'objet. Parmi celles-ci, une des premières tâches, et non des moindres, consiste tout simplement à définir ce que l'on entendra par le double, tout particulièrement lorsque le domaine littéraire et plus largement artistique est concerné. À cette exigence, on rétorquera, certes avec quelque raison, qu'on ne saurait concevoir le double comme une entité fixe dans le ciel platonicien des idées mais que la notion prend tout son sens à travers la confrontation avec des textes à chaque fois différents et relevant d'époques tout aussi diverses. Il n'empêche qu'il n'est pas impossible, pour s'exprimer dans les termes mêmes des éditeurs, d'identifier des « invariants » de « l'écriture du double » (10) et, devant la complexité de l'objet, il ne me semble pas inutile de le faire avec la plus grande précision et surtout de

la manière la plus explicite possible. De ce point de vue, le lecteur du présent volume, risque, pour une partie de la dizaine d'études sur le sujet ici réunies, d'être un peu dérouté sinon déçu. Certaines d'entre elles lui font peu de concessions, s'autorisant d'audacieux raccourcis argumentatifs, multipliant parfois les termes ardues et rares (tautégorie, ré-originé, éversion, vérificationnisme...), s'adonnant sans frein à la jubilation néologique (métahorreur, néocorporalités...), et ne sont pas exemptes de confusions philosophiques (après la « fracture kantienne », le sujet serait « désormais incapable de connaître le monde phénoménal », 10 ; or c'est le contraire, comme il est précisé à la page 30 ; « transcendantal » est confondu avec « transcendant », 81). Le fait que les auteurs ne rappellent pas toujours, ne serait-ce que brièvement, le contenu des œuvres analysées, fussent-elles des classiques du genre, ne facilite pas non plus la tâche du lecteur. Raison de plus pour nous pour mettre en avant les quelques articles où leur auteur s'attache de manière rigoureuse et claire à cerner le phénomène qu'il s'appête à analyser. C'est ainsi que l'historien des sciences Dominique Lambert, appelant à la rescousse les « mathématiques pour penser ... le double » en se servant de la théorie des catégories, procède méticuleusement et pas à pas jusqu'à distinguer la « duplicité superficielle », relevant de la simple copie et de la conservation de la forme, de la « duplicité profonde », qui « est une réalité originale, qui possède néanmoins un lien profond avec la réalité dont elle est le double » (68). Massimo Fusillo, spécialiste du double auquel il a consacré notamment un important ouvrage, fournit en quelques pages limpides (43–44) les préliminaires définitoires nécessaires à la thématique en question. Louise Flipo et Marie-Valérie Lambert affirment que « le double est le fruit d'une démarche autoréflexive (positive ou négative) de l'original sur lui-même et que, d'autre part, c'est le regard de la société qui donne son impulsion à un tel phénomène » (108). Quant à Amaury Dehoux, il développe la distinction éclairante entre la duplicité impliquant une dissonance identitaire, où la subjectivité est remise en question dans ses fondements ontologiques, de la dissonance cognitive, rupture avec les horizons et les possibilités que le sujet entretient d'habitude avec le monde et provoquant chez ce dernier un trouble profond (76).

Les études rassemblées ici, pour l'essentiel de la main de chercheurs belges de l'Université catholique de Louvain, sont assez diverses par leur corpus. Certaines ratissent très larges et se veulent panoramiques. Elles procèdent à une réévaluation de la signification du double dans la littérature fantastique (Jean Bessière, Patrick Marot), concernent le roman contemporain (Louise Flipo et Marie-Valérie Lambert), le roman

posthumain (Amaury Dehoux) ou le cinéma contemporain (Denis Mellier). D'autres se focalisent sur un aspect thématique spécifique du double, comme la question du pouvoir à travers l'analyse du sosie du souverain (Massimo Fusillo). Enfin, on trouvera ici des analyses comparatives plus circonscrites, comme la comparaison des films de Raúl Ruiz et de l'œuvre de Jorge Luis Borges du point de vue du double (Maude Havenne) ou le rapprochement des romans *Le Golem* de Gustav Meyrinck et *Ferdydurke* de Witold Gombrowicz, chez lesquels la démultiplication identitaire se met au service d'une vision du monde holiste. C'était un véritable tour de force de rassembler en une structure cohérente des études aussi dissemblables. Aussi la tripartition du volume en « Relectures critiques de la tradition du double », « Les mutations contemporaines du double » et « Le double comme poétique » ne recouvre-t-elle que partiellement le contenu des articles qui y sont subsumés. En réalité la plupart des études du volume traitent des questions auxquelles renvoient ces sous-titres.

À travers la lecture de ces « Nouvelles approches » du double, qui offrent le grand avantage d'inclure également l'art cinématographique et des textes en différentes langues, le généraliste de la littérature française et de la littérature comparée sera surtout sensible à la mise en évidence de la souplesse du thème du double, qui se maintient à travers l'histoire tout en se chargeant à chaque fois de nouvelles significations, comme quelques exemples nous permettront de le montrer. Le sosie du souverain, qu'analyse Massimo Fusillo, en partant du dix-septième siècle pour aboutir à l'époque contemporaine, renvoie à l'impuissance du pouvoir parce qu'il bouleverse toute fixité des rôles et déstabilise l'ordre social. Si cela est le cas des expressions les plus anciennes du sosie du souverain, des manifestations plus récentes rompent avec l'esprit du renversement des hiérarchies, au profit de la *vanitas* universelle ; parfois le retour à l'ordre, après la suspension carnavalesque, n'est pas au rendez-vous. Ces variations historiques dans la signification du double ne sont nulle part aussi marquantes que là où l'analyse prend en compte des tendances récentes de la fiction qui sont révélatrices d'une nouvelle manière de penser l'humain, à savoir le « posthumain ». À cet égard, la comparaison qu'effectue Amaury Dehoux entre le double dans la littérature fantastique et dans le roman du posthumain est tout à fait révélatrice d'une évolution historique notable de la nature même du double. Le roman du posthumain, en évoquant de nouvelles technologies qui affectent profondément le corps humain, et qui trouvent une réalisation à travers

le cyborg, le clone ou l'être virtuel, multiplient les mutations du corps et aboutissent à une « généralisation du double » (79). Or, si ce nouveau type de double conserve la dissonance identitaire, en l'étendant même, au-delà de l'individu, à l'humanité en tant que telle, en revanche, il abandonne la dissonance cognitive, car il peut être considéré sans fantastique ni étrangeté. Bref, les nouvelles réalisations technoscientifiques ont conduit à un déplacement de la norme et de la normalité (82). On trouvera des considérations analogues, mais à propos du *blockbuster* de science-fiction, dans la contribution de Denis Mellier. Enfin, on complètera utilement la lecture de la contribution de Dehoux par celle de Louise Flipo et de Marie-Valérie Lambert, qui porte également sur la continuité et les différences dans le traitement du double entre le fantastique et la fiction contemporaine mettant en scène le cyborg, l'être virtuel et le clone. Les auteurs constatent également pour cette dernière une généralisation de la duplicité qui va de pair avec un abandon du conflit entre l'original et la copie, lequel était très fréquent dans la tradition fantastique. On le voit, la mise en scène du double dans la littérature et dans les arts en général ouvre à un questionnement philosophique sur l'identité, non seulement de l'individu dans sa singularité mais désormais aussi, à l'ère des technologies du posthumain, de l'humanité en tant que telle. Malgré ses imperfections et des idiosyncrasies stylistiques qui peuvent irriter, ce volume permet donc de mieux comprendre les enjeux littéraires et philosophiques du double, envisagés dans une perspective de littérature comparée et d'intermédialité, et surtout d'en saisir les mutations à l'ère du posthumain.

Enfin, signalons, fait assez inhabituel, que le volume inclut à la fin un « texte de création », un récit de Carl Havelange, intitulé *Le Faussaire*, et qui est censé mettre en scène le double. Ce récit d'une vingtaine de pages relève de ce que les Anglo-saxons appellent le *campus novel*, puisque l'auteur, universitaire lui-même, y introduit, non sans talent ni humour, un narrateur simultanément protagoniste qui raconte comment, un beau jour, il a « pris conscience de [son] ignorance » (167). En l'occurrence, cette expression ne désigne pas l'abandon par le professeur en question d'un dogmatisme qui s'est révélé déplacé au profit d'un scepticisme davantage approprié à l'avancée de la science mais l'acquisition assez soudaine d'une lucidité qui lève pour lui le voile sur la comédie sociale qu'implique la vie universitaire, avec ses conventions, ses rituels, ses inévitables étalages d'amour-propre et ses luttes de pouvoir. Une telle situation met-elle en jeu le paradigme du double comme le prétendent les préfaciers du volume ?

On peut en douter, car si la duplicité implique en général la coprésence de deux états, le nouvel état d'« ignorant » du professeur du récit le rend plutôt inapte à continuer à fonctionner comme il le faisait auparavant (il a des problèmes d'élocution, adopte une attitude de repli, etc.), comme si sa réflexion nouvelle avait rendu la spontanéité de son action passée impossible. Autrement dit, plutôt qu'à une oscillation entre deux états du sujet on a affaire à un nouvel état qui rend l'ancien inopérant. Mais laissons le lecteur juger car, quoi qu'il en soit, ce récit constitue une pièce intéressante à verser au dossier.

**Arvind Thomas. *Piers Plowman and
the Reinvention of Church Law in the Late
Middle Ages.***

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In his painstakingly researched work, Arvind Thomas finds that *Piers* not only relies on canon law for material, but also rewrites legal discourse in its poetic meanderings. Reimagining the relationship between *Piers* and medieval canon law as a site for poetic creation and legal criticism, Thomas summarizes his argument thus: “*Piers Plowman*’s mobilization and modification of juridical properties not only engender a poetics informed by canonist thought but also express a vision of canon law alternative to and even critical of that offered by medieval jurists and recorded by modern medievalists” (9). As a way of opening, Thomas notes that *Piers* was often collected in mixed-manuscripts alongside canon law, and that these “poetic and canonistic compositions” (5) suggest an intimate relationship between legal texts (notably but not exclusively canonistic) and *Piers*. Thomas performs most of his readings by comparing the B and C versions of *Piers*, assuming as most critics do that the versions are both authorial, but remarking that C represents a “sharpening” of the canonistic focus (20) absent in B.

Thomas’s “Introduction” remarks on the similarity between the composition process of *Piers* and the way in which canon law grew – each “mobilizes *sententiae* not just as statements of normative authority but also as sites within which to fashion approaches to problems or cases that could have been heard in the medieval church’s penitential and judicial courts” (11). The poetic and canonical texts are gathered together and composed similarly, making an analysis of their creative relationship

a necessary interdisciplinary project. Thomas concludes by asserting that the C-version of *Piers* represents a strong poetic intervention in the subtle and flexible tradition of Canon law, and that those interventions are lay reinventions of canon debates. Thomas closes the introduction by remarking that the book offers a direct counterpoint to David Aers's *Beyond Reformation?* and that it is "structured thematically around the movements of the penitential process: contrition, confession, restitution (when necessary), and satisfaction" (25). These also form the nodes around which each chapter is successively organized.

Accordingly, Thomas's first chapter takes contrition as its theme and serves primarily to coordinate the failed confessions of Mede and Contrition with their canonical examples. Taking William of Pegula, Raymond of Penafort, and William of Rennes as examples of guides for confessors, this chapter investigates Meed's confession in B/C 3 and Contrition's in B 20 / C 22. Thomas points to the canonical exemplars as indications of how many ways in which each personification fails. There is a difference between being a penitent and appearing as one, although the latter is expected. In Mede's confession, the "friar's gentle offer [...] no doubt amounts to simony" (42) and "excuses Mede from the necessity of expressing any verbal and visual signs of remorse" (43), which in turn inspires a brief, mirthful, and shameless 'confession' from Mede. This double failure, of course, leads to further simoniac activity, namely the glazing of windows, a scene created, Thomas implies, by stacking penitential failure on penitential failure. Contrition's confession activates the second sense of 'pudor,' shame, by presenting a scene in which the penitent is so ashamed that it prevents confession, a shame which Raymond and others identify.

Mede serves as the focus for the second chapter, "Dreams of Avarice: The Absent Presence of the Usury Prohibition." In C, Thomas notes, Conscience no longer compares Mede to usury and presents "a more sustained treatment of 'Mede'" (65). The engagement with usury in B, however, points not to a direct biblical source, as critics have supposed, but to canonical source-texts. Thomas takes this as reading the poem "alongside its formal rather than material sources [...] to read it laterally" (68), primarily alongside Gratian's *Decretum*. Gratian, via Pope Julius, advocates for avoiding profit "on account of cupidity" (71) and Johannes Teutonicus advocates for the inclusion of 'doubt' in his gloss on Gratian, kicking off a discussion of allowable 'usury' which is neither sinful nor abusive. Thomas notes that, although the B-text quotes the

“usury-prohibition,” “[t]he C version draws upon canonistic logic” to structurally inform the conversation behind usury and simony rather than to make explicit comment and so “realiz[e] the ideal of spiritual usury” (75). The second part of this chapter focuses on the conjunction between usury and simony, and the vast number of economic sins the canonists related to usury. Thomas mentions this to demonstrate that the *Piers*-narrator and Gratian recognize the ‘shared logic’ between usury and regrating, even if the two are technically separate. Conscience’s critiques of Mede in C are not so much that she offers payment, but that she usuriously offers payment “before one has merited or worked for it” (93). The final section of the chapter focuses on the fungibility of gifts and usurious (Mede) versus non-usurious (Conscience) giving, demonstrating a remarkable sensitivity in C to subtle economic sensibilities of the late fourteenth century, particularly with reference to gift-giving in ways which were designed to disguise fraud (fungible) and those which genuinely serve as non-fungible gifts.

“*Restitutio*: From Rule to Law to Justice in Covetise’s Confession” continues the thread of “corporeal usury” (116) into a discussion of restitution, the “*redde quod debes* [repay what you owe].” Thomas argues that *Piers* shifts from a “rule” of restitution in B to a “law” of restitution in C, which is a shift exemplified by Repentance’s interactions with Covetise. The ‘rule of restitution’ again finds its source in Gratian when the canonist discusses genuine feeling as necessary for penitence. In the way *Piers* transmutes the strength of this injunction from a rule into a law, so does the *Liber Sextus* in following the *Decretum*. As before, C shows strong direct ties to legal discourse in vocabulary and metrical patterns. Simon of Tournai serves as the exemplar for a sense of responsibility for reparation shared between the penitent and his priest. The chapter closes with another assertion of formal influence, this time of the *Memoriale presbiterorum*, a penitential manual, which exerts a “unidirectiona[l] and hierarchica[l]” (147) influence on *Piers*; both furthermore share a commitment to restitutive justice. Thomas reads the two side-by-side for the remainder of the chapter, but leaves the reason for the comparison hazy. Finally, this ‘upscaling’ of a regulative maxim to a law reflects the steep increase in self-appointed papal power culminating in the Boniface VIII’s bull “proclaiming that each human’s salvation depends upon obedience to the pope” (160).

In “*Satisfactio Operis*: Maxim and Metaphor in Wrong’s Trial,” the trial of Wrong, and most specifically, Reason’s emphasis on penitential

satisfaction rather than a civil sentence, serves to underscore the theoretical social healing that should be the result of true penance. Reason, through this trial, is set up as the opposite of Wrong, and Reason's focus on the type of punishment that should be levied on Wrong shifts the emphasis of the trial toward the penitential process. Through an attention to the grammatical moods of the passage, Thomas argues that Reason hypothesizes a kingdom to give a theoretically politically efficacious flavour to Reason's spiritual citations against Wrong. Reason's quotation is derived from Innocent III's *De contemptu mundi* and creates the sort of "derivative text" so common in the Middle Ages and brought to larger scholastic attention again by Matthew Fisher. Innocent III pulled this quotation from Peter the Chanter, who "introduces the Latin words as a familiar lexical commonplace" (178). As attested to by a long history of canonists, this maxim highlights the need for confessors to assign the proper amount of punishment for a crime, lest a sentence of penance go unworked completely. This satisfaction, as was attested by Gratian – whom Atria Larson dubs the 'Master of Penance' – should be accomplished both by external (workable) and internal (spiritual) penance. This 'workability' of penance makes satisfaction, in part, an issue of labour and law, a pairing Thomas is quick to remind his readers is frequently linked in *Piers*. The poem, Thomas concludes, thus establishes a mutually entangled model of penance, in which the confessor and the penitent are each responsible for accomplishing restitution for sin together by external working and modelling and by internal spiritual penitence.

In Chapter 5, "*Contritio Cordis, Confessio Oris, et Satisfactio Operis*: From Symbol to Sign in Patience's Sermon," Thomas launches into a sort of defence of the C-version while ostensibly maintaining that he sees neither B nor C as a revision of the other. That Thomas strongly prefers C, at least for the purposes of this book, is quite clear, and he reminds his audience that "C emerges as more co-productive of canon law than B, and as far more innovatively invested in the church's institution of penance than scholars such as Aers would grant" (207). Thomas's favour of C, which is quite understandable given how helpful he finds the text, does seem to be muddled by the possibility of a disguised teleological argument; a confusion further muddled by the consistent absence of the A-version. That C is most explicitly canonistic is convincing enough; why Thomas includes a survey of scholarship about which version which scholars or which graduate students find most enjoyable was unclear, given the

scheme of the chapter and of the book. In the bulk of the chapter, Thomas compares B.14 and C.16, the former of which uses the word 'patente' and the latter 'chartre' – the first has an orally-mixed sense, and the second a clearer emphasis on the material page. The 'patente' refers to the body of Christ, a contract made itself flesh, a body written upon in no uncertain terms. The 'chartre,' conversely, expresses a salvific contract mediated by the church's institutional penance between God and the sinner. God is no longer a direct salvific force, but is, in C, "an enabler of the three penitential stages" (217); the implication is that Thomas favours a transition from B to C, and in his examination of Hawkyng, mentions A at last as a particularly fleshy and gruelling account of Christ-as-document. This and the rich coat-cleaning passage in B suggest, to Thomas, that C "stands out as symbolically impoverished" (221) in a visual sense, but accomplishes its work with "verbal allegory" as opposed to the (earlier?) "visual allegory" of B. Like Peter Lombard, Aquinas, Raymond, Gratian, and other canonists, Thomas takes the verbal allegory of C as "contest[ing] the correlation between sign and referent theorized by the penitential theorists [sic]" (228). This brings Thomas into a discussion of the tone of the parts of the charter and the verbal nature of the "three Dos" (232). The C text, it seems, advocates for a documentary salvation as opposed to one more personal.

Thomas's Epilogue gestures at the salvific effect he envisions for his book: saving *Piers*, or at least the generative moment of its creation from the fires of ideologues and the ravages of time. Whether it is so salvific or not, this volume is a productive reminder of osmotic modes of composition found in medieval mixed-manuscripts. Thomas convincingly argues for structural similarities between Canon law and composition habits of canonists and *Piers*. He even mentions the possibility of "formal" influence. His argument stutters in accounting for allegory in this relationship and in arguing that C does constitute a revision of B; the latter point is not material to his argument – it might have been fatuous to argue too staunchly that Langland "becomes more canonistic." Nevertheless, Thomas's compendiously researched volume will provide an essential mine of penitential material for *Piers* scholars who previously overlooked the importance of canon law. Canon law often lurked in the shadows of *Piers* scholarship, but Thomas has clearly demonstrated that it undergirds some of the most essential scenes of the poem and gave the poet the very words with which the poem was created.

**Matthias Müller, Nils C. Ritter, Pauline Selbig,
eds. *Barock en miniature – Kleine literarische
Formen in Barock und Moderne.***

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Depuis la dernière décennie du siècle passé, ce que l'on qualifie en littérature allemande de « *kleine Formen* » (« formes brèves ou courtes ») a commencé à faire l'objet d'études philologiques qui se sont alors surtout concentrées sur l'importance de ces formes littéraires au Moyen-Âge et au début de l'époque moderne.¹ Lors du passage au nouveau millénaire, l'intérêt de la recherche s'est déplacé vers la modernité et, simultanément, les approches philologiques ont été complétées par des problématiques propres à l'histoire et à la théorie des médias.² Alors que les genres mineurs tels que le fragment, le feuilleton, l'aphorisme, l'anecdote, l'esquisse, l'image de pensée (cf. W. Benjamin), la note, le récit miniature, etc. ont longtemps existé à l'ombre des genres majeurs que sont le roman et la nouvelle, la tragédie et la comédie, la biographie et l'autobiographie, les questions qui se posent désormais ont trait d'une part au rôle joué par les formes brèves dans le processus de différenciation de la littérature moderne et d'autre part aux pratiques médiatiques et à leur influence sur l'émergence ou l'évolution de ces formes littéraires. À cet égard, la littérature allemande offre un éventail de ressources particulièrement riche puisque plusieurs auteurs célèbres – citons entre autres Friedrich

¹ Voir par exemple Haug et Wachinger *Kleinere Erzählformen*, ainsi que *Kleinstformen der Literatur*.

² Voir par exemple Althaus, Bunzel et Göttsche.

Schlegel, Novalis, Franz Kafka, Robert Walser, Walter Benjamin, Joseph Roth et Milena Jesenská – ont privilégié ces formes d’expression.

Une vingtaine d’années plus tard, force est de constater que le travail d’exploration systématique des formes brèves se poursuit mais qu’il s’est aussi enrichi de nouvelles approches et perspectives. C’est notamment le fameux virage épistémologique (ou *epistemological turn*) qui a conduit à de nouveaux questionnements et enjeux. Ainsi, les membres d’un Collège doctoral consacré à l’histoire littéraire et épistémologique des formes brèves (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft : *Literatur- und Wissensgeschichte kleiner Formen*), fondé en 2017 à l’Université Humboldt de Berlin, n’étudient plus seulement des productions strictement littéraires. Ils se penchent également sur d’autres types de textes courts, de l’Antiquité à nos jours, tels que des rapports d’expertise médicale, des procès-verbaux, des comptes-rendus, des résumés ou encore des curriculum vitæ tabulaires. Joseph Vogl, qui dirige le Collège en collaboration avec Ethel Matala de Mazza, explique les objectifs du projet comme suit :

Le projet de recherche *Literatur- und Wissensgeschichte kleiner Formen* part de l’hypothèse selon laquelle les formes brèves, peu déterminées en termes de genre, contribuent largement à la production, la circulation et l’organisation des savoirs, mais qu’elles demeurent souvent inexplorées. Cela s’explique en partie par le fait que ces formes entretiennent d’étroites relations avec des contextes spécifiques d’utilisation pratique ou routinière et qu’elles se définissent dès lors essentiellement par leurs aspects praxéologiques et leur adaptation à certains formats médiatiques. Cela vaut tout autant pour l’aphorisme médical de l’Antiquité que pour les textos propres aux réseaux sociaux (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) en vogue actuellement.

(Shep n.p., ma traduction)

Les contextes pratiques évoqués par Vogl correspondent par exemple à des contextes administratifs, scientifiques ou encore journalistiques.

Voilà, esquissé en quelques traits, le champ de recherche dans lequel s’inscrit l’ouvrage consacré aux formes brèves de l’époque baroque et de la modernité. Cet ouvrage est le second volume de la collection *Minima* qui publie les résultats des recherches menées par les membres du Collège berlinois. Dans leur préface, les éditeurs Matthias Müller, Nils C. Ritter et Pauline Selbig mettent l’accent sur les deux objectifs principaux du volume. Il s’agit d’une part de montrer que le baroque, généralement associé à l’exubérance, à la surcharge, voire à l’emphase stylistique, antonymiques des formes d’expression minimalistes, a également

privilegié les formes brèves pour en exploiter les licences poétiques en réaction aux crises politiques, religieuses et scientifiques d'alors. D'autre part, c'est aussi la longévité de ces formes issues du baroque qui intéresse, c'est-à-dire leur réactivation aux époques moderne et contemporaine, en particulier au début du XX^e siècle, lorsque le feuilleton, le montage ou le collage ont fait leur apparition aux côtés des genres établis et ce, grâce à leur capacité esthétique à capter l'expérience d'accélération du quotidien dans les grandes métropoles. Les éditeurs soulignent qu'à la célèbre question « What is baroque ? » posée par l'historien d'art Erwin Panofsky, il n'existera jamais d'autres réponses que des descriptions et analyses historiquement datées du phénomène baroque : « Chaque époque invente son propre baroque et se reflète dans cette invention » (4).

Le volume est divisé en trois sections, chacune regroupant trois à quatre contributions : 1) *Formen und Formate* ; 2) *Barocke Poetiken des Kleinen* ; 3) *Nachleben barocker Kleinformen und Barock als Konzept*. Ces titres indiquent que les deux premières sections sont principalement consacrées à la littérature baroque et à ses pratiques médiatiques et épistémologiques, même si quelques contributions s'interrogent sur l'existence ultérieure de formes brèves pratiquées aux alentours de 1800 (entre autres par Goethe et Wordsworth). Trois études seulement portent, conformément à ce qu'annonce l'introduction, sur les tensions entre la littérature baroque et celle du début du XX^e siècle. Les auteurs de ces trois études étant également les éditeurs du volume, on peut supposer que davantage de contributions aux accents diachroniques prononcés étaient souhaitées, mais que, finalement, comme souvent dans le cas de colloques ou de projets de recherche transdisciplinaires ou comparatistes, chacun se cantonne dans son domaine d'expertise sans trop oser en sortir. Par conséquent, l'ouvrage ne rencontre que partiellement l'ambition formulée dans l'introduction et visant à explorer la longévité et la résilience des formes brèves issues du baroque. Ce constat ne préjuge cependant pas de la qualité des différentes contributions. En effet, celles-ci s'avèrent stimulantes et abondamment documentées. Elles offrent des éclairages multiples des partis-pris épistémologiques qui caractérisent les formes brèves. À titre d'exemple, je me concentrerai sur quatre contributions.

La contribution de Roman Widder, répertoriée dans la section *Formen und Formate*, met en relation les honoraires, les formats et les formes littéraires du début de l'époque moderne. À partir d'un fait littéraire concret, l'intégration insolite dans le célèbre roman picaresque *Der abentheurliche Simplicissimus Teutsch* de Grimmelshausen d'un conte

drolatique rédigé par un tiers, Widder explique qu'à cette époque, les écrivains étaient rémunérés à la pièce (« pro Stück »), c'est-à-dire en fonction du nombre de feuilles imprimées. Cette pratique strictement matérielle a toutefois des répercussions esthétiques dans la mesure où réunir des éléments disparates en un tout présente des avantages pécuniaires. La pratique de rétribution unitaire reflète approximativement le temps de travail consacré à la production littéraire. Il n'est dès lors pas surprenant que le roman devienne le genre de prédilection. L'auteur explique ensuite pourquoi ce sont les livres de petit format qui, dans le courant du XVIII^e siècle, se sont finalement imposés au détriment des grands formats de type in-folio. Près de 90 % des livres de fiction sont alors publiés en petits formats de type in-8, in-12 ou in-16.

La contribution de Jasper Schagerl, qui fait également partie de la section *Formen und Formate*, est consacrée aux index de l'époque baroque. Pour ce faire, l'auteur se réfère à l'ouvrage intitulé *Von der Schreib- und Rechenkunst (De l'art d'écrire et de calculer)* de Georg Philipp Harsdörffer. Comme la précédente, cette contribution montre que les techniques et les pratiques d'organisation du savoir ont une incidence sur les aspects esthétiques des productions littéraires de l'époque. Ainsi, l'auteur montre que la technique d'indexation élaborée par Harsdörffer et qui consiste en une méthode spécifique d'extraction d'informations a une influence directe sur la forme poétique du recueil de récits sanglants intitulé *Schauplatz jämmerlicher Mordgeschichte*. En effet, cette compilation est organisée de façon à pouvoir être systématiquement explorée à l'aide du registre qui l'accompagne et qui répertorie même les préceptes moraux. L'index est donc plus qu'un appendice, il interagit véritablement avec le texte de l'œuvre.

La contribution de Christiane Frey a trait aux petits formats et à la monadologie chez Leibniz et Benjamin (deux pages seulement sont consacrées à ce dernier). Elle fait partie de la section *Barocke Poetiken des Kleinen* mais aurait tout aussi bien pu trouver sa place dans la première section de l'ouvrage car elle présente plusieurs affinités avec l'étude de Schagerl. Frey se penche également sur les techniques d'extraction, de compilation d'informations et de prise de notes. Cependant, contrairement à Harsdörffer, Leibniz, aux antipodes de toute tentative de systématisation, a laissé derrière lui un véritable fouillis de notes éparses (« Schnipselwirtschaft », 136). Le fonds d'archives qui lui est dédié ne contient pas moins de 150.000 à 200.000 feuillets couverts de notes. On peut dès lors se demander comment cette façon quasi anarchique

d'extraire des informations et de prendre des notes s'accorde avec la représentation courante du savant universel à la pensée systématique. Autrement dit, « quel rapport le Leibniz des feuillets entretient-il avec le Leibniz du système » (138, ma traduction) ? On pourrait supposer que si Leibniz manifeste le besoin quasi maniaque de consigner jusqu'aux moindres éléments de savoir, c'est parce que, pour lui, l'univers se reflète dans les choses de petites dimensions, la monade représentant ainsi le tout en miniature. Toutefois, Frey montre, par ses relectures de passages bien connus de l'œuvre du philosophe, que c'est du contraire qu'il s'agit. Chez Leibniz, la monade ne représente justement pas le tout à la manière d'un modèle réduit. Contrairement à cette interprétation convenue, l'universel se constituerait uniquement par la pratique, par le biais d'un processus de réduction faisant l'impasse sur l'idée de totalité.

Enfin, il convient de mentionner la contribution de Hans Jürgen Scheuer et de Pauline Selbig. Celle-ci figure en tête de la troisième section de l'ouvrage, celle intitulée *Nachleben der barocken Kleinformen und Barock als Konzept*. Contrairement aux deux autres contributions de la section qui, au lieu de traiter de pratiques ou de techniques dictées par des contraintes matérielles, étudient, de façon plutôt conventionnelle, la manière dont des auteurs modernes tels que Werfel ou Hofmannsthal se réapproprient les figures rhétoriques et les procédés stylistiques de la littérature baroque, la contribution de Scheuer et Selbig se concentre sur les méthodes de travail développées par Benjamin, sur la manière dont celui-ci organise le savoir qu'il accumule. Pour ce faire, les auteurs se réfèrent à la digression sur le thème de la mélancolie (*Melancholie-Exkurs*) intégrée à l'œuvre publiée en français sous le titre « Origine du drame baroque allemand » (*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*). Le texte sur la mélancolie existe en trois versions : la version publiée de 1928, une prépublication dans la revue *Neue Deutsche Beiträge* de 1927 et le manuscrit dit « de Jérusalem ». La présentation synoptique des trois versions du texte permet de retracer les configurations successives envisagées par Benjamin et de comprendre que ce dernier n'écrit pas seulement à propos du baroque, mais qu'il utilise lui-même des modes d'organisation du savoir (collecte, inventaire, catégorisation et extraction) directement inspirés du baroque.

Somme toute, l'ouvrage est très stimulant. Il permet de mieux cerner les rapports qu'entretiennent des œuvres littéraires avec des techniques d'organisation du savoir. D'un point de vue comparatiste, on peut toutefois regretter que les contributions ne soient pas accompagnées

de résumés en langue anglaise. Le fait que la plupart d'entre elles ont recours à un vocabulaire spécialisé et se réfèrent à des textes rédigés en vieil allemand ne favorisera malheureusement pas leur réception au niveau international.

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**Jakob Christoph Heller, Erik Martin and
Sebastian Schönbeck, eds. *Ding und Bild in der
europäischen Romantik.***

**Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. Pp. 350.
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Le recueil *Ding und Bild in der europäischen Romantik* rassemble les contributions du colloque du même titre qui a été organisé en octobre 2018 à l'Université européenne Viadrina de Francfort (Oder). Il examine en détail différents aspects d'un domaine thématique complexe qui a été traité d'une manière soutenue dans les recherches sur le romantisme au cours des deux ou trois dernières décennies. L'importance et donc l'actualité du romantisme, comme cela a été maintes fois souligné, résultent entre autres des multiples discussions philosophiques, esthétiques et artistiques sur la médialité (pas seulement linguistique et verbale), sur les possibilités, les difficultés et les apories de la transmission (inter)médiale. Le volume se concentre sur deux concepts clés du romantisme, celui de la chose et de l'image, qui représentent chacun des rapports complexes et des interactions entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, et qui ont une énorme importance pour la création artistique et le positionnement historique des méthodes artistiques et des œuvres d'art dans les littératures européennes.

En sus d'une introduction, le volume contient seize contributions de chercheurs en littérature, culture et beaux-arts, et aborde également des domaines de recherche tels que la philosophie, la religion et l'écocritique. L'introduction des rédacteurs positionne la problématique théorique et historique des rapports entre la chose et l'image en esquissant successivement la position de l'image et de la chose dans le discours romantique, ainsi que leurs liens mutuels. En partant de textes

emblématiques du romantisme allemand, de Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis et E.T.A. Hoffmann, les éditeurs tentent d'une part de répondre à la question comment fonctionne la notion d'image « ambiguë et surcodée » (7)¹ dans le discours romantique, et d'autre part d'examiner « deux modes de traitement des choses caractéristiques du romantisme qui sont opposés l'un à l'autre » (8), et qui sont décisifs pour la « construction de l'époque romantique » (11) ; troisièmement – en les prenant pour point de départ – ils discutent le problème de « l'attribution de l'image et de l'imagination au préromantisme et de la chose ou de la matérialité au romantisme tardif » (11), en arrivant enfin à la conclusion de leur interconnection. Les auteurs du recueil appliquent les résultats et les concepts d'une part de « la théorie de l'acteur-réseau », d'autre part de « l'écocritique » (12) ; en outre, les concepts théoriques introduits par le « iconic turn » et le « pictorial turn » jouent un rôle décisif pour la discussion des problèmes posés dans les contributions. En examinant comment les concepts de l'image et de la chose sont étroitement liés, comment la médiation spécifique entre le sujet et l'objet s'opère et est réfléchie, les rédacteurs soulignent qu'il s'agit ici non seulement de revisiter le romantisme d'un point de vue historique et culturel, mais aussi d'examiner son prolongement face aux apports théoriques modernes. L'accent est mis sur l'analyse comparative des contextes historiques et systématiques du romantisme allemand, français, polonais et russe.

Les contributions du volume sont réparties en trois sections : dans la première, quatre articles traitent des relations entre la chose et l'image à la lumière d'approches théoriques actuelles ; dans la deuxième section, les concepts de médiation liés aux notions de la chose et de l'image sont exploités, afin d'examiner dans la troisième section l'applicabilité de quelques concepts actuels, entre autres ceux de la science de l'image et de la théorie des choses, pour décrire les discours romantiques sur les choses et les images.

La contribution de Ralf Simon aborde les notions de l'époque du romantisme et du réalisme en postulant deux notions du romantisme, une notion de processus et une notion de réflexion : l'une désigne la littérature romantique (à proprement parler allemande) du début du romantisme jusqu'aux années 1820, l'autre se réfère au romantisme comme époque littéraire perçue et étiquetée a posteriori par l'école réaliste comme un

¹ Toutes les traductions sont de l'auteure.

phénomène de l'histoire littéraire, à partir des années 1830. La chose et l'image correspondent donc à des points de vue différents, mais après une étape de distinction, elles peuvent être combinées dans un second temps. Cette thèse est illustrée par l'analyse d'un conte littéraire de Clemens Brentano, qui peut être situé entre le romantisme et le réalisme. Dans son article, Johannes Grave traite de questions similaires par rapport à la peinture, en partant de la distinction entre la conception de l'image comme signe transparent et la conception de l'image comme objet matériel. En s'appuyant sur l'exemple de la peinture *Moine au bord de la mer* de Caspar David Friedrich et sur d'autres exemples tirés de l'art jardinier, il montre l'importance fondamentale de la réflexion sur le rapport entre les choses et les images vers 1800 ; selon lui, cette réflexion indique également une incertitude globale quant à l'ordre de la représentation, qui peut ensuite déboucher sur une crise de la représentation. Philipp Weber aborde le rapport entre la chose et l'image sur le plan philosophique, en analysant la *Conversation sur la poésie* de Friedrich Schlegel et en la situant dans le contexte des concepts de Spinoza et de Fichte ; puis il la soumet également à une lecture actualisante qui intègre aussi les réflexions de Walter Benjamin. La poésie universelle romantique, telle que Schlegel la présente par exemple dans le fragment Athenäum nr. 116, insiste sur le rapport alternant entre la réflexion de l'univers et la réflexion universelle, qui introduit dans l'œuvre d'art le mouvement infini au sens de la poésie progressive universelle. Michal Mrugalski utilise le concept de l'échange dramatique pour décrire les relations entre les hommes et celles entre les hommes et les choses, ainsi qu'entre les choses elles-mêmes, de même que la possibilité d'une inversion des rôles dans ce modèle romantique. Ce faisant, il lit la théorie d'Adam Müller et ses *Vorlesungen* comme la transcription esthétique d'un processus d'éducation sociale dans lequel le monde intersubjectif est aliéné en un monde de marchandises.

Les six articles de la deuxième section mettent l'accent sur les notions de l'image et de la chose et se concentrent sur les conceptions de médiation qui leur sont associées. Silke Förschler examine, sur la base du tableau *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* de Delacroix, comment la surface colorée acquiert une qualité de chose au niveau de la représentation, et comment les choses sont caractérisées par une qualité de couleur spécifique au niveau du motif. Les phénomènes de la représentation du culturellement Autre et de la transformation médiale sont également examinés afin de mettre en évidence les niveaux de signification de la narration picturale. Patricia A. Gwozdz analyse

les romans *Atala* de Chateaubriand et *Paul et Virginie* de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, qui, selon elle, sont imprégnés d'images, comme en témoignent les illustrations de Doré et Blanchard. Gwozdz formule la thèse selon laquelle la poétique romanesque des deux auteurs s'inspire du métier du peintre et du dessinateur. Dans ce contexte, la notion d'esquisse est utilisée par le prisme d'un « modèle icononarratologique » permettant de négocier l'oscillation entre le projet esquissé et l'image achevée au niveau du récit dans les scénographies insulaires établies par les textes. Alfred Gall discute la question de la référence, en particulier la tension entre le sujet et l'objet, qui résulte de la relation entre le monde des objets représentés (y compris la nature) et le sujet qui les observe ou représente. Il le fait à l'aide de textes lyriques d'Adam Mickiewicz et de Julius Slowacki, qui thématisent des expériences de voyage. De ce fait, il présente ces constellations à travers une référence non-verbale. Dans sa contribution, Erik Martin s'intéresse à la figure du Dernier dans le romantisme. En considérant les conceptions esthétiques de Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel et Schelling, il examine l'épopée en vers *Pan Tadeusz* de Mickiewicz, en la comparant avec *Les Jardins* de Delille, afin de mettre en évidence les poétiques des périodes « avant » et « après 1800 » en tant que « réification » de la poétique du XVIII^e siècle reposant principalement sur l'allégorie. Matthias Preuss se rattache à la conception post-allégorique des images romantiques en analysant la poétique du conte de la Forêt-Noire *Das kalte Herz* de Hauff. Il se concentre sur le topos romantique de la « forêt », et constate que dans le texte de Hauff, ce sont les propriétés matérielles du bois qui sont mises en relief. Ainsi, les médiations spécifiques, la figuration et la matérialisation du bois, sont comprises comme une variante de la dynamique de la chose et de l'image. La tension entre la chose et l'image est également au centre de la contribution d'Abigaël van Alst. Elle y examine le fonctionnement de l'allégorie chez un Baudelaire post-romantique sur la base d'une lecture approfondie du poème *Le Masque*, qu'elle interprète comme un exemple de la réflexion critique de Baudelaire sur la chose et l'image. La statue décrite dans le poème peut être perçue à la fois comme une chose et une image, ce qui permet de saisir la dualité du « moi » romantique récemment découvert dans son intégralité.

Les articles de la troisième section se concentrent sur des textes littéraires et les discours sur les images et les choses qui y sont présents, en utilisant les conceptions actuelles des théories de l'image et des choses. Maximilian Bergengruen reconstruit et analyse – à partir de *Der*

getreue Eckart et *Der Runenberg* de Tieck ainsi que de *Das Marmorbild* d'Eichendorff – la dimension épistémique des textes poétiques romantiques du Venusberg dans leurs interrelations intertextuelles. Il se concentre sur la lecture de ces textes en tant qu'exploration littéraire de la question de la mémoire inconsciente et du rapport aux choses qui y sont associées. Pour ce faire, il utilise un modèle de l'inconscient inspiré par Schelling en tant que « mémoire » surindividuelle des choses. Jakob Christoph Heller examine les *Descriptions de peintures* écrites à Paris et aux Pays-Bas de 1802 à 1804 par Friedrich Schlegel en les interprétant comme une ébauche pratique d'une herméneutique générale affirmant une applicabilité universelle et postulant que l'image, le langage et la chose ne sont pas catégoriquement différents dans leur mode de fonctionnement épistémologique. En prenant l'exemple de la lecture des œuvres de Le Corrège par Schlegel et de leur indéchiffrabilité, l'auteur met en évidence la manière dont l'analogie entre la chose et l'image est fondée sur une concrétisation de l'inspiration chrétienne de l'absolu commun à tous. Yvonne Al-Taïe détecte dans le roman d'E.T.A. Hoffmann *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, une double structure narrative, un procédé narratif qui, dans le discours, combine un mode de narration picturale paradigmatique avec un mode de narration linéaire. En les mettant en relation, cette technique fait apparaître les liens internes des éléments apparemment hétérogènes de l'histoire racontée. Dans la conception poétique des choses et des images d'Hoffmann, les images représentent le côté matériel des choses. De plus, un « fil secret » est attribué à la chose et l'image. Seul ce fil permet d'accéder à leur contexte de signification interne. Un texte peu connu d'E.T.A. Hoffmann constitue le sujet de l'article de Sebastian Schönbeck. Dans l'analyse du récit *Der Dey von Elba in Paris*, Schönbeck met l'accent sur le contexte de l'histoire des idées et des médias. Il examine également la difficulté de savoir comment le monde extérieur influence l'imagination et comment celle-ci agit en réaction sur le monde des choses. Il s'agit également de déterminer les transitions entre les modèles narratifs fantastiques et réalistes, qui conditionnent la critique d'Hoffmann à l'égard du traitement médiatisé du discours politique et, en même temps, sa satire des médias. Dans sa contribution, Caroline Schubert s'intéresse à Gogol et à son utilisation de la lettre « O » comme signature d'auteur. Les pratiques de Gogol révèlent l'utilisation du cercle comme symbole et signe matériel. Elles attirent ainsi l'attention sur des questions concernant la relation entre signe et signification ainsi que sur l'autorité de la personne écrivante, à la fois celle de l'auteur et

du texte. Schubert tente de surmonter l'écart entre la chose et l'image en discutant les séries « O » de Gogol, qui peuvent contenir le signe primordial de la révélation ainsi que de l'annulation du sens. Dans la dernière contribution du volume, Werner Michler examine la relation entre l'image et la chose chez Grillparzer, un auteur appartenant, du point de vue de l'histoire littéraire, de la fin du romantisme. Michler examine la fonction des choses et des accessoires scéniques dans les drames de Grillparzer ; leur utilisation conduit à une synthèse du Classique et du Romantisme, ce qui caractérise l'attitude ambivalente de Grillparzer envers ces époques littéraires.

Le volume offre une lecture variée et riche en informations, les contributions pouvant être lues individuellement ou regroupées en plus petits ensembles (par ex. en mettant l'accent sur la peinture, les auteurs ou les problèmes thématiques) selon le centre d'intérêt du lecteur. Le choix des thèmes et l'argumentation des contributions démontrent la possibilité d'une approche plus large et plus spécifique de la problématique. Ces essais soulignent ainsi l'importance de l'analyse comparative des textes ; leurs conclusions suggèrent la possibilité d'étendre ce type d'analyse à d'autres auteurs et d'autres œuvres. L'importance exceptionnelle du préromantisme allemand, de par sa pensée philosophique et esthétique, ses concepts ainsi que ses pratiques littéraires, est affirmée dans toutes les contributions ; sur la base des conclusions de ces articles, il est également possible de déterminer des lignes de développement ultérieures, des caractéristiques d'époque et d'autres délimitations. Enfin, le recueil suggère la désirabilité d'études comparatives plus larges, incluant d'autres littératures nationales, d'autres auteurs et d'autres corpus de textes, ce qui permettrait de dresser un inventaire comparatif plus complet.

**Dirk Göttsche, Rosa Mucignat, Robert Weninger,
eds. *Landscapes of Realism. Rethinking Literary
Realism in Comparative Perspectives.***

**Volume I: *Mapping Realism.*
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Mapping Realism is a substantial, wide-ranging, and fascinating collection that makes a significant contribution to scholarship on the histories and theories of literary realism, both in its dominant nineteenth-century Anglo-European manifestations and through its many global legacies. This volume is part of the broader series *A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* (published under the auspices of the International Comparative Literature Association), and it is – somewhat remarkably – only the first of two volumes, with its companion volume (*Pathways through Realism*) appearing in 2022. At a fundamental level, this volume achieves what its title signals as its project: it “maps” the “landscapes” of realist practice across different periods and cultures; it takes up “comparative perspectives” to examine how key dimensions of realism play out in different contexts; and in the process, it helps scholars to “rethink” both the histories of realism as well as its ongoing significance for literary studies and cognate disciplines. It achieves all of this by bringing together and coordinating the work of thirty scholars from across the United Kingdom, United States, and Europe, scholars whose expertise spans an impressive array of national literatures and disciplinary perspectives. Indeed, one thing that distinguishes this project from other large edited collections is the extensive planning, collaboration, and coordination of its component pieces; funded by the UK’s Leverhulme

Trust, the *Landscapes of Realism* project brought contributors together in varying combinations through sixteen workshops across six years, where its component pieces developed – through discussion, debate, and feedback – from concept proposals through to completed essays. While it is perhaps impossible for a volume this large and eclectic to fulfill its editors' ambitions of being seen as a “collaborative monograph rather than as a traditional edited volume” (20), *Mapping Realism* nevertheless demonstrates a coherence of purpose and execution that amplifies its contributions to the study of realism.

Realism is a concept with a complex and conflicted history, and *Mapping Realism* does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of the debates that have accompanied the term. Nor, however, do the editors find it necessary to defend realism or offer extensive refutations of its detractors or critics. Refreshingly, the authors here take their point of departure from the developments of the past few decades that have established realism as a heterogenous, international, and interdisciplinary mode defined (in part) by its “self-reflexive questioning and (re)conceiving of the experience of reality in the shape of (literary) representation” (10). Although the contributors resist both a strict definition of realism as well as the solution afforded by a mere pluralization to “realisms,” realism as a mode is characterized in a consistent, if still capacious manner across the volume's component essays. Realist representation is a creative process that aims to capture the social and psychological experience of the “material world via processes of imitation, mimesis, replication, simulation and modeling” (2–3). And, equally important, it is a response to modernity, a process “which entailed a deep-rooted revolution in the understanding of history and society as well as a fundamental transformation of our knowledge base and the scientific methodology and philosophical epistemology that underpin it”; this revolution “so profoundly changed European conceptions of time, space, history, subjectivity, the body and the environment” that “‘reality’ as a whole [...] came to require a complete revaluation” (3).

This framework not only defines realism in a manner that can account for dominant features of the nineteenth-century English and French novels that are seen as realism's most recognizable period, but also helps establish why such periodization cannot constitute the entire landscape of realism. The generative work of so many of the essays in this volume is tied to fundamental claims about realism that follow logically (though not necessarily) from this framework and that guide – in varying

degrees – the arguments put forth in this volume. First, realism is an inherently dynamic mode insofar as it responds not only to rapidly changing socio-historical conditions but also to the representational codes and conventions that have developed to capture those conditions. Second, because the processes of modernity to which realism responds unfold unevenly across the European continent and the globe beyond, artists embrace or interrogate realism at different times in specific cultural and national contexts. Third, because realism is a particular kind of response to particular historical processes, we can identify its dialectical relation to preceding movements (romanticism) and subsequent developments (modernism, postmodernism), but realism cannot be reduced to a mere “period” within a given tradition or history. Fourth and finally, although literary representation is historically one predominant form in which these creative responses find expression, these same representational impulses are also seen in other media, including painting, cinema, theatre, photography, and new media – “comparative perspectives” on literary realism should thus also attend to realism in these different forms.

Mapping Realism opens with the editors’ introduction to the two-volume series, which not only outlines the project’s aims and the specific content of this volume, but also makes a particularly compelling case for the value of examining realism through an interdisciplinary and comparativist lens. The editors here also address one of the possible limitations of such an ambitious project: even with the broad expertise of its contributors and its significant size, such a work “cannot aim to produce a comprehensive comparative history of realism in the European language” (14). Even if such a project were possible, it would run the risk of devolving into a mere collection of “national mini-histories of realism” (17) or – worse still – a “facile pluralization or mere enumeration of component parts” (14). This problem – having to maintain a theoretical core to the project while also incorporating a broad range of traditions, literatures, and forms – is addressed by the volume’s structure and methodology: *Mapping Realism* comprises five chapters, each of which begins with a “core essay” that is then followed by three to six shorter case studies. The focus of the chapters builds from “What is realism?” (Chapter 1) to “Post-1900 transformations of realism” (Chapter 5), with chapters on “Routes into realism,” “Time and space,” and “Rereading nineteenth-century realism” occurring between.

If these chapter titles provide a logical structure for mapping the range of realist practice, they should not obscure the originality of the

methodology that guides the volume's theoretical essays. For instance, the question "what is realism?" that guides the opening chapter could very easily lead to extended philosophical considerations of core problems of the realist project (e.g., referentiality, representation, verisimilitude, etc.), or to a catalogue of nineteenth-century essays, reviews, and letters that illustrate how canonical practitioners articulated and theorized realism. Instead, the first core essay addresses the question of realism by examining the keystone theoretical works of Georg Lukács and tracing the debates and disagreements they generated. Rather than insisting on a single and delimited definition of realism, then, this approach defines realism by the tensions and contestations that characterize realism in its multifarious instantiations. Similarly, the final core essay approaches twentieth-century transformations of realism through an extended consideration of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), a novel which is typically seen as the embodiment of high modernism but which nevertheless can be viewed as an extension – rather than a rejection – of the realist project. Throughout the volume, the core essays approach central theoretical problems through examples that help to historicize realism and its significance as part of "a continuously unfolding process, not a fixed and finished [...] phenomenon in the history of literature and art" (5).

The case studies in each chapter are more focused examinations of specific issues or traditions that further contextualize the theoretical problems explored in the core essays, and they fall generally into three distinct (though not mutually exclusive) categories. Many of the case studies trace the emergence and particular contours of realism in national and linguistic traditions as it travels beyond England and France; individual case studies address African, American, Austro-Hungarian, Baltic, Greek, Indian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Lusophone, and Russian literatures. Another group of case studies consider realism in the context of specific genres or adjacent forms, including magical realism, "cartographic realism" (321), "utopian island realism" (373), "pictorial realism" (489), dramatic monologue, naturalism, socialist realism, crime fiction, biographical fiction, and the "Black British *Bildungsroman*" (735). Finally, some of the case studies move beyond literature to investigate aspects of realism in painting, film, and computer games. In addition to taking up a stunning diversity of topics, the case studies are particularly effective in substantiating the volume's efforts to "map" realism beyond its more familiar spatial and temporal boundaries. For example, several of the case studies demonstrate how the importation of canonical

realist texts generated the emergence of realism, though not without complications or debates, within specific European traditions – how, for example, the multiple Croatian translations and adaptations of *Jane Eyre* (1847) offer a lens to view issues accompanying Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslavian modernity in the latter part of the twentieth century, or how the migration of *Madame Bovary* into Italian literature shaped the form of the late nineteenth-century Italian novel.

As even this brief overview should indicate, every student and scholar of realism will find much to discover and to learn from in *Mapping Realism*. Throughout the volume, the contributors situate their discussions in relation to the foundational critics of realism: Auerbach, Jameson, Lukács, Moretti, Watt and others. Many of the essays also discuss the novelists one would expect to find in such a work on realism: Balzac, Dickens, Eliot, Flaubert, Hardy, Scott, Stendhal, and Zola. The volume as a whole strikes a nice balance in relation to this extensive tradition that will make its insights widely accessible. The essays do not presuppose a deep familiarity with the debates and developments within the critical tradition of realism, but readers more well versed in this scholarship will be able to tease out the broader ramifications of the work being done within these pages. Perhaps the greatest achievement of *Mapping Realism* is the interplay between its core essays, which consolidate the foundational ideas and issues, and case studies that chart new directions in the field. While the index only lists proper names (rather than keywords and concepts), the core essays are divided into sections and sub-sections whose descriptive titles provide legible points of entry for readers. Just as importantly, essays reference and direct readers to relevant points of association both within this volume and its companion. The sheer range of topics and ideas in this work will make it a touchstone for scholarship on realism in European languages and beyond.

James Little. *Beckett in Confinement: The Politics of Closed Space.*

**London: Bloomsbury, 2020. Pp. xix + 235.
ISBN: 9783110685985.**

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The title of James Little’s book reconciles two notions – confinement and politics – that have received a very different treatment in Beckett studies from the outset until the present. Beckett’s work, especially his drama, has always been associated with confined spaces, as many commentators have noted his predilection for all manner of enclosures (dwellings, urns, dustbins, etc.). As to Beckett’s engagement with politics, the opposite has been the case: as Emilie Morin notes, “[Beckett] is often thought to be ‘almost totally nonpolitical’ (in the words of Alan Astro), ‘consistent in his apolitical behaviour’ (in the words of Deirdre Bair), or ‘resolutely unpolitical’ (in the words of Robert Brustein)” (“From save Salman” n.p.). At the same time, Beckett was known to support a number of political causes, which has led Fintan O’Toole to ask the following question:

Why, given all of [Beckett’s] immersion in oppression, propaganda, totalitarianism, colonialism, and racism, is Beckett’s artistic work not more explicitly engaged? Why does someone who knew so much and cared so deeply about history and politics create a body of work in which they are approached so obliquely?

(qtd. in Little 2)

James Little’s book attempts to provide an answer to this legitimate question and does so in an elegant and convincing way. His is one of the latest critical inquiries into Beckett and politics, signalling a renewed interest in this topic in Beckett studies. Other examples include Emilie

Morin's *Beckett's Political Imagination* (2017), James McNaughton's *Samuel Beckett and the Politics of Aftermath* (2018), and the recent volume titled *Beckett and Politics*, edited by William Davies and Helen Bailey (2021). What sets Little's book apart from these investigations of Beckett's political aesthetics is the emphasis on the spatial dimension of Beckett's works. As Little himself puts it, the focus of his study is the suggestion that "Beckett's use of confined space is central to the political dynamics of his work" (3), with the important assumption that "these confined abodes are always political" (3).

What is particularly felicitous is that Little sees both confinement and politics in very broad terms, minding (and acknowledging) Beckett's own warning that "the danger is in the neatness of identification" (Beckett 19). For example, confinement in Little's book is not reduced to its spatial form only: apart from the more obvious discussion of incarceration and coercive confinement (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), mental confinement in one's mind, body, language or other texts also features prominently in the book (Chapters 6, 8). That said, shunning straightforward definitions harbours another kind of danger: that of the *vagueness* of identification, meaning that notions such as politics and confinement can contain such a broad spectrum of properties and characteristics that they cease to be meaningful or useful notions altogether. Little avoids this pitfall, even when discussing some of Beckett's most challenging texts (as in Chapter 8, tellingly titled "The Limits of Interpretation"). Instead, the book remains extremely focused, largely thanks to the unifying methodology of genetic criticism, or the study of the writing process.

As Little notes, genetic criticism as a methodology allows for a "shift [of] focus from spatial '*products*' to spatial '*production*'" (4) and "to shed light on the 'temporal dimension' of the creative process" (De Biasi, qtd. in Little 5). By adding the temporal dimension to his study, Little also adds depth to the synchronic structure of published texts, which in turn enhances their hermeneutic potential. It is clear that Little's engagement with genetic criticism and the archive is profound and based on extensive experience: as one of the editors of the *Beckett Digital Manuscript Project* (www.beckettarchive.org), Little has just published the digital genetic edition of three of Beckett's short plays (*Not I*, *That Time* and *Footfalls*), as well as the accompanying monograph (Bloomsbury / UPA, 2021).

Apart from his intelligent choice of methodology, Little makes ample use of his solid knowledge of theoretical works on space. Especially productive is Little's deployment of Michel Foucault's term "heterotopia,"

or “‘counter-sites’ in which ‘other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted’” (Foucault, qtd. in Little 8). Among Foucault’s heterotopias are institutions of confinement (termed “heterotopias of deviation,” 8) and the theatre, because of the latter’s ability to bring together different spaces that are “foreign to one another” (8). Both of these heterotopias are consistently deployed by Little throughout his study of Beckett’s confined spaces in prose and in drama, fleshing out a political dimension in each case, however unorthodox that dimension may be.

Being Irish and growing up in the context of the rising tensions between Ireland and the British Empire that culminated in the independence and formation of (a very conservative and parochial) Irish Free State, the young Beckett could hardly stay out of politics altogether, especially given his own Anglo-Irish Protestant background – a minority, albeit wealthy and powerful. Eventually he decided to go into voluntary exile and settled in France in 1938 (aged only 32), later admitting that he preferred living in France at war than in Ireland at peace. Recognising his political engagement as a budding artist, Little wisely devotes his first chapter to Beckett’s early critical essays, in which his aesthetic theory was largely shaped. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, Little traces the evolution of the role of institutions of confinement in the narrative from early to later prose (*More Prick than Kicks*, *Murphy*, *Watt*, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*), noting the gradual “undoing” (Gontarski) and “vaguening” (Pountney) of concrete references to places such as asylums toward less explicit, indeterminate closed spaces that Beckett’s narrators find themselves in. In doing so, he revisits the terms long entrenched in Beckett studies and reaffirms their enduring value for the field from a different, refreshing angle.

In Chapters 5, 7 and 9 we enter the world of Beckett’s drama, starting with *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* and moving on to lesser known, shorter plays of Beckett’s “late style in theatre” (Gontarski). For this discussion, Little reintroduces Foucault’s heterotopia, this time with regard to theatre and more particularly to the tension between the (proscenium) stage and “invisible, offstage space” (91), the tension Beckett uses “to stage political themes associated with confinement” (91). Chapter 6, with its return to Beckett’s prose in the discussion of his novel *The Unnamable*, seems the odd one out as it disrupts the focus on drama. Nonetheless, it is a useful interlude in more ways than one: to begin with, it foregrounds the notion of confinement in language by studying the use of personal pronouns in the novel, thus expanding the application of

confinement from places to language and identity. Moreover, it prepares the ground for the next chapter, which features a detailed analysis of the short play *Not I* and revisits Beckett's concern with personal pronouns, as is evident from the play's title. This chapter is probably the most successful sample of Little's in-depth and comprehensive scholarship: not only does it feature an illuminating genetic analysis of the play's early draft, but it also introduces the element of performance into the narrative by comparing and contrasting Beckett's preference for the proscenium stage space to Antonin Artaud's wish to "break down the division between stage and audience which the proscenium stage enforces" (136). Likewise, the play highlights the tension between a very limited stage space (minimal in a play in which only the mouth is visible onstage, with the rest of the body and space shrouded in darkness) and the vast and indeterminate offstage space. The chapter also features a brief but informative survey of the play's recent performances, emphasising the extreme confinement not only of the character Mouth, but also of the actors playing that character and relating it to the notion of torture (which playing Mouth most certainly was).

Chapter 8 goes back to prose, this time to short prose texts that are notoriously difficult to interpret with any degree of certainty. This is probably why this chapter is the most difficult one to discuss in terms of confinement and politics, as the texts it deals with display what H. Porter Abbott termed "terminally indeterminate" relations between the real world and the storyworld (qtd. in Little 156). Nonetheless, Little does succeed in making the link between the two worlds by examining the underlying intertextuality as well as zooming in on the role of the body in defining closed space in those hermetic short texts.

More convincing is the politics of confined space in the next and last chapter (9), which surveys a little-known mime and the only play that Beckett wrote with an overtly political agenda in mind. *Catastrophe* (1982) is dedicated to Václav Havel, later the first president of the Czech Republic but at the time a playwright and political prisoner in communist Czechoslovakia. Little concludes his survey with a brief study of *Quad* (1981), an enigmatic silent TV play that features "four mimes, dressed in coloured gowns with cowls hiding their faces, [who] are [...] pacing patterned paths around a lit square, avoiding a supposed 'danger zone'" (201). The play, consisting entirely of the square and four moving bodies, is an excellent example of collaborative production of space, in which the outcome depended on "the negotiation that took place between director,

crew and actors [...] as well as the negotiation of that space by four players each time they meet” (202). This continuous negotiation introduces the element of contingency to the seemingly perfect, serialised movement, fixed as it were in Beckett’s own detailed sketches (Fig. 9, 203). Such “impure spatial zones” are, according to Little, what makes Beckett “the writer of the world, whose spaces are open to new relations and interpretations” (204).

As is clear from the above summary, the range of the works discussed by Little is impressive, as he moves chronologically from the early to late works and includes all genres that Beckett practiced in his long creative life: critical essays, poetry, prose fiction (both short prose and novels), and all types of drama (stage plays, radio plays, TV plays, film and mimes). Also, various shifts in Beckett’s poetics (such as his move away from Joycean “omnipotence” to his own poetics of ignorance after WWII, or his switch to French, which accompanied that move) receive due attention in the discussion, as Little traces “Beckett’s move from writing *about* closed space to creating an art *of* confinement” (4). In selecting the corpus for such a survey study, choices inevitably had to be made, and Little has made very intelligent and sometimes courageous choices. First of all, he included a number of works that are little known and defy easy interpretation, especially in the second half of the book (Chapters 8 and 9). Besides, the mixture of prose and drama works is carefully balanced and representative. Also noteworthy is Little’s attention to Beckett’s bilingualism – much room is devoted to his self-translations and the creative nuances those often contain.

One of the book’s undeniable strengths is Little’s skill as an engaging and persuasive writer. His writing remains consistently clear, despite the need to navigate often complex texts and concepts. Little’s transparent and lucid writing style is another reason (along with the methodology) why this book, despite its ambitious scope, remains a coherent narrative throughout, as well as a true pleasure to read.

Beckett’s legendary reluctance to explain his work by locating his texts in concrete spatiotemporal terms has created a misconception that his oeuvre is apolitical and ahistorical. This misconception has been largely undone in recent Beckett scholarship, and James Little’s book forms an important contribution to this ongoing process of “undoing.” By creating confined spaces without any geographical or temporal markers, Beckett left us with oblique yet powerful political statements that we can “recontextualize vividly in different moments, without

sliding into allegory or one-on-one correspondence” (McDonald, qtd. in Little 204). Little’s references to recent performances of Beckett’s plays in different parts of the world (be it *Not I* or *Godot*) testify to their immense potential to resonate with their audiences in various political and cultural contexts. His comprehensive and extremely well-researched investigation of Beckett’s creation of confined spaces, “whether onstage or on the page” (207), by means of the genetic-critical methodology, is illuminating, persuasive and extremely well-written, and as such is a valuable scholarly resource both within and beyond Beckett studies.

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**Rita Rieger, ed. *Bewegungsszenarien der Moderne.
Theorien und Schreibpraktiken physischer und
emotionaler Bewegung.***

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« La vue me donne un mouvement, et le mouvement me fait sentir sa génération et les liens du tracement. Je suis mù par la vue ; je suis enrichi d'une image par le mouvement, et la même chose m'est donnée, que je l'aborde par le temps, que je la trouve dans l'espace... » (Valéry 54). Dans ces quelques lignes de 1921, Paul Valéry conceptualise, à travers un dialogue fictif entre Socrate et Phèdre, le mouvement comme pôle d'une relation jamais achevée. Marqué, comme l'ensemble de ses contemporains, par les chronophotographies d'Étienne-Jules Marey, c'est le vertige paradoxal d'une pensée physique, d'un affect intérieur qui est ici retracé par une élaboration où le regard, focale des traces du temps, finit par être le véritable lieu d'émergence de l'œuvre. Le mouvement, l'un des « mythes » fondamentaux de la modernité (Hülk), est au cœur de l'esthétique et de la pratique modernes. De la poésie du sentiment, et des émotions du XVIII^e siècle, au « transitoire » baudelairien jusqu'aux chronophotographies de Marey et à l'irruption du cinéma, le mouvement/émotion accompagne les changements de paradigme de la modernité.

Penser le mouvement des corps et des sentiments, l'inscrire dans une scénarisation qui permet de changer la perception de l'œuvre, tel est aussi le fil rouge du volume collectif dirigé par Rita Rieger, qui se place à la jonction entre l'histoire des arts et celle des idées. Plus précisément, la

« scénarisation » ou « scénographie », l'élaboration ou l'imagination¹ du mouvement, formulée par Valéry à travers la « ligne » et « le tracement », est la pierre de touche à laquelle les auteurs et les autrices du volume, rédigé entièrement en allemand, mesurent cette longue modernité, étendue, à la suite des travaux d'Ottmar Ette (Ette), de son émergence au XVIII^e siècle à sa réinvention à la fin du XX^e siècle. Rita Rieger replace dans son introduction (7–20) les jalons essentiels de ces trois « tournants » de la mobilité : tournant du mouvement des affects et des émotions vers 1800, tournant de l'esthétique du mouvement vers 1900 et déplacement de la représentation vers les dynamiques propres au mouvement depuis 2000. L'approche comparatiste revendiquée, que ce soit dans la confrontation entre les aires linguistiques et culturelles ou dans la réflexion sur l'objet inter- ou transmédiat, permet un brassage thématique large. De la sculpture à l'art conceptuel, des cahiers d'écrivain aux carnets de mise en scène, des pièces de théâtres aux ballets, classiques et contemporains, des peintures aux photographies, des romans aux essais esthétiques, toutes les formes, tous les supports et genres artistiques sont ici convoqués, à l'exception étonnante du cinéma. Les douze articles mènent des ballets codifiés français et italiens du XVIII^e siècle au théâtre contemporain germanophone et à l'art conceptuel anglophone, en passant par les drames du *Sturm und Drang*, les pièces de Pirandello ou les *Cahiers* de Valéry.

Cette variété s'appuie dans chaque article sur un appareil critique homogène, largement tributaire des réflexions esthétiques de Deleuze, Derrida et Didi-Huberman, et s'inscrit dans une démarche méthodologique détaillée par Rita Rieger dans son article liminaire. Elle y insiste sur la portée épistémologique des termes-clefs « figure, scène et scénario » (21–37). Ces trois concepts investissent autant de potentialités du mouvement. La « figuration », illustrée à travers l'analyse contrastive des « figures » de Pierre Rameau pour *Le Maître à Danser* et du *Recueil de danses* de Raul-Auger Feuillet, est « mobilisée » sur la « scène » de la feuille de papier grâce au travail intermédiat. La « scène », comprise à la suite de Jacques Rancière comme « une petite machine optique qui nous montre la pensée occupée à tisser les liens unissant des perceptions, des affects, des noms et des idées » (Rancière 12), comme le surgissement de « l'histoire » dans la « mobilité », procède par une réduction et une

¹ « L'imagination » est à comprendre ici comme mise en image et comme potentialité. Elle est alors proche de la notion de « scénarisation » privilégiée par Rita Rieger. Voir Barrère et Martuccelli.

sélection préliminaires à la schématisation (30). La scène, comme cadre herméneutique, devient « scénarisation » dès lors qu'elle est comprise comme projet, comme potentialité. Toutes deux permettent de mettre en exergue la conception moderne de la littérature comme texte ouvert qui se réinvente à chaque nouvelle lecture. Volontairement a-chronologique, les trois grandes parties de l'ouvrage, « culture et arts du mouvement » ; « le mouvement et son autre » ; « le mouvement entre scène et scénarisation » donnent une ossature parfois artificielle à un ensemble malléable.

Dans la première partie, Walburga Hülk (41–54) retrace avec Baudelaire, Taine et Valéry la place du mouvement dans l'histoire des arts au tournant du XIX^e siècle en associant les réflexions sociologiques de Hartmut Rosa sur l'accélération à l'analyse des « formules de pathos » d'Aby Warburg par Georges Didi-Huberman. Le fil qui mène du positivisme de Taine aux travaux de William James et de Friedrich Nietzsche (50) aurait d'ailleurs pu être étendu au « moi insauvable » d'Ernst Mach et à sa fortune dans les écrits de la fin de siècle viennoise, tant les lignes de Taine sur l'école de Barbizon font écho aux descriptions de ce moi prismatique et modulable. Le mouvement pénètre dans la critique d'art comme « formule » pour faire surgir le « dilemme » chez Baudelaire, et il devient le support et le sujet des avant-gardes, futuristes, et sujet d'étude et de pratique scientifique. Günther A. Höfler (55–71) se penche sur le déplacement paradigmatique du mouvement de l'extérieur (affect) vers l'intérieur (sentiment) à travers les écrits philosophiques et théoriques de Breitinger et Herder en illustrant ce retournement par l'étude du silence et de sa figuration dans les pièces du *Sturm und Drang* (Lenz, Goethe). L'aposiopèse, la suspension du sens, implique l'activation surtout émotionnelle du lecteur. Dans la littérature du *Sturm und Drang* cette ouverture est le signe d'un changement de paradigme : l'indicible est réévalué, et les silences et les exclamations, de même que les mouvements inscrits dans les didascalies, font surgir « visuellement » la psychologie du personnage. L'aposiopèse n'est toutefois pas univoque, elle est liée à la conception du sujet et des émotions qui le constituent. Chez Goethe, nous montre Höfler, l'émotion jaillit en suspendant le verbe ; dans les drames contemporains du sujet en « déconstruction » chez Thomas Arzt et Ewald Palmetshofer, les tirets ne sont pas simplement les traces de l'incommunicabilité, mais l'expression d'une rupture existentielle. Ajoutons que le tiret peut être lu chez Palmetshofer, grand lecteur de Lacan, comme la « barre » du « sujet ». Le « sujet barré » renvoie à l'aliénation du sujet par le langage. Et c'est bien le sens des tirets envahissants des pièces

de Palmetshofer. Höfler analyse ici sa réécriture de *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, mais la « barre » est explicitement reliée à Lacan et introduite dans le jeu de son autre réécriture : *faust hat hunger und verschluckt sich an einer grete* (2009). L'article de Julia Weber (73–89) revient sur le renouvellement de la narration à travers ce même vertige existentiel, cette fois appliqué à une lecture très convaincante du roman d'Ann Quin, *Passages* (1969). En rapprochant les focalisations fluctuantes du texte des conceptions poétologiques de Virginia Woolf et de T. S. Eliot, Weber montre, texte à l'appui, l'émergence non plus d'une narration impersonnelle mais trans-personnelle dans ce véritable « laboratoire littéraire », où la forme dialogique permet l'émergence d'une perception affective a-subjective.

Dans la seconde partie, Ralf Bohn (93–109) interroge « l'absence », reprise à Barthes, Virilio et Derrida, comme « autre » de la photographie-« héliographie » (Henry Fox Talbot). Entre art et technique, la photographie remet en question la place de l'auteur. S'il n'est pas le simple déclencheur d'un art-automatique (les débats sur l'instantané en 1890 font écho à ceux sur la photographie numérique en 1990), comment montrer son art invisible ? Il faut ajouter à la photographie une part discursive et opérer trois mises en scène : mise en scène par choix du sujet, par déclenchement (choix du moment de la prise) et par « alchimie » dans le bain du révélateur. L'article d'Isa Wortelkamp (111–125) s'inscrit dans la continuité du précédent en reportant son regard sur les « notes » chorégraphiques. Il ne s'agit plus de la mise en scène de la performance artistique, mais d'un espace de réflexion et d'élaboration qui accompagne la création au lieu de la fixer. Si Valéry considérait ses *Cahiers* comme une *Anti-œuvre*, en déplaçant l'attention du produit à son processus (118), dans le contexte de la danse, leur notation opère un retournement : la performance devient l'anti-œuvre, alors que l'œuvre se cache dans les carnets de danse. C'est ce déplacement qu'analyse Wortelkamp à partir des carnets (surtitrés « still ») d'Anna Till sur son spectacle intermédial *parallel situation* (2017). Karoline Gritzner (127–141) interroge la mise en scène de l'écriture chez Hélène Cixous (citée souvent en anglais) comme pratique impliquant nécessairement le mouvement et l'altérité (y compris dans une perspective genrée), plus encore le mouvement vers l'altérité. C'est enfin la scénarisation des émotions dans la pièce « littéraire » de Pirandello, *Suo marito*, qui occupe Karin Schulz (143–162) : le carcan classique est ici poussé à bout par une exacerbation des mouvements et des émotions. La mise en abîme et la peinture des contrastes forcent le spectateur à une prise de conscience de ses propres affects.

La dernière partie investit la scénarisation du mouvement. En s'intéressant à la sculpture comme champ performatif, Sabine Flach (165–178) remonte à la source des réflexions sur l'intermédialité, le *Laocoon* (1766) de Lessing. La scission entre arts dynamiques et arts statiques n'a toutefois pas survécu au tournant du XX^e siècle ; le mouvement est devenu sculpture, s'est inscrit dans les installations et les performances ; il s'élabore, se met en scène (Alexandra Pirici, Sasha Waltz, Tino Seghal).² Tout comme l'article de Wortelkamp plus haut, c'est le moment de l'élaboration que Kirsten Maar (179–189) étudie dans les carnets de chorégraphes, ou « scénographies », de William Forsythe et Meg Stuart. Iris Julia Buehrle (190–205) complète harmonieusement ces trois articles en revenant sur un cas d'école de la transmédialité : les mutations du ballet « littéraire » entre 1763 (*Médée et Jason* de Jean-Georges Noverre) et 1978 (*Die Kameliendame* de John Neumeier). Le dernier article prend le contrepoint du précédent : Ingrid Pfandl-Buchegger (207–225) s'intéresse à la codification sociale de la société britannique de 1800, afin de permettre au lecteur d'aujourd'hui de décrypter, à travers les publications de Thomas Wilson sur la bienséance, l'implicite des scènes de danse (sans danse) de *Pride and Prejudice* de Jane Austen. Les treize articles de l'ouvrage rassemblent de nombreuses facettes d'une théorie du mouvement adossée aux modalités de sa matérialisation, conceptualisation : penser, écrire, lire, « formuler » le(s) mouvement(s) et émotions de la modernité est, forcément, un « work in progress ».

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² Parmi les sources qui n'ont pas été citées par l'article, les réflexions de Claire Gheerardyn sont particulièrement fructueuses (« Geste révélé, geste révélateur : Rilke face à Rodin »).

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Rey Chow. *A Face Drawn in Sand: Humanistic Inquiry and Foucault in the Present.*

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The far-reaching and enduring intellectual legacy that Foucauldian theories exert has left a profound influence on a variety of authors, particularly on the works of Rey Chow. In her latest book, *A Face Drawn in Sand*, Foucault plays a leading role in Chow's inquiry into the possibility of re-imagining humanistic study in the new age. The focus of the book, however, is not to purely probe into Foucault's thinking but rather to re-negotiate and re-delineate the parameters of humanistic and transhumanistic studies more significantly, as Chow suggests, in order to challenge a set of questions that Foucault raised during his career (6).

Beginning with Bruno Latour's article "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern" (2004), Chow questions the dominant status that European theory has played in American academe. The concept of "thingness" – a material entity as a scholarly object extracted from reality – plays a prominent role in North American academic network, which, in the words of Chow, is taught to adopt a particular standpoint. European philosophy and theory serve as an antidote, and yet fail to incorporate diverse ideologies through *interdisciplinarity*. Chow therefore advocates "an active imagining of relations of *exteriority* – of possibilities that lie outside established structures of meaning production" (14, emphasis added). The recurring notion of "outside" that appears throughout Foucault's works thus becomes an anchor point of *A Face Drawn in Sand* to answer the questions of "what is *outside*?" and "how is *outside* relatable?"

“Outside,” as Chow theorizes from Foucault, is an openness that not only offers access but also intervenes in an epistemic hegemony (21). Unshackled by a type of epistemic pre-determinism, “thinking outside” forms the very basis for a critique and a feature of interdisciplinarity. As an interdisciplinary study, *A Face Drawn in Sand* seeks to resist the *a priori* connection between signifier and signified through “thinking otherwise” (36). By articulating a set of pre-existing humanistic debates over literary study, racism, (in)visibilities, among other issues, Chow transcends spatial and temporal limits to fill in the interstices between different material entities by re-invigorating not only Foucauldian theory but also other influential and less-influential texts. Following the vision that Latour articulated in “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?,” Chow seeks to be the one that assembles rather than the one that debunks.

The first chapter is devoted to the predicament and the potential future of literary study from a biopolitical lens. Traced to Foucault’s genealogical analysis of Western linguistic transformation in *The Orders of Things* (1970 [1966]), Chow highlights the “autistic” (42, emphasis in original) status of language reduced to a mere object when literature is more distinct from the discourse of ideas. The change of function that language undergoes in the course of modernity allowed science to become the new discourse, or, in other words, a new language. As a prime example of this, Franco Moretti’s “distant reading” approach vacates language by forming an abstract model in a visual and comparative manner. Studying literature, therefore, requires the reader to contend with both the text’s verbal and visual significations. However, Chow questions the efficiency of such a quantitative and visualized approach. The eviction of language, according to Chow, not only leads to the digital humanities based on a bureaucratized academe and on the utilitarian strategies of the corporatized university setting. It also profoundly objectifies literature by associating it with a set of humanistic issues, such as social justice and public policy. When literature becomes a mere problem-solving tool to cater to a new biopolitical niche, literary study is inevitably reconfigured and objectified.

Returning to the issue of visualization in Chapter 2, Chow focuses on how Foucauldian theories of visibility and invisibility impact modernist art. From Édouard Manet’s *Olympia* to René Magritte’s *This Is Not a Pipe*, Foucault’s understanding of invisibility rests on a certain unknowability – a form of openness and potentiality. Chow extends his theorization into *temporality*, in which the knowledge created by invisibility is inextricably

associated with a passing condition where an invisible yet active gaze from the *outside* deconstructs any absolute knowledge (69). Visibility – the unmasking or restoration of the truth – is thus not defined by what can be seen but rather by what cannot be seen.

Compared to the rest of the book, Chapter 3 is endowed with a distinctively realistic significance. Foucault's use of "race," as Chow remarks, "intends something akin to *group, type, class, or speciation*" (103, emphasis in original). The concept of race then is no longer bounded by an *a priori* Eurocentric repressive hypothesis, such as the Freudian paradigm of sexual repression. Specifically, racism as a relation of biopower is a composite defined by both biological and social "transcriptions" of "race war" (104). The issue of racism, in this respect, is essentially a class struggle that was gradually transferred from Bible-based religious power to the objectification of reason as a secular power. Within the context of law and order, the racism that was exhibited by the police and the stigma attached to Muslims after the 9/11 attacks are representative examples. The new race war, as Chow suggests, "rests [...] on a *multinational consensus to govern*" that not only "legitimize[s] and monopolize[s]" certain "rationales of governing," but also divides the world by "ostracizing specific groups of people" (112, emphasis in original).

Drawing on post-structuralist theory, sound theory, and media theory in the works of Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Jean-Luc Nancy, and others, Chapter 4 examines voice, sound, listening, and, more importantly, how their historical, theoretical, and sociopolitical ramifications can be extended to recurring motifs in literary studies. In Chow's survey, the dual nature that voice, sound, and listening possess creates a universalized chasm between perception and expression, hearing and speaking, direct speech and reported speech. Such an "information dispersion" (127) signals the inherent heterogeneity of reading, listening, and speaking. The central theme of this chapter, the "*énoncé*" in Foucault's and Deleuze's philosophies refers to what has been said as well as what has been reduced and muted. And "*énoncé*" shares a very similar status with knowledge when knowledge *per se* is seen as a "verbal mass," a "temporal composite," and an assemblage of fragments (121). The focus of this chapter thus questions the infinity of knowledge by dissecting its condition amid the differentiated dimensions.

In Chapter 5, Chow explores the role of confession in the media spectacle in order to re-assess the "trajectories of selfhood" in neoliberal

times (34). As Chow argues, today's confession has shifted from Foucauldian self-devaluation and self-destruction to a project of self-elevation – as a visible show spectacle, Princess Diana's interview with the BBC in 1995 provides a key example. In other words, confessional discourse deviates from its religious and sexual limits while, at the same time, transforming and becoming a form of self-growth, self-therapy, self-fulfillment, self-elevation, and self-correction that seeks “public validation, legitimation, exhibition, and performativity” (35). Through mass media and digital media, therefore, selfhood is essentially intermediated and heterotopic, and defined as both utterly real and unreal.

Beyond a discussion of “self” or “outside,” *A Face Drawn in Sand* offers us Chow's personal critique as well as skepticism towards the compatibility of humanistic studies amid the swirl of the neoliberal in our digital era. By juxtaposing a set of micro-arguments about diverse disciplines and areas, Chow alerts scholars in the field of humanistic studies by calling attention to some basic but essential issues. *A Face Drawn in Sand* is not a book that simply debates over theory: this study reconceptualizes theory by pondering the questions of “how should we read these texts today?” and, as Chow proposes, “*how not to have the answers before the questions are asked?*” (31, emphasis in original).

Hence, instead of merely reviving or re-interpreting Foucault's theories, Chow challenges and closely examines the discourses that were formulated by the French critic and his interlocutors. What makes this book worth reading, however, lies first in how the author unshackles the formal and perpetuated discourse by providing a suspension, a cut, and a form of “otherwise” before Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, and many others become another form of unassailable fetishism *vis-à-vis* human science. Second, Chow refuses certainty and further extends the originality of the canons in order to probe not into the past but into the present and the future. The temptation and pitfalls of sanctifying Foucault and other theorists' philosophy, therefore, are indissolubly associated with the process of de-objectification that Chow articulates throughout this work. Only when the face drawn in sand is “washed away by the sea,” as Chow remarks, can the “‘possibility of thinking otherwise’” (36) be fulfilled. Only then can the development of criticism flourish, and, more significantly, can humanistic studies survive.

Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen. *A Literary History of Reconciliation. Power, Remorse, and the Limits of Forgiveness.*

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That literary works are instructive is an ancient truth. Perhaps they may be said to extend invitations to inhabit other lives and to observe modes of living that, at least in this instance, may reduce dissention and enhance peaceable human relations. For Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, reconciliation is the overcoming of conflict and the commitment – at times, irenic; at times, agonistic – to harmony (3). Remorse is salient in the texts to which the author turns (4–9). Contrition, humility before God and the other, avoidance of punishment and grace-filled restoration, reveal the characters’ religious and secular motives that may recur upon them doubtfully; and also may reinstitute extant disparities of domination that remain stubbornly persistent, even when love loves the profligate stray (11–14). Attempts to heal and to restore are often derailed by the reassertion of force with a newly glossed veneer: is there the possibility of “forgiveness without power: unconditional but without sovereignty” (Derrida, qtd. in van Dijkhuizen 18)? These issues are highlighted in the introductory chapter and then explored in six chapters.

In an appropriately inverted chronological sequence, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1674), in Chapter Two, precedes Shakespeare, and the Edenic *felix culpa* inaugurates a paradoxical alliance of unconditional and conditional modes of restoration: God’s free and forgiving grace; Satan’s observation that God’s forgiveness singularly depends upon humanity’s self-subservience (34–35). As the author concedes: “Satan is

not entirely mistaken in ascribing an element of subjection to divine forgiveness" (45) – recalling, possibly, *the* inceptive moment of perennial disparity that stealthily perdures in all conciliatory endeavours. Thus, the admission of sin and self-abnegation that appear non-negotiable before the preeminent "throne of grace" insinuate themselves in all future attempts to reconcile, illustrated here in the public display of Eve's abasement as mirroring a monarchy in which "sub-jects," indeed, are "thrown under."

In Chapter Three, van Dijkhuizen shows how Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* provide a spectrum of reconciliatory practices. In *Measure for Measure*, the citizen is defined solely with reference to the ruler, but "moral" Vincentio's interpersonal relations contest his governance. His exploitative political will appears so to sweat his subjects that their resultant "terrible exposure and humiliation" (56) eviscerate gracefully practiced clemency. In *King Lear*, Cordelia's remonstrance with her father for his posture of deference before her is a result of "shock" in IV. vii. for Van Dijkhuizen (60, 62), because it inverts the established patriarchal hierarchy. But it also is a proleptic sign of rescinding rank in the concluding *tableau* in which father and daughter resist blame, and where asking for forgiveness and offering blessing are united in a single act (*King Lear* V. iii). Less palatable is the almost grotesquely tantalising nearness of reconciliation that beckons but is deferred in *The Tempest* and, particularly, in *The Winter's Tale*. In the latter play, where "death" intrudes as metaphorically true, the guilty living remain guilty. Leontes's iniquity, when confronted by the "death" of Hermione, is enmarrowed, and Paulina's insistence of his blame entrenches his diminishment because of Hermione's return to age and childlessness: time's healing has etched its scabrous wounds.

In Richardson, Godwin, and Dickens (Chapter Four), "remorse and repentance [are] important enablers of forgiveness: remorse signals a moral transformation on the part of wrongdoers that renders them eligible for forgiveness, both by other characters and by God" (77). However, in the works of these authors, gender power differentials and hierarchical class structures seldom are altered. Pamela's final consent to marry Mr B in Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), and Florence's return to Mr Dombey in Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1846–1848) retain forms of male domination and class-consciousness that cannot be erased. If the alternative vistas of these novels are suppressed, then, significantly, a vision beyond emerges in *Caleb Williams*. Of some import in these

novels (and those to which the book subsequently turns) are forms of humbling – that within the reassertions of oppressive social relations reside altered sensibilities and detectable transformations in superiors that, if not always evident to the characters themselves (109), may be noticed by readers and witness to literature’s ancient warrant.

Woolf and Joyce, in Chapter Five, introduce the reader to psychological territory of oedipal magnitude and the recursive *monologue intérieur* that expose the suppressed, the unknown, and the perduring traction of the sacred. The contrast between James and Cam, and their distinctive relationships with their father in *To the Lighthouse*, contests the grim obstinacy of the former with the accepting benevolence of the latter. Not insignificantly, in the final pages, Cam’s love of her father is reaffirmed, or, more accurately, recast, because she now sees him and accepts him in his damaged and “complex” (134) “beauty” (130–32). Although *Ulysses’s* treatment of the displacement of remorse, from its hounding and debilitating persistence (138–39) to its sublation in sacrificial propitiation, would demand a book-length study in itself, van Dijkhuizen ably introduces an example that, again, authorizes readers to learn about themselves by observing “a departure from the marital and familial reconciliation paradigms ... encountered in earlier chapters” (142). A gracious self-offering of an inflected kind not quite yet encountered occurs as the events of the 16th of June, 1904, close in the early hours of the following morning and “avoid [...] ... a hierarchical form of marital reconciliation ... [and] the confirmation of patriarchal gender hierarchies” (144). Embarking upon a friendship with Stephen Dedalus, with its angles still to be smoothed, prompts Bloom to accommodate his own sundered marital bond. After bidding Stephen farewell, Poldy returns to the conjugal bed even though the evidence of Boylan lingers (145), and a form of nuptial consonance is recovered. The quietly transfiguring “impersonality of reconciliation” that Leopold enacts (145–47) is one of the erasing moments of self in self-humbling.

With reference to *Atonement* by Ian McEwan in Chapter Six, John Mullan’s insistence that the novel is a metanarrative *tout court* (Mullan 178–80) – inasmuch as it is an analeptic account of events and their elaboration describing and explaining the writing of the story by Briony Tallis – rather elides the “foreground[ing of] its own status as a work of fiction” (van Dijkhuizen 151). McEwan’s largely, but not entirely, successful dissembling for most of the novel invokes an ancient worry about the very nature of fiction’s influence that so

troubled Plato's Socrates (*Respublica* X) – and it accords to the novel some measure of fretfulness about literature's ethical responsibility and the “risk of reading” (Waxler): risks to both reader and author. For the challenges are not merely about readers' interpretations; they also are about writers' responsibilities when creating literary characters. The realisation that Briony has levelled a false rape accusation against Robbie with devastating consequences engenders questions about learning to account for one's actions, about how “to atone.” Thus, in the concluding metanarrative, the question arises about an altered Briony, a Briony who has lived a life pursued by an *ἀγών* of self-doubt through *la longue durée* (the manuscript is dated 1999, more than sixty years after the crucial event) of the “agenbite of inwit” (to cite *Ulysses*).

J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* tormented South African white readers, because it cast them as characters in a novel that interrogated their own belonging, their concept of “the nation” or, more brutally, “the state”; of self-appropriated privileged “rights” underwritten by theological sanction, and of a tendentious politics – all with a particular relevance to Afrikaners who had ruled the apartheid South Africa. But the local white liberal reader, whose post 1994 “credentials” not infrequently included a vaunt about a long-standing opposition to the racist regimes' policies, also expressed some disquiet or, on occasions more vehemently, a repugnance at the events portrayed in this novel. For both sets of readers, this was not only, or not primarily, because of David Lurie's predatory sexual pursuits or the challenging concerns raised at, and about, his “Truth and Reconciliation” hearing, which the author's observations helpfully analogise (158–59). Undoubtedly, David Lurie's disgrace comprises a multidimensional critique – of the academy, of paternalism, of masculine dominance, of the machinations of committee jousting, and of strategizing for advancement within the university – but it also assumes a significance for white citizens of the nascent democratic South Africa, because it caustically strips off the veneer of settler citizenship down “to the third and fourth generation” (Deuteronomy 5:9) and three or four times that. Van Dijkhuizen's analysis of Lurie is rewarding because even though it reveals an unreliable focalizer, his self-probing modulates towards a form of reconciliation in a compassionate yielding to non-human animals when, towards the end of the novel, he cares – discovers a love – for the dogs at an animal welfare shelter (see Attwell 192–96).

Marilynne Robinson's first two novels of the Gilead Quartet¹ primarily are explored by van Dijkhuizen in Chapter Seven, but all four are embedded in a (presently) unfolding account of how racial others were, and continue to be, viewed – of their status in the context of small-town traditions and prejudices, and of a stealth that menaces parochial *mores* with its lurking uneasiness, as it senses a threat in colour difference. The 1950s setting foregrounds a Protestant individualism in which the practices of seeking forgiveness and effecting reconciliation, and its urgency, are located in the private sphere (181, 189, and 190). The two ministers, John Ames (Congregational) and Robert Boughton (Presbyterian) preach a “similar gospel of forgiveness” (183) that soothes the inconveniences of domesticity and smooths the day's dinner table friction (192). It has the potential “to trickle down,” for Ames; it initiates the possibilities of reconciliation, for Boughton (183). However, beyond the familial and familiar, a past haunts them. Behind Ames, stands his grandfather; before Boughton, stands his son (and Ames's godson), Jack, the prodigal, who returns after twenty years and tests their beliefs about forgiveness, its practice and necessity, and the unreasonableness of its demands (184). Grandfather Ames was a proto-liberation theologian persuaded by the necessary violence of a “just struggle” because he believed that no nation could be at peace with itself for as long as some were in chains (189). His convictions cast an ominous shadow upon his son (in bitter conflict) (187–88), his grandson (in irenic opposition) (188), and his great-grandson (in silence) (189).

The peaceful privacy of Christian salvation with its *hauteur* and sense of smugness that reigns in Gilead is disturbed by the arrival of Jack and Della, his African American wife, and their son, who has been named after his grandfather (190–91). In an exchange about race between Robert Boughton and his son, Boughton senior's sanitised neutrality on politics and his demeaning views of “coloured people” also fail to acknowledge the role of legislative statutes in enacting forms of systematic exclusion (191). This town of Gilead, once “radical abolitionist,” is no place for Jack and his family in the 1950s (192). Ames's position, initially not dissimilar to that of Boughton's (192), now modulates. Conflict – familial dissension – may be unavoidable; in fact, Ames acknowledges its ineluctability: Jack cannot but hurt his

¹ Publication dates: *Gilead* (2004), *Home* (2008), *Lila* (2014), and *Jack* (2020).

father for as long as his father deflects his gaze from the reality of own life. Whilst Boughton resists probing his son's restiveness, Ames edges towards an understanding of the depths of his predicament. Pain will ensue, and his friend will be wounded; but forgiveness is owed to his godson (194). These recognitions that hearken to the seventy-seven-year-old Ames reintroduce his own grandfather's contextual Christian politics of justice and love into consanguineal domesticity. Indeed, in *Lila*, the presence of this politics already is close to Ames, who accepts more willingly, forgives more generously, and forgets. Too old now, John Ames bequeaths these further challenges of "bravery" to his son (194, 196): a silent bestowal upon a new generation. Where Ames's young son is exhorted to enact the courage he lacked – "to be a 'brave man in a brave country'" (194, 196) – Lila and Glory (Jack's long-suffering sister) imagine a promised presence of freedom in the domestic, social, and political spheres that invokes utopia, the "no place" gift of the subjunctive and the optative modal capacities of being human, where vision's earnest calls upon humanity to look again at itself and its unasked for giftedness, and to persist in re-envisioning its existence holistically. As the third of the Gilead novels, *Lila*, closes, heaven is depicted as this place without location, where reconciliation between the impossible *impossibility* of forgiving now in this mortal realm – Lila's tragic sense that "forgiveness is incompatible with the world as she has come to know it" (195) – is tantalizingly descried.

Van Dijkhuizen's rich and instructive account, undoubtedly, also raises questions – thus, three brief comments. The first returns to *King Lear*, and to the eponymous character's brusque and severing exchange with Cordelia at the beginning of the play. In contrast to her father's approach, perhaps one may propose that Cordelia adopts a stance of "thinking silence" in an attempt to evaluate the responsibilities of daughter to father in a sororial context: How does one reply? And how does one reply justly, accounting for the other and the others? If so, then one may observe that Cordelia's absent-presence of "nothing" embeds itself in the unfolding scenes of the play that follow – and even as the *interior intimo meo* of Lear's own self-finding. Without the initial insertion of a lesson in thoughtful silence that Cordelia provides, and which, in her physical absence for much of the play, others may or may not learn, one could ask whether the possibility of achieving the semblance of harmony between father and daughter that occurs in the later episode may be envisaged (on strategies of silence, see, *inter alia*, Williams [Chapter Six]; Grillo;

England *Fictions* [Chapter Three]). For the later expectation of censure and blame is met by the decisive assurance (staged with a pause before it, and so re-enacting the opening scene's silence; or not, and so overturning that initial silence?): "No cause, no cause."

The second comment also concerns silence – now, less interpersonal and more overtly political. In a brief article, this reviewer focused upon reconciliation in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (see England "Lucy"; cf. Clarkson 73–74) – not upon David Lurie but upon Lucy. For it seemed then, and may well remain one's view, that the primary challenge of just reconciliation that responds not only to the present, but also examines the past and the archive of the past – as in the anxious history of the transgressed boundaries of reconciliation and forgiveness in the Gilead novels, both familial and political – engenders an ethical imperative to interrogate and to answer. And Lucy's answer in *Disgrace* is the silent commitment of staying – in a practice, perhaps, of penance – and of the handing on (inaugurating a neoterically inflected *traditio*), or the handing back, of "her land" (?) – an action that recasts her as a just and sacrificial self: *for* the other; atoning *for* one's past and the past of one's past in a form of self-humbling that, oxymoronically, elevates the self and exalts reconciliation's implicit hope.

Finally, after the Gilead testimony (and those from Milton to Coetzee), the book rather yearns for a concluding chapter that evaluates the lessons in the novels by returning to the fundamental faultlines that disrupt personal and social relations, and by sketching an imaginary of justice beyond justice, of the *impermissible* return and welcome of the *unjustified* non-repentant. For the novels explored here seem to invite the reader to meditate upon what could occur when forgiveness does not merely finesse structural forms of violence, where gestures towards harmony are not incentivised, and where silence deliberates and waits for the right time to speak in reconciliation.

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Dominique Bertrand, dir. *Rencontres facétieuses entre France et Italie : Pour une généalogie du rire européen.*

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Ce volume, publié sous la direction de Dominique Bertrand, est constitué d'un avant-propos, treize articles, une bibliographie, un index nominum, des résumés des articles et de la table des illustrations. Les articles sont distribués en trois parties, au sein desquelles ils sont organisés suivant la chronologie des textes explorés.

L'avant-propos nous introduit dans l'univers scientifique du rire européen par la brève présentation des projets menés par des scientifiques d'universités françaises, italiennes et américaines. Dominique Bertrand ouvre le volume en en présentant le contenu – la culture du rire de la première modernité, les travaux fondateurs, la médiation italienne et la réappropriation française – et en l'intégrant dans l'espace plus ample de l'étude du patrimoine comique européen, à travers l'analyse des liens entre l'histoire du rire, les transformations sociales, politiques, religieuses et la révolution technologique de l'imprimerie. Elle prépare les lecteurs à leur voyage dans « la nébuleuse facétieuse » (16) et met en évidence les nombreux défis que les scientifiques doivent relever pour reconstruire une généalogie du rire français et européen, dont les mots clés – polysémie, traduction, hybridation, détournement, réappropriation et réemploi –, présents déjà dans les titres des contributions, constituent le fil rouge du volume tout entier.

L'étude de Nora Viet ouvre idéalement la première section, centrée sur la « Gageure de la translation des modèles humanistes ». On y voit

rassemblés la plupart des auteurs qu'on retrouvera au fil des pages : Cicéron et Quintilien ; Boccace, Pontano, Castiglione, Pogge, Valla, della Casa ; Laurent de Premierfait, Antoine Le Maçon et Guillaume Tardif, et s'y dessiner la multiplicité de la facétie française. L'analyse des traductions et des adaptations du *Decameron* et des modalités de traduction du « bon mot » qu'elle nous livre met en évidence une nette hésitation terminologique qui s'estompe au fur et à mesure que le genre s'installe dans le paysage littéraire français et laisse la place à une facétie « à la française ».

Paola Cifarelli poursuit l'exploration du genre facétieux en France, en analysant, dans leurs aspects structurels, linguistiques, stylistiques et culturels, les traductions-adaptations réalisées par l'humaniste Guillaume Tardif entre 1483-1498 des *Facetiae* de Poggio, des *Apologues et fables* de Valla, des apophtegmes tirés d'œuvres de Pétrarque et Diogène Laërce. Ces textes ont été réunis par Tardif sous le titre de *Les ditz des sages hommes*, volume qui contient des ouvrages de l'humanisme italien liés par une grande cohérence thématique. Cifarelli consacre son étude au traducteur de cette trilogie, qui se distingue par sa prise de conscience de la nécessité pour un souverain de savoir maîtriser la facétie dans la gestion de son pouvoir ainsi que par le travail minutieux qu'il accomplit sur la langue française, et par la qualité de sa prose.

La contribution d'Anna Fontes-Baratto se développe autour de la question : « qu'est-ce qui *ne passe pas* dans la translation des facéties italiennes en France ? ». Elle met face à face six facéties de Pogge et six des *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*.¹ Son analyse montre que, souvent, des modifications, des omissions et des détournements de sens caractérisent les nouvelles et met au jour une opposition entre « découverte » (facétie) et « tradition comique » (nouvelles bourguignonnes). Elle conclut que pour les nouvelles « il s'agit d'un comique de *reconnaissance* » (99), tandis que l'auteur des facéties « intervient pour détourner le lecteur de la réception attendue » (99), utilisant le comique comme « une force agissante » (100).

Louise Amazan s'intéresse de son côté aux *Faceties et motz subtilz*, un recueil paru à Lyon en 1559 et composé de parties d'ouvrages de Politien, Domenichi, Pogge et Corrozet. Ce texte s'intègre parfaitement dans une époque (1530-1550) qui a vu le foisonnement de textes bilingues. Elle montre que la partie italienne subit d'importantes modifications ; la traduction est littérale, la langue est simplifiée, les tournures idiomatiques

¹ Recueil bourguignon anonyme publié en 1486.

sont calquées sur le français, des parties sont modifiées pour faciliter la mise en regard des deux langues. Amazan souligne le caractère unique au XVI^e siècle de cette compilation dont l'un des mérites est de mettre sur le même plan deux pays et deux langues et de tenter d'adapter la facétie italienne humaniste au contexte éditorial français.

En ouverture de la deuxième section, consacrée aux *Altérations assumées*, Bernd Renner se propose d'analyser les liens entre la facétie et le paradoxe, à travers les *Paradossi* d'Ortensio Lando, traduits et adaptés par Charles Estienne (1553). Il part d'une réflexion sur la nature, la fonction et les implications du rire satirique, à partir d'Horace, modèle par excellence de la satire de la première moitié du XVI^e siècle en France, en passant par le *Tiers livre* de Rabelais comme illustration du mélange horatien plaisant-utile qui caractérise également le paradoxe. Renner nous montre comment Estienne, dont l'adaptation relève plus de la facétie que de la satire, évite de traduire la partie satirique du *paradosso XXIII* et omet les pages les plus audacieuses des *Paradossi* en évitant l'excès et surtout l'attaque *ad hominem*. Renner conclut qu'« il semble donc que le paradoxe français cherche à s'éloigner du caractère anecdotique gratuit plus proche de la facétie et du rire franc brutal évocateur de la vulgaire et Satyricque moquerie rabelaisienne, pour se rapprocher [...] du rire ironique hérité d'Erasmus » (133).

Nicolas Kiès nous donne quelques éléments de comparaison entre les deux traductions du *Courtisan* de Castiglione, celle attribuée à Jacques Colin d'Auxerre (1537) et celle livrée quarante plus tard par Gabriel Chappuys. Kiès repère trois attitudes qui différencient le travail réalisé par Chappuys de celui de Colin d'Auxerre : Chappuys francise très rarement les termes, préférant conserver l'italien en italique, proposer une traduction personnelle, ou encore offrir un ou plusieurs équivalents français faussement synonymiques. Ces doublons mettent en évidence sa volonté de s'appuyer sur l'italien en empruntant des mots techniques, dont le traité de Castiglione est parsemé, mais aussi d'amener son lecteur vers un terrain connu utilisant des mots usités dans les écrits en français. Chappuys puise dans la richesse terminologique et sémantique de la facétie en langue française, et apporte des nuances à des mots sémantiquement plus neutres en italien, en faisant ressortir « les marges déshonnêtes, agressives ou sottes » (151) de la facétie. Kiès souligne l'apport au texte italien de la traduction de Chappuys, qui, en jouant sur les nuances des mots français, parvient à adapter le texte de Castiglione au genre français de la facétie sans trahir le modèle italien. La traduction

de Chappuys apparaît en conclusion comme l'illustration du fait que le genre français de la facétie, influencé par le répertoire français des contes, des rencontres et des fabliaux, s'éloigne du modèle italien.

La contribution de Bruno Roche est consacrée au *Mascurat* de Gabriel Naudé (1649), une réflexion sur le burlesque dans laquelle Naudé invite à préférer les modèles italiens aux productions françaises et réfléchit à la manière de transformer les facéties italiennes en attaques libertines contre les dogmes chrétiens et la crédulité du peuple à leur égard. Bruno Roche, souligne le caractère exceptionnel de l'opération de catégorisation du burlesque transalpin que le bibliothécaire de Mazarin prend comme modèle pour formuler ses attaques et ses réfutations, non directement mais de façon perlocutoire : le burlesque italien produit un effet esthétique ; les ouvrages français dénoncent ouvertement. C'est la forme décalée du burlesque italien qui sera à la base de son art poétique.

Elsa Veret entame sa contribution par une réflexion sur la traduction du titre des *Piacevoli notti* de Straparola, *Nuits facétieuses*, en soulignant qu'en italien il existe une distinction entre *piacevole* et *faceto*. Elle s'interroge sur la relation que ce recueil de fables, s'achevant sur une énigme, entretient avec la facétie. De plus, un grand nombre d'énigmes dans ce livre se caractérisent par leur obscénité. Veret commence par nous présenter les *Piacevoli notti*, dans leur structure, qui est inspirée du *Decameron*, et dans leurs contenus, qui prennent quelques distances par rapport au modèle boccacien. Elle s'arrête ensuite sur les énigmes : plusieurs adjectifs sont utilisés pour définir l'énigme dans son style ou son effet ; l'adjectif *faceto* est réservé au « bon plaisant » (le poète Burchiella), le mot *facezia* aux récits de bons tours ; dans l'ouvrage italien, le lien entre énigme et facétie n'est pas explicité, toutefois, le titre de la traduction française, même s'il s'éloigne du titre italien, met en évidence un point commun entre la facétie et l'énigme, c'est-à-dire la plaisanterie. Veret poursuit son étude en analysant la traduction des énigmes par Pierre de Larivey (son nom n'apparaît pas dans le recueil), se focalisant sur les problèmes posés par la transposition des textes. C'est l'impossibilité de traduire fidèlement qui est mise en évidence, étant donné l'ancrage des énigmes dans la société transalpine, ce qui amène le traducteur à réécrire près d'un tiers des énigmes, transformant ainsi l'ouvrage en une collection originale d'énigmes en langue française.

L'étude de Florence Bistagne, en ouverture de la troisième partie, « Le facétieux à l'épreuve des polémiques identitaires », nous amène au royaume de Naples. Elle étudie les relations entre Italiens et Français

et leurs représentations à l'appui de plusieurs passages tirés des œuvres de Giovanni Pontano. C'est ainsi qu'on découvre, du côté des Français, des rois débauchés et laids aussi bien que des soldats brutaux mais valeureux, des hommes de cour ivrognes et des prélats dépravés, même si une supériorité militaire leur est reconnue par les Napolitains. Seuls les souverains aragonais, considérés comme des princes italiens, trouvent grâce aux yeux de Pontano. Les Espagnols ne sont pas épargnés non plus, même si la dédicace du *De Fortuna* de Pontano au capitaine de l'armée espagnole souligne sa *magnimitas* et sa *prudentia* (des qualités d'Alphonse d'Aragon), les réhabilite et leur assure l'entrée « dans la continuité dynastique et territoriale » (191).

La contribution de Giovanni Ricci porte sur les gravures de Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1634-1718), et plus spécialement sur les illustrations facétieuses de la politique européenne pendant le règne de Louis XIV. Ce sont les faits de guerre qui retiennent le plus son attention. Dans les gravures, les Français apparaissent aux côtés des Espagnols et « dans toutes les combinaisons de la politique internationale » (204). À l'instar de Pontano, Mitelli ne montre pas beaucoup d'admiration pour la puissance française, ce qui apparaît aussi bien dans ses gravures que dans les images et les textes qui les accompagnent, des dialogues entre personnages ressortissant de pays différents (Français, Espagnols, Anglais, Allemands, Turcs, ...) ou des rébus, des calembours, des vireslangues, parfois en différentes langues ou en dialecte. « Des bandes dessinées avant la lettre » (212), conclut Ricci.

Le voyage dans la facétie en Italie et en France s'achève à Chypre, avec l'article de Domna Moyseos, qui nous ouvre la voie vers une tradition littéraire populaire orale, où on perçoit, même si c'est de façon imprécise, la présence de ces deux cultures. En effet, les contes facétieux qui font l'objet de l'étude de Moyseos sont des contes sans aucune précision spatiale ou temporelle, donc adaptés à toute époque, et qui ont en commun leur but récréatif. De nombreux travaux en ont souligné le caractère proprement grec. Moyseos examine quelques contes chypriotes et essaie d'en repérer les liens avec les cultures française et italienne. « Les contes évoquent mais ne confirment pas » (229) : l'ordre social est bouleversé et l'on mise sur les limites entre le réel et le surréal pour cacher ce qui pourrait choquer le public. Moyseos montre que les éléments de plaisanterie ou de tromperie, tout ce qui relève de la satire et de l'ironie, permettent aux contes de dépasser un contexte social et culturel précis et de se relier, par exemple à la tradition littéraire médiévale française (c'est

l'exemple du renard qui est examiné) ou à la religion influencée par la présence des Francs impliqués dans les croisades. Moins les personnages ont une identité précise, plus ils deviennent exemplaires. On peut alors repérer des liens avec d'autres cultures et d'autres sociétés.

Pour conclure, par son contenu riche et diversifié, ce volume constitue un point de départ incontournable pour l'étude du genre facétieux en France et en Italie.

Dorota Walczak-Delanois. *Dédoublément poétique : Marian Pankowski – poète polonais de langue française.*

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Marian Pankowski (né à Sanok le 9 novembre 1919, mort à Bruxelles le 3 avril 2011) est connu surtout comme romancier, dramaturge et nouvelliste. Dans la lignée de Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz ou Jerzy Andrzejewski, son œuvre est souvent sacrilège et provocation où la bouffonnerie et la verdeur peignent des réalités cruelles et douloureuses qui se mêlent à la philosophie. Cette œuvre est féroce envers les cultes et donne souvent libre cours à un érotisme effréné. Cependant, les romans de Pankowski (*Liberté vagabonde*, 1955, *Matuga*, 1959, *Rudolf*, 1980, *Les gars de Lvov*, 1988 et bien d'autres) s'apparentent à la prose poétique et remettent en question les procédés narratifs classiques. Il ne faut pas oublier non plus que l'auteur de cette prose, qui fut prisonnier des camps nazis et qui s'installa à Bruxelles après la guerre, s'est fait d'abord connaître par un recueil de poèmes *Pieśni Pompejańskie* (*Chants de Pompéi*, 1946). Notons que Pankowski fut également l'auteur d'une anthologie française de poésie polonaise (1961).¹ La méthode d'analyse de son œuvre adoptée par Dorota Walczak-Delanois a été construite sur des bases solides car, sans délaisser les performances romanesques et dramaturgiques de Pankowski, elle a permis d'explorer la veine poétique de cet auteur en remontant aux origines polonaises de son écriture, laquelle a obéi, dans un premier temps, comme on peut le

¹ Ajoutons que sa thèse d'habilitation a été aussi consacrée à l'œuvre d'un poète polonais (Pankowski *Leśmian*).

voir au fil des dissections convaincantes, aux règles purement poétiques. Nous suivons Dorota Walczak-Delanois dans ses recherches effectuées à Sanok, petite ville des Carpathes où le jeune Marian a fait ses premières expériences d'avant-guerre dans un milieu multiethnique composé de Polonais, d'Ukrainiens et de Juifs. Cette monographie détaillée de la matrice poétique de Pankowski est rédigée en polonais (11–94), mais elle est doublée de sa version française qui est encore plus complète (95–176). Walczak a eu également le soin de traduire vers le polonais un certain nombre de poèmes rédigés initialement par le poète bruxellois en français. De cette façon, elle a pu démontrer à quel point certains poèmes mentionnés, transposés par Pankowski lui-même dans la langue polonaise quarante ans plus tard, s'éloignent des originaux, donnant lieu de manière explicite à une (ré)écriture parallèle qui tient compte de l'évolution sensible des goûts et des priorités de l'écrivain-poète.

La méthode inspirée par la notion du « dédoublement » dont se réclame le travail de la titulaire de la Chaire de polonais de l'Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) peut étonner dans un premier temps dans la mesure où celle-ci pourrait suggérer la coexistence de deux personnalités chez un même sujet, situation qui serait susceptible de provoquer un certain trouble de l'unité de la conscience de soi. Mais nous sommes aussitôt convaincus par la proposition de la critique littéraire qui introduit la catégorie de « la vie en vers » et qui porte aux nues les « matrices poétiques de Marian Pankowski ». « À partir de l'image, à travers les qualités auditives du “langage”, Pankowski se dirige vers la recherche du mot juste, en suivant les pas des anciens maîtres, et surtout de Jan Kochanowski, pour trouver le plus ajusté, le plus adapté à l'objet décrit », constate Dorota Walczak (120). Dès lors, toute la démonstration littéraire basée sur une exégèse détaillée de l'œuvre de Pankowski s'oriente dans ce sens. La lectrice attentive de cette œuvre puise son inspiration dans les premiers poèmes publiés dans la revue parisienne *Kultura* où le sujet lyrique fait déjà preuve d'une extraordinaire création verbale. Viennent ensuite d'autres réalisations dont les origines remontent à la période de l'après-guerre : le premier volume des *Chants de Pompéi* à la charge émotionnelle exceptionnelle ou les *Poèmes alpins* qui abondent en métaphores colorées inspirées par le cycle *Des Tatras* de Julian Przyboś. À ces œuvres succède rapidement *Galettes (Podpłomyki)*, 1951, volume en vers où le poète chante la beauté et la diversité ethnique et géographique de sa terre natale en s'inspirant à la fois des avant-gardes européennes et de l'héritage romantique polonais. Cet état poétique permanent

de l'écrivain Pankowski s'affirmera ensuite avec deux autres tomes de poèmes en langue française qui relie davantage encore l'espace littéraire polonais à celui du pays d'accueil figuré par la Belgique littéraire : *Couleur de jeune mélèze* et *Poignée du présent*. Le premier recueil est dédié à la femme de l'auteur, Regina Fern, le second, marqué par l'esthétique de Tadeusz Peiper, développe les thèmes du toucher corporel et des émotions amoureuses.

L'on voit bien, à travers les analyses pertinentes de la production lyrique du poète bruxellois, que ce qui est ouvertement posé en tant que sujet d'interprétation, c'est le problème du bilinguisme de l'écrivain exilé qui relie constamment l'expérience littéraire du passé à celle du présent. Il apparaît en effet que le romancier Pankowski veut continuer à pratiquer la poésie en dépit du statut et du rôle de moins en moins importants du poète dans la société occidentale. Voilà pourquoi, tout au long de sa vie professionnelle d'enseignant et d'écrivain, il cisèle les rimes et les rythmes de ses poèmes en les apprenant soigneusement par cœur afin de les faire partager à ses étudiants. Ajoutons qu'en ayant le souci de mettre en lumière sa poésie dans sa prose, Pankowski a également contribué, à travers son engagement social, à la création de la Maison Internationale de la Poésie de Bruxelles ainsi que du Musée des Voix Poétiques, qui est devenu une sorte d'archive sonore de la récitation.

En plus d'être une étude monographique détaillée menée avec verve et conviction, le grand mérite du travail de Dorota Walczak consiste aussi à avoir fourni une série d'explications de textes et de commentaires (en français et en polonais) réalisés à partir des deux principaux recueils poétiques de Marian Pankowski : *Couleur de jeune mélèze* et *Poignée du présent*. On peut y déceler le désir de l'autrice de mettre en évidence les procédés les plus intimes et les plus frappants de l'imaginaire aérien et cosmique de ce chantre de la nature verdoyante, nature riche sur le plan de la symbolique des couleurs, des étoiles et des astres.

L'ouvrage est en outre agrémenté de nombreuses photos, de documents de famille et d'archives provenant du Musée de la Littérature à Bruxelles et de la collection privée de Dorota Walczak et de Nicolas Delanois. Le livre de Dorota Walczak-Delanois est une contribution importante aux études pankowskiennes en Belgique et en Pologne. C'est, à n'en point douter, une contribution qui tend à combler les lacunes en matière d'interprétation de cette œuvre multiple et polyphonique. Dans ce sens, on peut dire sans exagération que cette vaste et pertinente étude corrobore et consolide magistralement les travaux ponctuels de

chercheurs tels qu'Alain Van Cruyten, Alain Bertrand, Stanisław Barć, Tomasz Chomiszczak, Wojciech Ligęza ou Przemysław Czapliński.

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**Hubert Roland. *Magischer Realismus und
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In the 1980s, the term «magical realism» started to be associated with world famous Latin American bestselling authors such as Gabriel García Márquez, Alejo Carpentier or Isabel Allende. The persistence of this trend can still be traced today, along with the inclusion into the canon of writers from various cultural backgrounds such as Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, Ben Okri, and Haruki Murakami. As Bourdieu indicated, the book market demand, defined by readers' expectations, undoubtedly has a major influence on reading decisions made in the literary field; however, one cannot deny the impact of the recommendations of specialized scholarship on the reading choices made by the public. Surprisingly, anglophone academic criticism has hardly paid any attention to the origins of the phenomenon of «magical realism» in the German literature of last century's first two decades. In conjunction with limited knowledge of the German language worldwide, this explains why mainstream critics and the general readership remain almost unaware of the historical and poetological roots of currently well-received and appreciated works.

Fittingly, this book therefore focuses on the understudied research topic of «magical realism» in German literature, precisely on the relationship between the poetological approach of magical realism and history. To that end, the author investigates exemplary texts from the period 1920–1960, a time decisively marked by major historical events both in Germany and worldwide. Hubert Roland examines magical

realism's rendition of historical processes at the intersection of "wonder and objectivity," as he considers magical realism as a phenomenon emerging from the early avant-garde concomitantly with expressionism and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. The analyzed works lay bare various ethically or existentially/metaphysically motivated representations of historical phenomena and their impact on individual, collective, transnational and transcultural identity formation, negotiation and reinscription.

When introducing the history of the concept of magical realism and its main features, Roland situates its beginnings in the intellectual program of the standard work of German art critic and historian Franz Roh, *Nachexpressionismus. Magischer Realismus* (1925). Roh viewed the mode of writing as a reaction to the increasingly technological modern world, which opposed the regressive, neoromantic utopia of the rural or elemental natural energies. Seeking to enlarge the concept, Massimo Bontempelli established a connection between magical realism and futurism, thus gesturing towards a new *géométrie spirituelle*. Ernst Jünger further stressed the new ways of perceiving reality that emerged after the war. At that time, the programmatic-essayistic aspect of «magical realism» took on a more ideological dimension differing radically from a merely political one. Bontempelli's recommendation to discover the fantastic in reality and to locate the storyline at the intersection between the dream and the real resonated in the interwar era in the works of Flemish and French intellectuals and writers such as Johan Daisne, Edmond Jaloux, Robert Poulet, and Franz Hellens. Their writings display a cultural transfer of the German concepts and its postulates, coupled to the attempt of amending them. All these authors stress the ontological dimension of the phenomenon and its ability to emphasize particular situations such as crises, dramatic changes and transition phases. Not surprisingly therefore, the program of «magical realism» was rapidly embraced in the years following the Second World War by the *Gruppe 47*. Hans Werner Richter, a member of this group, warned against the escapist attitude of the inner emigration-movement or exile literature. In doing so, he suggested the necessity of grasping the irrational behind reality, while at the same time preserving the objectivity of a "new" realism.

Unlike the above-mentioned cultural transfer to neighbouring countries, the import of German magical realism to Latin America was a great success. Excerpts from Roh's *Nachexpressionismus* study were translated in 1927 and published in *Revista de Occidente* (edited by Ortega y Gasset), one of the most important cultural links between South America and Europe; furthermore, professor Angel Flores's favorable reception of

Kafka stressed his importance for European as well as world literature. The transfer of magical realism to Latin America in the 1950s coincided with the emergence of the newly coined notions of *realismo mágico* and *real maravilloso*. The latter is characterized by a clear demarcation from the European phenomenon, as it makes use of mythical structures to represent the impact of historical events on collective identity formation, particularly in postcolonial contexts. The groundbreaking anthology *Magical Realism. Theory, History Community*, published in 1995, sought to establish an international canon of magical realism in the context of world literature, while still taking into consideration Roh's study and its ramifications. However, German literary texts from the period 1920–1950 largely remained left out, the book thus defining the poetics of «magical realism» as a rhetorical feature of postmodern and postcolonial experience. The ways in which recent authors like Günter Grass or Patrick Süskind could still contribute to the corpus of magical realism is unclear at this stage. At any rate, the transfer of *Magischer Realismus* to Latin America, together with its internationalization, constitutes an indisputable success, of which German contemporary authors seem to have been more acutely aware than their forerunners. Replete with sceneries and visions borrowed from South American magical realist postcolonial novels, Uwe Timm's *Morenga* (1978) or Daniel Kehlmann's *Vermessung der Welt* (2005) seem to follow in the wake of the international reconfiguration of magical realism rather than to pay tribute to the earlier literary works of their countrymen.

Taking his cue from Wendy B. Faris' definition of «magical realism» as a combination of realism and the fantastic, Roland detects continuities between German and international magical realism, as well as between modernism and postmodernism. Relying on detailed analyses of key texts and using concepts and approaches derived from the international scholarship in the field (Amaryll Chanady, Wendy B. Faris) as well as from the few experts working in the Germanophone space (Michael Scheffel, Burkhard Schäfer, Doris Kirchner, Uwe Durst, etc.), Roland identifies a series of specific features that apply to «magical realism» in German literature.

The first of these characteristics consists in the deliberate choice of situating texts at borders, borderlands or in-between spaces. Indeed, this aspect constitutes the main feature of the poetics of magical realism. Echoing Jurji Lotman's semiosphere-theory, the author ascribes an organizing function to the spatial features of the text, whereas the border has the capacity to dynamize a cultural schema while transforming and

redefining it. In Hermann Kasack's novel *Die Stadt hinter dem Strom* (1947), border spaces and crossing or transitory locations are endowed with an existential meaning transcending immediate historical events. Nevertheless, as Roland points out, the authorial political conscience remains vigilant. Indeed, the novel does not end up in an escapism melting away the contractions of everyday life in a decadent Western Europe that gazes at its sunset (echoes from Spengler's philosophy are here obvious).

Close readings of selected texts by George Saiko and Ilse Aichinger lead the author to identify in «magical realism» certain poetological features as means of representing extreme situations and events, “histories of violence, such as slavery, colonialism, wars, the Holocaust, genocide and dictatorship” (93). In other words, literature becomes the medium through which trauma is processed, the unspeakable is articulated. Roland views the skepticism towards fate in George Saiko's stories as an echo of the early modernism of the Weimarer Republik. Indeed, the isolation and alienation of the individual caused by materialistic society trigger the awareness that one cannot control nor escape these hostile forces. The author further contrasts the two versions of Ilse Aichinger's novel *Die größere Hoffnung* (1948/60), an analysis which is prolonged in the next subchapter. Unfortunately, Roland here fails to provide details and examples about magical realism; unconvincing in this respect is also the following very short subchapter, dedicated to the war diary writings of Felix Hartlaub.

Roland considers Kafka's famous *Metamorphosis* as a forerunner of magical realist prose, because of its questioning of the sense of reality, rooted in an identity crisis. He further notices related features in later German texts, which he characterizes as identity disruptions and epiphanic realizations. Such is the case of the snow scene in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* or of Hans Henny Jahn's novel *Die Niederschrift des Gustav Anias Horn* (1949/50). Both texts seek to integrate contingent events into a higher causality of metaphysical and mythical colour, the only one able to create meaning and order.

Obviously, during the time of Nazi Germany, literature had to resort to even subtler strategies to escape censorship and reach its readers. Nevertheless, the writers of the so-called inner emigration or exile literature have often been accused of adopting unpolitical positions, refusing to face up to reality and seeking idyllic escapes into aestheticized alternative worlds. On the basis of analyses of Elisabeth Langgäser's novel *Der Gang durch das Ried* (1936), Anna Seghers' story *Der Ausflug*

der toten Mädchen (1946) and Alfred Döblin's *Amazonas*-trilogy (written in exile while in Paris between 1935–1937), Roland argues that these writers indeed offer allegorical representations of historical reality, which become politically subversive in the literature of the inner emigration.

Contemporary German literature preserves the main features of historical magical realism, yet aligns it with the trends of the globalized, multicultural, postmigrant and postcolonial world. In so doing, recent literary works in Germany adapt their topics to reflect current cultural, social, economic and political changes. «Magical realism» becomes, as Roland stresses, a manner to oppose 'dominant' western realism, to question and regenerate it. Hybridity, changing places, third spaces and intercultural encounters become the new paradigms in the works of authors seeking their inspiration from the international «magical realism» rather than the genuine German one. W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), Sabrina Janesch's *Katzenberge* (2010), Christa Wolf's *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010), Daniel Kehlmann's *Die Vermessung der Welt* (2005) and Uwe Timm's *Morenga* (1978) are steeped in these new historical contexts. They stage, like their Latin American equivalents, collective mythical structures and hybrid identities, critically dealing with the colonial past or present postcolonial relationships.

Roland's study can be read as an introduction to «magical realism» from a Germanophone perspective. In the case of canonical writers, the author's close-reading analyses generally favour immanent readings accompanied with a selection of critical references. Roland does not delve deeper into the context of the authors. Nor does he discuss his corpus through the help of a more precise examination of specialized literature, which subsequent investigations will certainly remedy. Despite these minor reservations, Hubert Roland's book is a welcome contribution to a rarely researched field in German literature, with considerable implications for world literature. The results of such research not only cast a new light upon texts and authors that have been so far approached from other points of view and different methods, they also invite a critical reconsideration of the literature of inner emigration and exile.

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**Susanne Rohr. *Von Grauen und Glamour.*
*Repräsentationen des Holocaust in den USA und
Deutschland.***

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Although the last survivors of the Holocaust are slowly disappearing, their story seems to be more alive than ever. This is, after all, the impression that arises when we consider the current mediatization of the topic. Books, films, and graphic memoirs in which the theme of the Holocaust and the memory of its brutal legacy play a principal role continue to be published in significant numbers. Being the Chair of North American Literature and Culture at the University of Hamburg, Susanne Rohr traces this in her latest book, *Von Grauen und Glamour. Repräsentationen des Holocaust in den USA und Deutschland* (2021) [*Of Horror and Glamour: Representations of the Holocaust in the US and Germany*], in which she examines the ways in which the Holocaust is represented in different media after 1990, a year that seems to be a central turning point in Holocaust remembrance. From this moment on, taboos were broken, the foundations for new memorial developments were laid and the Holocaust was also represented in comedies. Whereas former debates about the representation of the Holocaust revolved around ethical questions – e.g. is it possible at all to represent the Shoah and if so, which forms would be appropriate? –, the discourse then moved to aesthetic considerations. In this book, Rohr refers to a paradigm shift, showing how the representation of the Holocaust became more of a discursive and rhetorical affair. While it was first the aim to represent the Holocaust as truthfully and authentically as possible, mostly in non-fictional ways,

in order to bear witness to the Holocaust's unfathomable atrocities, as of the 90s different modes of representation, which would previously have been regarded as scandalous and unthinkable, were experimented with. In this context, Susanne Rohr points to camp comedies, such as *La vita è bella* (1997) that elicited a range of critical reactions. The same can be stated for the discourse of repositioning and reinterpreting the question of German guilt and conscience (317). In this new narrative template, Germany no longer portrayed itself as a perpetrator only but also as a victim. From this moment on, debates arose about both ethical and aesthetic issues.

This new kind of discourse leads Rohr to the main questions of her book: is it allowed to laugh about the Holocaust? How is the Holocaust being represented in different nations? What about the process of collective memory? How can the memorialization of the Holocaust be evaluated from a transnational perspective? How is (Jewish) identity being treated and questioned? Can trauma be transmitted to the next generations? And perhaps the most pressing question 77 years after the liberation of Auschwitz: has everything about the Holocaust been told? Rohr seems to be the right person in the right place to answer these questions by investigating the different discourses of Holocaust representation, since she already published *Comedy – Avant-Garde – Scandal: Remembering the Holocaust after the End of History* (2010), together with Andrew S. Gross, a book that dealt with a similar subject, namely the quest for an answer to the question 'why,' in the 1990s, taboos had been broken. *Von Grauen und Glamour* provides a successful continuation and examination of the issues tackled in the previous book. Rohr is driven by the question of what comes once the taboo has been violated, since it can be broken only once. Moreover, she aligns herself with leading voices in the field of Holocaust remembrance and collective identity – such as Assmann, Adorno, Nora, Blanchot, Klüger, Jureit. Through her analyses, she triggers fresh discussions which advance interesting concepts, such as "Wettbewerb der Opfer" (competition of the victims, 121), "Hierarchie des Leids" (hierarchy of suffering, 122), "vicarious memory" (287), and "Erlösungshoffnung" (hope of redemption, 322).

In order to examine the new representational modes of the Holocaust from a transnational fashion and deal with the cultural narratives from a comparatist perspective, Rohr relies on a corpus of contemporary German(-Jewish) and American(-Jewish) books, films and graphic memoirs, such as Melvin Jules Bukiet's *After*, Tova Reich's *My Holocaust*,

Shalom Auslander's: *Hope: A Tragedy, Frühling* by Thomas Lehr, Kevin Vennemann's *Nabe Jedeneu, Vielleicht Esther* by Katja Petrowskaja, the films *Jojo Rabbit*, *Train de Vie*, *Hotel Auschwitz*, and Nora Krug's graphic novel *Belonging*. All the works she discusses revolve around the positioning of the second and/or third generation of Holocaust descendants and questions of guilt, innocence and the construction of identity and belonging. Rohr opted for the representation of the Holocaust in the USA and Germany for obvious reasons. On the one hand, Germany played a central role in the historical context of the Holocaust; on the other hand, Rohr refers to the so-called "Americanization of the Holocaust." In the USA, the Holocaust is seen as a kind of central "icon," as America has had a huge influence on the paradigmatic shift in the representation of the Holocaust (22). In all the works examined, she investigates the typical debates about generations, memory, inheritability of trauma and commemoration processes, but then, more or other contemporary works could have been integrated as well. The book would thus have benefited from a clearer definition of its corpus, not least because Rohr sometimes overwhelms the reader with references to other titles and names in the course of her examination. This clearly shows her broad knowledge and expertise in the field, although she sometimes inundates the reader with a lot of insufficiently processed information. Once getting acquainted with her style, however, the reader realizes that Rohr usefully offers a list of alternative works on the same topic, which can be used as further reading. The invitation to look up the titles she refers to constitutes an important accomplishment of Rohr's work.

Before starting her analysis, the author goes back in time and gives the reader an overview of how the Holocaust has been treated in different genres from the end of the war up until now. This introductory part of the book will be welcome by those as yet uninitiated into the topic. Rohr lucidly discusses the different stages of Holocaust-representation, albeit in a sometimes repetitive manner. For instance, the fact that from 1990 onwards, the tropes and motifs of memorial works have changed is reiterated on several occasions. These redundancies could have been cut throughout the book to leave more space for the analysis of the corpus, which only starts on page 103. Nevertheless, Rohr's accessible prose style should be commended. She easily leads the reader through her book by using catchy chapter titles, such as "Von Holocaust zu Hollycaust" (27), "Genocide Pop" (41), "Von Auschwitz nach Disney World und zurück" (59), and "Shopping for images – Der Holocaust als Supermarkt" (80).

In the rest of the analytical part of the book, Rohr clearly shows how the Holocaust has been globalized by becoming part of cosmopolitan memory, in which global and local reminiscences are interrelated and trigger intergenerational debates. The above-mentioned Americanization of the Holocaust circulates through and sometimes even dominates the German cultural landscape, although Rohr insightfully refers to some differences. While the taboos were often broken on a transnational scale, in Germany, the land of the perpetrators, such provocations were less frequent. The topic was primarily dealt with by exploring intergenerational conflicts and the question of guilt and responsibility. This is also valid e.g. for the topos of the survivor. In German works, survival seems to be based on a combination of the will to live, luck and chance. In America, however, survival is seen as a proof of enormous resilience. Moreover, the focus on victory and Americans as liberators evidently plays a key role in representations in the USA, whereas the perspective of the perpetrator or victim tends to be central in Germany. German accounts make use of (post)modern strategies, such as fragmentation and broken chronology, whereas these techniques have gone out of fashion in America, where family novels have become popular. Such differences reveal a culture's understanding of the Holocaust at a particular time and show how commemorative culture, memory and trauma discourses differ (20–21) according to different needs (cultural, social, political) within society. These narratives are determined by national specificities and interests. (26) The most impressive part of Rohr's book consists in her detailed close readings, her multi-layered point of view and the special attention she devotes to both thematic and formal as well as stylistic issues in this multi-media corpus.

Some visual material such as images or screenshots would have been helpful, certainly so in the parts where Rohr describes in detail certain pages or covers of works (e.g. 120) and parts of movies. A more fundamental criticism can be levelled at the epilogue of the book: it would have benefited from a conclusion in which the German and American approaches are directly compared in a transnational dialogue. Granted, references to differences or similarities between representations in Germany and the USA are commented upon throughout Rohr's analyses. However, a concluding overview of the main findings and allusions to future explorative methods and works are sadly missing. The book ends with the detailed examination of the graphic memoir *Belonging*. While

Rohr's analysis is engaging, a synopsis and/or references to future research involving Israeli works would have made the volume more convincing.

In sum, *Von Grauen und Glamour* is a thought-provoking study of how the contemporary media perceive, adapt and communicate about the Holocaust, its remembrance and representation from a transnational perspective. Coming back to Rohr's most pressing question as to whether the topic of the Holocaust has been exhausted, the answer seems to be a resounding "no." The historical events of the Holocaust are still overwhelmingly present in our memory and stimulate artistic imagination. This book insightfully sheds light on the continuing necessity of remembering and the articulation of ever new ways of memorializing. In this process, the Holocaust has become an intrinsic part of popular culture, which has taken on a leading role in keeping this historical event alive in our memories. One can conjecture that future generations will know the Holocaust primarily in this popularized form.

Héctor Hoyos. *Things with a History. Transcultural Materialism and the Literatures of Extraction in Contemporary Latin America.*

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Things with a History confronts the reader with a challenge, as it emphasizes the double articulation – rather than the exclusion – linking *historical materialism* and *new materialism* in contemporary Latin American literature.

This volume represents the culmination of more than a decade of rigorous work, during which Héctor Hoyos refined his thoughts on the subject-matter. This lengthy process generated a volume deserving textbook status. This study will also serve as a guide for those wishing to approach the text from the perspective of social, cultural and political relations.

The introduction functions like a welcoming (and well-deserved) red carpet joyfully ushering in an innovative re-interpretation of major works by Fernando Ortiz. Hoyos contends that these texts, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* and the essay “The Human Factor of Cubanity,” both dating from 1940, contain an ‘avant la lettre’ form of Latin American historical materialism. For Hoyos, *Cuban Counterpoint* perfectly exemplifies in itself the notion of ‘transculturation’ envisioned by Ortiz.

By intertwining historical materialism and material history, Hoyos introduces a narrative mode which he calls – adapting Ortiz’s terminology – ‘transcultural materialism.’ This phrase designates a narrative process that interweaves the order of the human and the

non-human (whether vegetal, mineral, or animal) in order to offer a post-anthropocentric vision of history. In this way, Hoyos manages to preserve the agency and importance of objects. Thus, while he proposes the concept of ‘transcultural materialism’ that reflects our evolving relationship with objects, he also highlights the often-unknown theoretical contribution of Latin American literature to this research field.

The monograph is divided into two parts, of which the first is entitled “Objects.” Indeed, each chapter in this first part introduces a fundamental element: raw material (Chapter 1), rocks and particles (Chapter 2), and corpses (Chapter 3). These components lay the ground for the interactions explored in the second part, entitled “Assemblages,” in which more complex phenomena such as hyperfetishism and digital accumulations are foregrounded.

In Chapter 1, “Raw Stuff Disavowed,” Hoyos relies on linguistic playfulness to highlight the different (and sometimes ambiguous) relationships established with non-humans. If one agrees that cross-reading texts written in dissimilar spaces and times re-energizes literary interpretation, then Hoyos should be applauded for his audacious transcultural materialist re-examination of *La vorágine* [*The Vortex*] (1924) by the Colombian José Eustasio Rivera and *Muñecas* (2008) by the Argentinean Ariel Magnus. Without denying the notable differences existing between these works, Hoyos reminds us that they both originate from the same raw material. Thus, in addition to providing an innovative approach, Hoyos also detects a diachronic evolution in the way objects, embedded in literature, contribute to creating (and reinforcing) both cultural meanings and relationships.

In Chapter 2, “Of Rocks and Particles,” the discussion moves from such tangible things as mountains in the Bolivian Blanca Wiethüchter’s *El jardín de Nora* (1998) to the tiniest subatomic particles in the Argentinean César Aira’s “El té de Dios” (2010). Applying the lens of transcultural materialism, Hoyos offers a reinterpretation of these two works that reveals the ability of literature to reflect society’s concerns. He thereby invites us to consider the ethical responsibilities inherent in the literary medium itself. By showing how these two texts question the degree of responsibility underlying the relations between humans and the non-human, between culture and nature, Hoyos suggests how we could reinvent the ways in which we study and teach literature.

Chapter 3, “Corpse Narratives as Literary History,” is mainly devoted to the narrativization of corpses in works by Chilean Roberto Bolaño. Hoyos points out that the use of language is ultimately one of the easiest ways to dehumanize. For instance, from the various lexical alternatives used to refer to the same raw material of a dead human/non-human animal, ‘corpse,’ ‘body,’ ‘flesh,’ ‘meat,’ there emerges a differentiated behavior that influences our relation of otherness between human, non-human animals and their remains. As Hoyos suggests, it is possible to establish a link between two aspects of dehumanization, one that would connect genocide and feminicide in Bolaño’s novel *2666* (2012). At this point, it is worth noting that Hoyos had already published a first book on Bolaño in 2015, entitled *Beyond Bolaño: The Global Latin American Novel*. In this earlier work, he compared Bolaño’s novels to those of César Aira, Mario Bellatin, Diamela Eltit, Chico Buarque, Alberto Fuguet and Fernando Vallejo, among others, in order to explore how to read or write in a globalized era.

The second part of the book, “Assemblages,” contains its last two chapters. In Chapter 4, “Politics and Praxis of Hyperfetishism,” Hoyos focuses on the hyperfetishism of consumption that frantically responds to the frenzy of extractivism described in the first part of the study. The diversity of the works (poems, narratives and photos) selected to illustrate hyperfetishism deserves special mention. When translating “La voz de las cosas” (1908) [The Voice of the Things] by the Colombian José Asunción Silva, Hoyos confesses he chose to foreground the poem’s questioning of the boundaries between a thing and a person, thereby emphasizing the materiality of language as a thing. Moreover, these reflections about translation complete Hoyos’ initial thoughts about the relevance of language as “a thing that summons other things” (6). The opening to *De sobremesa* (1925) [*After-Dinner Conversation*] also by the Colombian José Asunción Silva allows Hoyos to stress not only the presence of objects but also their interconnectedness, which is comparable to a deck of cards incessantly thrown on a table. Each word in the card deck connects to the other one by enhancing the literary work’s rhythm, which results in an unnecessary repeated accumulation throughout the following paragraphs. Furthermore, through his examination of *Almas en Pena, chapolas negras* (1995), a fictionalized biography of Silva by the Colombian Fernando Vallejo, Hoyos manages to decode the so-called ‘primitive accumulation’ of the opening of Silva’s poem, although he admittedly finds it excessive.

Surprisingly, Hoyos also includes the photographic essay *Ricas y famosas* (1999–2002) by the Mexican Daniela Rossell, which could be said to illustrate not only hyperfetishism but also a baroque form of fetishism. In the 1990s, upon its publication in Mexico, Rossell's book sparked controversy. It was criticized by both the photographed women and the general public. The kitsch pictures of Mexican multimillionaire women, photographed as they indulged in their excesses and made fools of themselves through their eccentricities, were perceived as provocative and violent images at a time when the country was plunged in a severe economic crisis.

In the last chapter, "Digitalia from the Margins," Hoyos highlights the obsolescence of things as well as that of the language used to describe them. This is the case, for instance, in "Mis documentos" (2014) by the Chilean Alejandro Zambra. As Hoyos notes, "Mis documentos" also underlines the contradictory relationships that resulted from our interaction with technology, as we moved from personal computers to collective clouds, from ownership and freedom to servitude and control, from a human-dominated world to a universe privileging the non-human. In this kind of scenario, non-human, technological aspects eventually condition existence.

In addition to its innovative perspective taking into account the link between subjects and objects, this book also establishes a dialogue between canonical authors and lesser-known figures outside the Latin American sphere. By doing so, *Things with a History* corroborates and further examines the fundamental role that Latin American literature has played in enriching and guiding our understanding of global contexts. Through such a perspective, Hoyos connects the dots separating relationships experienced with objects in the past and in the present. And these lines serve as maps skillfully showing us how these relationships have evolved, even when we were unaware of their existence.

Despite the academic rigor of his book, Hoyos manages to enact a subtle dialogue with his reader, thanks to the conversational tone of his prose. Most importantly, in *Things with a History*, the author does not provide rigid answers to the questions he raises. Rather, through the challenges ahead he highlights, he paves the way for further discussions. Quoting a phrase that Hoyos applies to literature in general, we could conclude that *Things with a History* contributes to revealing "aspects of form that would otherwise go unnoticed" (3). Even though Hoyos reminds us that we live in a time when "things are not made to last anymore" (2), this reviewer certainly believes his book will retain a prominent place on the scholar's bookshelf for decades to come.

Patricia Vilches, ed. *Negotiating Space in Latin America*.

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Brill's *Spatial Practices* series edited by Christoph Ehland is a rare editorial gem dedicated to cutting-edge scholarship on the study of spaces and places and their appropriations for cultural meanings. Its scope is interdisciplinary and includes approaches to cultural history, literary, performance and cultural studies, geography and media studies. Among the 37 volumes published to date, Patricia Vilches's edited volume *Negotiating Space in Latin America* is the first to address a Latin American context. This is a valiant endeavour, and the spatial lens proves to be most fruitful, as the greed for spatial expansion, control and possession of "new" lands had been a core impetus from the beginning of the European colonization of the Americas. Starting with Christopher Columbus's taking possession of "all these lands for your Royal Highness" (letter to Luis de Santángel from 2/15/1492), the centuries of colonialism and movements towards independence in the nineteenth century were marked by battles for dominance over space – large-scale extractivism, invasions, and wars to alter borders. A case in point: the motto of the Mexican Revolution from 1910, "tierra y libertad" (land and liberty) tellingly puts the demand for land (and claim to expropriate the 97 % of Mexican land that belonged to less than 5 % of its population) before that of freedom. Then, during the dictatorships of the twentieth century, political repression oftentimes manifested itself through spatial confinement (incarceration in oftentimes clandestine detention centres) and forms of real or symbolical exclusion (exile or its

counterpart, *insilio* or inner exile). Today's Latin American neoliberal realities display novel forms of spatial dependency, commodification, migration and spatial divisions. As Vilches describes: "the geographical space that metamorphosed into *Latinoamérica* has notably been a capitalist experimental laboratory for the First World. Within its geographical spaces, it has witnessed utopian enterprises; been shaken by frequent assaults on the body politic; revealed socio-historical conflicts that have stubbornly remained since colonial times; endured profound social inequality and witnessed migration to its own urban centers and other areas of the First World, where its people remain the other of those human geographies" (4).

The historical periods under review in *Negotiating Space in Latin America* are the nineteenth, twentieth and beginning twenty-first century, with a clear focus on our contemporary neoliberal realities. While several chapters are dealing with spatial issues in a variety of Latin American countries, the emphasis of most of them is the Southern Cone, with nine of the fourteen chapters examining geographical context in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. A splendid characteristic of the volume is the diversity of disciplines represented that include literary, theatre and film studies, geography, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and environmental geography. The collection, spearheaded by Vilches's introduction, is divided into three parts: "Reclaiming Space," "Travel, Spatial Practices, and the Market," and "Space and the Body Politic." In her introduction "Dis/locating Space in Latin America," Vilches highlights the impact of sites of memory (Nora), discusses the mobilizing potential of space (Canclini), notions of spatial safety, and elaborates on a hemispheric view on Latin American spaces from an 'Anglo' eye (3). The two key spatial perspectives of the volume are that of collective spaces that propel social movements and intimate spaces of everyday life, and their respective roles in human perception and action (Lefebvre, Harvey, García-Canclini and Soja). In its dual focus on the "pervasiveness of everyday life as well as ... (un)expected momentous socio-historical events" (7), the volume builds on *Ordinary Places, Extraordinary Events: Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space in Latin America* edited by Clara Irazábal (2008). *Negotiating Space* adds important conceptual examinations to the field of contemporary spatial studies through its inclusion of a broad diversity of places, urban and private, public and private, as well as ambiguously semi-private and semi-public, as results of the mass media's intrusion into the formerly bourgeois intimate spaces. The fact that this volume

won *Choice Magazine's* "Outstanding Academic Title" only speaks to the broad interest in the study of space in a Latin American context in and beyond academia.

The selection of chapters is comprehensive and commendable. However, oddly, the volume opens with the one essay that might not have been the best suited to do so. Jorge Saavedra-Utman's "Occupying Space and Time: Enabling Communicative Ecologies for Democracy" is a lucid study of expressions of dissent during protest movements in several Latin American countries through what the author terms the creation of a non-neoliberal time (21). While his point of the necessary intertwining of space and time is well taken, the premise of time's relative omission with regard to space (23) does not quite convince, particularly if we take into account the long history of modernist studies with their emphasis on time and the relatively recent "spatial turn" in the 1970s, a critical tradition that the volume under review carries on with much verve. Lucia Melgar's "Reclaiming the Streets: *Feminicidio* and the Space of Women's Rights in Mexico" examines recent initiatives by women to occupy public spaces through demonstrations, performances, and arts projects such as collective works of embroidered handkerchiefs on which family members of victims of feminicides stitched their names and brief descriptions of their lives. By doing so, they reclaim the public as a site of collective memory. In "Urban Renewal and Emerging Spaces for Art and Identity: Public Murals in San Martín Argentina," Silvia Hirsch and Carolina Di Próspero elaborate on how the civic project of collective painting of murals "San Martín Pinta Bien" (a pun referring to literally 'paints well' and figuratively 'looks good'), carried out in the district of San Martín in the Province of Buenos Aires, helped generate urban renewal. Through a semiotic analysis and series of interviews with neighbors, the authors show how the murals formulate a new appreciation of walls of former warehouses as well help foster a sense of inclusiveness beyond marginalization. The final essay of the first thematic section, Gail Bulman's "Framed: Barrio Yungay and Chilean Immigrants Take Center Stage in *Fulgor*," zooms in on the many blind spots related to the lived experiences of immigrants in Barrio Yungay, a traditional immigrant neighbourhood in Santiago de Chile today. The play she explores in this nuanced and beautifully written chapter, was staged and performed by immigrants. It reframes immigrant realities that all too often are hidden in plain sight. The production thus creates a space to reflect on marginalization, racism, low-paying, poor housing,

violence and discrimination and by doing so, “broadens our democracies and strengthens our pull towards humanity” (106).

The second thematic part, “Travels, Spatial Practices and the Market” analyses spatial movements within economic frameworks. Gareth Wood’s “Temporal and Geographical Markers of Civilization in Patricio Guzmán’s *El botón de nácar*” compares two instances of forced movement: the nineteenth-century travel of an Indigenous Native living in Patagonia, who was exchanged for a mother of pearl button and became part of Charles Darwin’s Beagle expedition back to England, and a plastic button found in the Pacific, the only remainder of an individual murdered in one of the ominous ‘flights of death’ where bodies of drugged dissidents were thrown into the ocean during Pinochet’s dictatorship. These two trinkets help the filmmaker Guzmán, and the critic Wood, examine notions of civilization in the context of forced migration. Silvia Nagy-Zekmi’s “The Commodification of History and the Spectacle of Tourism” examines Machu Pichu as a commodity for today’s tourism industry from the Global North. She argues for a breaking up of the stereotype of the tourist site in order to find a “third” space (Bhabha) for indigenous lives today in these spaces, which they share with masses of tourists, beyond a merely nostalgic selling of an irretrievable past glory. Edward Jackiewicz, James Craine and Tera Trujillo study the impact of contemporary US lifestyle migration to Belize on landscape and culture in “Differentiated Market Spaces and Lifestyle Migration: A View from Belize.” They show how this special form of migration is a new iteration of the American Dream myth that is “increasingly unattainable for many in the US” (163). The chapter shows how this juxtaposition of different cultures in one shared space leads to a replacing of the American “normal” outside the US, at the expense of the societal, cultural and geographic landscape for Belizeans. Gustavo Fares’s “Politicization of Space/Spatialization of Politics in Domingo F. Sarmiento’s *Argirópolis*” analyses Sarmiento’s essay written in the Chilean exile in 1850. According to Fares, the two optics of the text, one utopian and the other one real, and the theme of the fluid waterways in the Río de la Plata region, may help bridge the dichotomy of the trope of civilization versus barbarism. “*The Star of Chile: Modernity and National Identity in the Contact Zone*” by Ana María Burdach Rudloff and Jennifer Hayward analyses the discourse of the journal *The Star of Chile* founded in 1904 by British immigrants in Valparaíso in Chile. The essays aimed to create an imagined community (Anderson) of British expat entrepreneurs at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the

journal claimed to be objective, the essays' authors show that this was not the case: through the use of computational analysis of word choices, they present an insightful study of the underlying ideology in place that highlighted the complexity of the project of identity formulation beyond a harmonious, and generalizing notion of an imagined community of immigrants. Finally, Juan de Dios Torralbo Caballero's "Social Space in Fanny Calderón de la Barca's *Life in Mexico*" studies the portrayal of social spaces in the letters written by Fanny Erskin Inglis de Calderón de la Barca, the wife of Spain's first Minister in the newly independent Mexican Nation, written in 1842. It examines the change of tone from sentimental accounts towards ethnological commentaries during the epistler's time in this contact zone.

The concluding part of the volume, "Space and the Body Politic" contains four analyses of "the body politic through the space of the body," and in particular ways how these bodies are "venerated, exposed, autopsied, threatened, bombarded or shot in enclosed locations" (13). Angela N. De Lutiis-Eichenberger, in "The Body and Incorporated Signifier of 'Andrés Bello' and the 2011 Chilean Student Movement," explores the symbolic appropriation of portrayals and statues of Andrés Bello, the founder and first rector of the University of Chile (1842), during the 2011 Chilean student protests that criticized the market-oriented educational system established during Pinochet's dictatorship. In 2011, 'Bello,' became an emblem of resistance: protesters dressed his statue in front of the University's entrance in a black hood with the Chilean flag strapped to his arm, presumably holding a Molotov cocktail. In doing so, they called for a return to and contemporary adaptation of Bello's initial proposition of an inclusive learning environment. In "Staging Modernity: Reports on the Murder of Delmira Agustini, Cursed Celebrity," Magdalena Maiz-Peña and Luis H Peña examine a particular space of Uruguayan modernization, that of the *pensión de alquiler* (individual room rented in the city centre). It was in such a place where the modernist poet Delmira Agustini was murdered by her ex-husband. The chapter studies the intersectionality of "gender, the city and modernity" (260) in portrayals of the crime in journalistic chronicles in the early 1900s and develops contrasting contemporary readings where the dead body of the poet does reclaim agency beyond the initial staged domestic melodrama without touching on the crime of gender violence. Rosa Tapia's "Affect, Spectacle and Horror in Pablo Larraín's *Post Mortem* (2010)" analyses the deserialization of significant spaces of

collective memory related to the Chilean 1983 coup from the perspective of an assistant charged to transcribe the autopsy of president Salvador Allende on the day of his death. Tapia shows how the film cynically dissects the emergence of ordinary monsters in the neoliberal spaces that became central for Pinochet. The volume concludes with “La Moneda in Ruins: The Palace Tomb and Epitaph of Salvador Allende,” written by Vilches. While the description of Allende’s project as “Quixotic” (305) remains only partially convincing, the analysis of the Moneda palace as a metonymic site of the inclusive political project proposed by Allende is lucid and far-reaching.

In sum, *Negotiating Space in Latin America* is a rigorous, original and most insightful collection that helps illuminate the relations between humans and their changing spaces in Latin (mainly South) America in many facets and for readers interested in discussions on the impact of space in a variety of historical and geographical contexts, both inside and beyond the spaces of academe.

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Raphaël Lambert. *Narrating the Slave Trade, Theorizing Community.*

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Raphaël Lambert's *Narrating the Slave Trade, Theorizing Community* (2019) focuses on fictional and nonfictional explorations of both slavery and community. The book is also interested in the social and political contexts in which fictional accounts of slavery are produced, positing that these texts simultaneously contemplate philosophical ideas about identity and about community. Lambert cogently argues that these works continue to remain relevant if we wish to prevent new forms of slavery from emerging in our societies.

The introduction begins by stating the book's intention to bring together community studies and slave trade studies. Lambert points out that the multiple notions of community people may conceive of are often contradictory, as, for example, a community can be coercive or permissive, and no single definition is satisfactory to describe what community can mean. Lambert sets out to examine what the literature and arts on the transatlantic slave reveal about concepts of community; he explains that his chosen texts, including cinematic adaptations, have the ability to uncover different potentials and aspects of the topic. His selection of primary texts is initially intriguing in its peculiarity. The first three chapters explore a novella, novels, and adaptations by French, African American, and English writers in chronological order. The last chapter brings together a writer and philosopher from Martinique and a French philosopher. The rationale for these choices is based on the

contexts in which the works are written, the aspect of the trade depicted or examined, and the different facets of community and identity explored.

Chapter one outlines the historical and political contexts surrounding French writer Prosper Mérimée's 1829 novella *Tamango* and its 1958 cinematic adaption directed by American filmmaker John Berry, and African American Alex Haley's 1975 novel *Roots* and its 1977 adaptation into a TV mini-series. Lambert's interest in both texts centers on the depiction of the growth of racial consciousness that began on the slave ship, which produced race. The two texts were published at important times in the history of race and identity construction, he argues, as *Tamango*, with its racist portrayal of black people, was written during debates about the slave trade, when the French were choosing to flout the English ban on the Atlantic trade as an act of French nationalism. *Roots* in contrast was published after the advent of Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the detrimental Moynihan report that denigrated the black community by claiming that not only poverty, but also the scarcity of black nuclear families, was a factor in unemployment. Against this backdrop, *Roots* and its adaptation respond, Lambert argues, with a soothing colour-blind message of common values, significantly family values in particular, yet downplay the historical importance of African Americans in the USA.

Lambert's second chapter on African American Charles Johnson's 1990 novel *Middle Passage* is, I contend, the highpoint of the monograph. The novel focuses on Calhoun, a manumitted slave who stows away on a slave ship. Lambert reads the ship's Captain Ebenezer Falcon as a metaphor for the young American Republic. Shortly after this statement, Lambert tantalisingly points out that the Captain is a "pedophile dwarf" (49) but, unfortunately, does not disclose to his reader the symbolic meaning of the connection between this pedophilic figure and the young Republic. Lambert does, however, stress that the Captain does not hold racist views even though he participates in the slave trade. Moreover, his views of a utopian society are evocative of Puritan thinking. Lambert suggests that Calhoun, through his travels, is exposed to three different types of political systems that either repress, eliminate, or subjugate those deemed to be other; when he returns home at a later stage, it is argued, he will choose constitutional patriotism, like African American Ralph Ellison's narrator in *Invisible Man* (1952). Lambert claims not only that Calhoun and Ellison's unnamed narrator have much in common socially and politically, but also, by extension, that Johnson and Ellison

do because of their literary choices. Lambert uses interviews to support this claim, arguing that both writers reject the notion that their work is derived from the colour of their skin, either literally or aesthetically. In both *Middle Passage* and *The Invisible Man*, the protagonists experience discrimination and choose to return to US society to “exercise their citizenship and strive to uphold the values that American institutions purport and promote” (84). Thus, the protagonists and their creators, Lambert suggests, differ from writers such as Toni Morrison, who privileged the black gaze.

The third chapter, whose subtitle indicates that it focuses on English writer Barry Unsworth’s 1992 novel *Sacred Hunger*, is predominantly about different philosophies of community rather than the novel itself. Unsworth’s book narrates the story of a society made up of sailors and captives after the wreck of a slave ship off the coast of Florida and the murder of its captain. The chapter concentrates on the character of Delblanc, a young idealist, and compares his ideas of a utopian society with other philosophies. To do so, Lambert outlines theories of a social contract in the writings of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to finally declare that these theories are not applicable in the context of the novel, as there is no social contract in Delblanc’s community. The chapter also includes a discussion of Lisa Lowe’s views of community in her book *Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015), which covers Hegel, Utilitarianism, Marxism, and C. L. R. James’s *The Black Jacobins* (1938).

Chapter four examines the works of Martinican Édouard Glissant, predominantly *Poetics of Relation* (1990; especially his section entitled “The Open Boat”), and of French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy. Lambert’s interest focuses on the slave ship as a womb for a new society; he therefore likens Glissant’s notion of relation to Nancy’s concept of “being-with.” He discusses the dynamics of hierarchy in creolization and multiculturalism, and, by bringing in the viewpoints of multiple scholars and writers (such as Peter Hallward, Lorna Burns, and Nicolas Bourriaud), he also points out the risk for postcolonial societies to reproduce the power structures of their former colonial rulers. After briefly mentioning Nancy’s endorsement of communism, Lambert returns to older philosophies again, bringing in Hobbes and Aristotle. He finishes with a discussion of Friedrich Hayek to conclude that the world needs a social contract and new laws.

The conclusion starts with discussions of the 2014 migrant crisis and of the 2017 rise of slavery in Libya following the invasion of the country. Lambert argues that, despite there being differences between the triangular trade of the past and slavery today (legality being a significant one), the contemporary migration crisis and slavery in Libya can in some respects be viewed as a continuum of the transatlantic slave trade into neoliberalism. Thus, Lambert contends, fictions of the slave trade continue to be important, as the past offers lessons that resonate in the present. Somewhat strange is the omission of a modern slave narrative such as Sudanese writer Mende Nazer's 2002 *Slave: My True Story*, who was enslaved in Sudan and lived in bondage in London, a book that was also made into a Channel 4 film in 2010 entitled *I Am Slave*. Also strangely absent from Lambert's study is Pietro Deandrea's scholarly book *New Slavery in Contemporary British Literature and the Arts: The Ghost and the Camp* (2015). These two books might have enriched Lambert's discussion.

Similarly surprising is the conclusion's turn away from philosophy in order to validate anthropological work in agreement with Glissant's and Nancy's arguments, and to examine the socio-political features of primates and humans' hominid ancestors. Lambert states that, in the "loss of coherence" of these "primitive times," there is the potential for altruistic "world-forming" (220). In this way, he asserts, echoing Glissant's analogy, we are all now in the same boat and should "take back the helm and steer the boat in the direction we wish our world to go" (221). He thus presumably imagines, in this puzzling ending to the monograph, there is a homogeneous global consensus that may serve as a basis to construct a social contract.

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Laura Carvigan-Cassin, dir. *Littératures francophones : oralité et mondialités.*

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Dans son texte introductif, Jean Bessière précise que le présent volume regroupe les interventions du colloque qui s'est tenu à l'Université des Antilles en février 2019 sous le titre « Oralité, Mondialité : la langue dans la littérature française et francophone ». L'objectif en était de questionner l'oralité et les rapports qu'elle peut entretenir avec la mondialité à partir d'un corpus géographiquement et chronologiquement varié de productions littéraires en langue française. Nécessairement seconde, l'oralité retranscrite est, en effet, une manière d'interroger l'écriture littéraire qui dit la présenter. Écrite, l'oralité se chargerait d'une littéarité au prix d'un travail poétique qui lui permet d'échapper au double piège d'une exotisation et d'une instrumentalisation de la parole, deux critères distinctifs souvent associés aux littératures d'expression française hors des territoires européens, comme le rappelle Daniel-Henri Pageaux. Mais l'écriture de l'oralité l'inscrit aussi, de fait, dans un lien complexe avec la mondialité, dans un positionnement inconfortable entre la particularité et l'universalité, une autre dichotomie souvent appliquée aussi aux littératures dites « francophones ».

Il n'est pas indifférent de noter d'emblée trois modifications retenues dans le titre pour la publication définitive des contributions : d'abord, la mise au pluriel du mot « mondialité », assurément pour dire sans ambiguïté la pluralité du monde illustrée dans les fictions convoquées, mais aussi parce que les textes de l'ouvrage proposent plusieurs lectures du concept de « mondialité » dans ses rapports avec l'oralité. Deuxièmement,

la disparition du mot « langue » qui est pourtant présentée, on le verra dans les articles, comme la quintessence de la littérature. Laura Carvigan-Cassin, la coordinatrice du projet, termine d'ailleurs sa propre contribution en ces termes : « La question de la littérature est bien une question de langue », et la conclusion générale du volume rédigée par Danièle James-Raoul souligne aussi que la langue a été au centre de toutes les réflexions qui ont animé le colloque. Le dernier changement entre le titre du colloque et celui de sa publication propose la fusion du duo « littérature française et francophone » en un ensemble pluriel indivis de « littératures francophones ».

L'agencement des contributions suit un plan équilibré : précédées d'une introduction de deux textes cadrants fort pertinents, l'un sous la plume de Jean Bessière et l'autre de Daniel-Henri Pageaux, trois parties rassemblent chacune quatre ou cinq articles, avant de se refermer sur quelques mots de conclusion de Danièle James-Raoul.

La première partie réunit des textes qui portent un regard linguistique sur l'oralité : Gabriella Parussa s'intéresse aux productions dramatiques en moyen français (textes des XV^e et XVI^e siècles). L'introduction d'écrits médiévaux dans un volume consacré aux littératures francophones permet une réflexion intéressante sur l'étendue que peut/doit recouvrir l'appellation « littératures francophones ». La chercheuse accrédite la présence de variations linguistiques (diatopiques, diaphasiques, diastratiques) avant l'entreprise « purifiante » du classicisme littéraire. Michèle Laliberté cible les productions théâtrales québécoises de 1968 à 2018 et observe un recul du jocal et du français écrit standard au profit d'un français québécois oral familier et d'un français québécois oral standard. L'oralité est traitée ici sous l'angle d'un corpus de théâtre, rappelle Jean Bessière, donc un corpus littéraire oral. Même s'il s'agit toujours d'une représentation artistique de l'oral et d'une mise en perspective de l'oralité, ces deux premiers articles confèrent à l'oralité une fonction sociologique dans les textes littéraires qui deviennent alors des documents socio-linguistiques, une perspective alternative à l'ethnotexte, concept peu suivi dans les réflexions des participants au colloque, selon le constat de Daniel-Henri Pageaux. Anaïs Stampfli s'arrête, elle, à l'écriture étymologisante de Raphaël Confiant. Une approche lexicologique de son œuvre montre que Confiant exploite une langue consciente de sa pluralité et de son historicité. Ses emprunts aux créoles ne se réduisent pas à des xénismes exotisants, car l'écrivain martiniquais recherche des termes ayant existé en français hexagonal, redonnant à la manière d'un

Mallarmé « un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu », mais établissant aussi par l'oralité une filiation littéraire. Dans la dernière contribution de la première partie, Cécile Van den Avenne clarifie la notion d'oralité et porte sur elle un regard sociolinguistique qui permet de relativiser le rôle fantasmé que lui attribue les auteurs et les autrices mais aussi les critiques en francophonie littéraire. Et ici encore la mise en circulation des mots où s'entrechoquent différents imaginaires de l'oralité permet d'écrire une histoire littéraire où la partition français/francophone n'aurait plus de sens.

La deuxième partie interroge l'oralité dans la francophonie contemporaine à travers plusieurs espaces : les Caraïbes, l'Asie, l'Afrique du Nord, le Moyen Orient, l'Océan indien. Explicitant le lien entre la littérature caribéenne ultra-contemporaine et le genre haïtien de la lodyans, Yolaine Parisot montre comment l'oralité des textes dépasse la réception culturaliste et documentaire à laquelle la critique les réduit souvent. Leur oralité même est le moyen par lequel les romans caribéens s'ouvrent à la spécularité : la fiction y devient alors métafiction de la mondialité. Laura Carvigan-Cassin retient trois auteurs dans sa contribution : Anna Moi, Amin Maalouf et Kamel Daoud qui se servent de la mobilité extraterritoriale de la langue française pour y faire entendre une oralité plurielle. La voix des personnages enrichit les textes en français de mots et expressions venus d'ailleurs. Libérée du carcan normatif, la littérature réussit la symbiose des cultures chère à Senghor, par l'usage d'une langue « polynomique » comme je concluais ma propre étude sur les « exilés du langage » en 2005. Jean Bessière rappelait au début du volume que l'oralité serait aussi une manière pour l'œuvre de rejoindre la nature. Et c'est précisément le chemin de la démonstration emprunté par Valérie Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo. Les textes de langue française du sud-ouest de l'Océan indien visent à faire résonner les voix dans des lieux, à mettre en relation les voix et les paysages, ce que la chercheuse appelle une « éc(h)opoétique ». L'approche écologique des fictions permet de les faire sortir d'une interprétation folklorisante pour les charger d'un écho politique où l'homme et la nature ne font qu'un. C'est un autre rapport de soi au monde, une autre manière d'appréhender en fait la mondialité à laquelle nous convie cette contribution. La question de la mondialité ne pouvait assurément pas ignorer le concept du Tout-Monde glissantien, sujet des deux dernières publications de la deuxième partie. Roger Toumson retrace l'activité théorique de l'écrivain à la frontière de la littérature et de la philosophie, du poétique et du politique.

Les essais et les romans d'Edouard Glissant épousent une même structure rhizomique, représentation imagée de la mondialité in fine. Le commentaire et la fiction, les structures narratives et poétiques s'y entremêlent de la même façon qu'interagissent les processus culturels en activité partout dans le monde selon le principe de « Relation ». Et c'est ce même principe glissantien qui autorise à Thierry Ozwald une relecture dédouanée de l'accusation de plagiat du *Devoir de violence* de Yambo Ouologuem : la perspective et la logique glissantienne frappent d'obsolescence la propriété littéraire puisque tout texte littéraire est par définition à tout le monde, en tout point et de tout temps.

La dernière partie se concentre sur les oralités africaines avec deux intéressantes lectures écopoétiques d'abord : celle de Xavier Garnier, d'une part, qui interroge la nature des liens qui attachent les textes à leurs (mi) lieux, et celle d'Alice Desquilbert, de l'autre, qui illustre la contribution de Xavier Garnier, en se concentrant sur les dernières œuvres de l'écrivain congolais Soni Labou Tansi. Garnier démontre comment l'oralité des textes dénaturée au fond par une lecture coloniale traditionnaliste et une réception culturalisante de ceux-ci est devenue « mondialité », c'est-à-dire un phénomène planétaire, réexploitable à l'échelle mondiale. Elle a dès lors perdu le contact avec son environnement immédiat. L'enjeu des littératures francophones africaines est désormais de travailler l'écriture pour dépatrimonialiser leur oralité et réveiller les liens qui les unissent à leur milieu originel par le bruissement de la langue. Et c'est bien le programme littéraire de Soni Labou Tansi à partir des années 1980 tel que nous l'explique Alice Desquilbert. L'auteur n'aura en effet cessé de faire parler les éléments naturels pour relier la terre, les hommes et les mots. La troisième contribution, en lien étroit aussi avec la réalité linguistique et historique du territoire africain, rapproche la francophonie et l'anglophonie. Yves Clavaron éclaire l'oralité d'une nouvelle manière. L'utilisation de la langue anglaise et de sa variante pidgin par certains romanciers africains fait qu'ils attribuent de facto aux narrateurs de leurs fictions le rôle de traducteur. L'oralisation des textes se crée, dans ce cas, par la traduction et son fonctionnement dialogique. Dans le dernier article, Julie Crohas Commans fait entendre la voix comorienne d'Ali Zamir. Il est précieux de voir comment la ponctuation va servir l'oralité dans son premier roman, *Anguille sous roche*, et révéler une manière d'écrire la parole. L'absence de point sert, en effet, le rendu du flot des propos de la narratrice. Mais ce n'est pas tout. La ponctuation veut rendre compte de l'urgence de dire de l'auteur et le souhait qu'il a de permettre

au lecteur de ponctuer selon sa propre compréhension pour participer ainsi à l'élaboration du sens du récit. L'oralité trouve ici une nouvelle fonction : la co-construction du texte littéraire.

Les seize textes de l'ouvrage offrent, en fait, au lecteur du volume de précieux éléments de réponses à quatre questions récurrentes dans le champ de la recherche en littérature francophone : 1) la nature de l'oralité dans sa transcription à l'écrit, c'est-à-dire ses propriétés, les caractères qui la définissent et les effets de leur traduction d'un code à l'autre ; 2) la littérarité d'une écriture qui transcrit le « dit » ou pour le dire autrement, les fonctions littéraires de l'oralité ; 3) le positionnement paradoxal de l'oralité, entre la particularité et la mondialité, à l'instar du concept de francophonie lui-même ; 4) le statut des œuvres d'expression française qu'interrogent notamment leur appellation et le rôle qu'y joue la langue ou plus précisément le jeu littéraire entre les langues.

Shuangyi Li. *Travel, Translation and Transmedia Aesthetics: Franco-Chinese Literature and Visual Arts in a Global Age.*

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Contemporary novels and films by French-speaking Chinese authors, or *écrivains chinois d'expression française*, have thus far remained a niche topic in comparative/world literature studies. With his new monograph, Shuangyi Li makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the “emerging genre” of Franco-Chinese literature and visual arts in a global age (2).

A shrewd close reader, Li unravels with surgical precision the generative mechanism of transculturality undergirding the oeuvre of four contemporary Chinese émigré authors currently living in France – namely, François Cheng (b. 1929), Gao Xingjian (b. 1940), Dai Sijie (b. 1954), and Shan Sa (b. 1972). These transcultural features – as Li convincingly shows – are by no means marketing gimmicks or Orientalist clichés tossed in solely to please western readers in quest of exotic touches. To further buttress his argument, Li calls for a paradigm shift from the translingual to the transmedial by looking at not only the linguistic but also the visual and even aural aspects of transculturality. This liberating approach has yielded many satisfactory results. As a case in point, in Chapter 4, Li delineates how Dai knowingly tickles western readers’ fantasy about Chinese pictographs (which in fact form only a small portion of the Chinese lexicon) in *Balzac et la Petite Tailleuse chinoise* (2000), known in English as *Balzac and the Little Chinese*

Seamstress (2001). At one point, Dai's narrator draws three figures to represent the deep meaning of his name, which include a galloping horse, a sword, and a bell. A reader versed in Chinese would effortlessly deduce from these signifiers both the sound and the script associated with the narrator's Chinese name, which is Ma Jianling 馬劍鈴 (the three constituent characters here literally denote "horse," "sword," and "bell"). Yet, for someone knowing no Chinese, the rebus remains impenetrable, as evidenced by two western commentators' failure to decode the narrator's name in their review essays (121–23). Another example of Li's discernment and sensitivity to what lies beyond the textual can be found in Chapter 5, where he draws attention to how Dai, in the film adaptation of *Balzac*, intermingles Sichuanese dialect with standard Mandarin, thereby engineering a brand of auditory exoticism for western and Sinophone viewers alike (171–94). If previous scholars have already picked up on this deliberate code-switching as showcasing the plurality of Sinitic languages (Bloom 156), Li's attentiveness brings him even further, as he notes how Dai's spellings of personal names also reflect the phonology of his native Sichuan dialect, rather than that of Putonghua (Li 129).

The book is overflowing with trendy concepts. My only quibble about the author's attempt at sweeping generalization is that he rarely grapples with previous theories, but instead indulges in name dropping and block quotes (e.g., the fleeting references to Linda Hutcheon's reflection on adaptation on page 76, and Edwin Gentzler's idea of post-translation on page 83), which at times culminates in a word salad. To cite a few examples, Li builds his own theory of transmediality on the tenets of Lars Elleström, Henry Jenkins, Mabel Lee, Liu Jianmei, Kobus Marais, and Robert Stam (11). In a similar vein, he rejects the outmoded definitions of translingualism advanced by Steven G. Kellman, Jacqueline Dutton, Julie Hansen, Alain Ausoni, Nathalie Edwards, Christopher Hogarth, Stefan Helgesson, Christina Kullberg, and Alice Duhan (12–13), in favor of a more protean notion of exophony developed by Dirk Weismann, Yoko Tawada, Ursula Mathis-Moser, and Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner (13–14). At first sight, these name lists are overwhelmingly redundant. But an exhaustive literature review as such is perhaps not altogether out of place, given that contemporary Franco-Chinese literature and visual arts exhibit a wide range of transcultural ambiguities that defy categorization. To address this challenge, Li subsumes his case studies under three thematic blocks, namely travel, translation, and transmedia

aesthetics. He then invokes a broad spectrum of theoretical perspectives such as fabulation, sinography, pseudo-translation, born-translated, textless back translation, cultural translation, and so forth to bear on each individual case study. This customized approach works out quite well on a technical and microscopic level. From a big-picture viewpoint, however, neither the Francophone nor the Sinophone model, or any center-periphery narrative so prevalent in postcolonial studies today, can neatly explain the “strategic outsideness” of the four Franco-Chinese authors under scrutiny, as they do not necessarily produce their works at the margins and seldom question the legacy or legitimacy of French/Chinese cultural imperialism (242–43).

Admittedly, theoretical abstractions are no more than red herrings when taken out of the tumultuous political context in which the four Franco-Chinese authors have found their voices. Intriguingly, as Li has observed, the four authors have over the past years collectively moved away from the tragic political events in contemporary China (e.g., the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square protests) that marked their earlier works. Instead, they have turned to ancient China for themes, tropes, and aesthetic inspirations (7–8, 12, 57). This palpable process of depoliticization is somewhat baffling. One may wonder, what makes these diasporic authors no longer willing to assume a dissident/activist identity? For reasons unknown to me, Li fails to provide a convincing explanation for this riddle, nor does he conjecture about the rationale behind these writers’ ambivalence towards contemporary Chinese politics. Instead, he states that the focus of his project is aesthetic rather than political. But is it possible to divorce aesthetics from politics after all? At the end of the day, what justifies the idiosyncratic aesthetics of the four maverick Franco-Chinese writers is none other than their diasporic identities (though the word “identity politics” never pops up in the book). In fact, Li acknowledges – in the first paragraph of his introduction – his debt to Shu-mei Shih for the concept of “articulation,” and highlights in a footnote its subversive nature when it comes to the discursive construction of new identities (2). Needless to say, this book would have been even more engaging if the author had aligned his argument more tightly with Shih’s critical insight.

Despite my quibble, Li’s scintillating monograph is a must-read for all those interested in a singular body of non-postcolonial, diasporic literature/visual arts by a group of authors who straddle the Francophone and the Sinophone, yet stubbornly resist labels of any sort.

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**Leonor María Martínez Serrano and
Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández, eds. *Modern
Ecopoetry: Reading the Palimpsest of the More-
than-Human World.***

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In *Modern Ecopoetry: Reading the Palimpsest of the More-than-Human World*, an important volume edited by two Spanish scholars, eight chapters written by authors from Spain, Pakistan, the United States of America, England and Scotland, chart the ecological dimension of poetry through the works of American, Canadian, English, Indian, Pakistani, Spanish and Welsh poets. Through these essays written in various parts of the world about poets themselves coming from several continents, the book studies the relationship between humans and the nonhuman world while underscoring the political role of poetry in the awareness of that link and/or confrontation. Echoing and questioning John Felstiner's seminal book *Can Poetry Save the Earth?*, the editors ask "Can Poetry Really Save the Earth?" (7). Besides asking fundamental questions, one of the most salient merits of this book consists in examining the works of poets who are "not necessarily included in mainstream literary canons" (back cover). The stunning cover, a photo representing River Nile in Sudan, also deserves special mention, as its colours and the lines of the geological survey photo make it look like a beautiful abstract painting.

With its poetic title, "Finding a Compass to a Commonwealth of Breath," the extended and thoughtful introduction offers many keys to the understanding of ecopoetry. The beautiful conceit of "a Commonwealth

of Breath” adequately sums up the spirit of the book. The introduction thus “endeavours to situate the present volume within recent theoretical advancements in the field of ecopoetry” (2).

The first part of the introduction defines ecopoetry as the study of “words in space and poets as place-makers” (1). In this rich preamble, Felstiner’s book *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* serves as a sort of leitmotif guiding readers on the path of ecopoetry. Romantic poets, the precursors of ecology, are dealt with from the start. Moreover, the importance of Felstiner’s work in the introduction also reminds us that Keats’s poetry inspired environmental defenders, since Felstiner’s title echoes a line by Keats. In a similar vein, one of the chapters of nature writer Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), “And no Birds Sing,” was also inspired by Keats. The first part of the introduction clearly pinpoints the role that poetry can have at a period when the degradation of the planet is one of the most worrying problems. Interestingly, the editors remind us that poetry, an “ancient mode of thinking,” could respond to the world’s contemporary problems (2). To explain this role, they rely on poets like Seamus Heaney, philosophers like David Abrams and some of the world’s main ecocritics like Kate Rigby, Greg Garrard or later on, Serenella Iovino, Serpil Oppermann, Scott Slovic and others. Leonor María Martínez Serrano and Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández interrogate the notion of corporeality through Stacy Alaimo’s notion of “sustainable poetry” and through Leonard Scigaj’s differentiation between *ecopoetry* and *environmental literature* (3). They mention Yi-Fu Tuan’s distinction between place and space, thus following in the wake of J. Scott Bryson in *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space and Ecopoetry*, or Tom Bristow in *The Anthropocene Lyric*. The concept of the “*more-than-human-world*,” is tackled through Bristow’s revisiting of “Cartesian ontological dualism (mind versus body [...])” in an effort “to transcend it and ‘highlight human and nonhuman interdependency’” (6–7). This part of the introduction ends with an allusion to Sarah Nolan’s *Unnatural Ecopoetics*, a notion “inspired by Donna Haraway’s materialist conception of ‘naturecultures’” (7). This blurring of the boundaries between nature and culture, between the natural world and the human one, between the human body and the world, lies at the core of “Material Ecocriticism.” To sum up, this very rich survey of ecocritical theory and philosophy studying the relationship between the human and more-than-human world provides an excellent tool to approach a book devoted to “Modern Ecopoetry.” The second part of the introduction, “Can Poetry *Really* Save

the Earth?," is predicated on the notion of "a *symposium of the whole*" defined as "a community of beings embedded within the webbed natural world" (7). The notion of an interpenetration of every component of the Earth is evoked through significant theoretical references and is reflected in the editors' poetic style.

The last part of the introduction, "The Fractal Structure of Modern Ecopoetry and Its Contribution to Ecopoetry," introduces the various contributions to the volume, using two metaphors. One such metaphor is connected with the subtitle of the volume, "Reading the Palimpsest of the Morethan-Human World." The editors explain that "the volume aims at a *palimpsestuous* pattern for poems written in the twentieth and twenty-first century from different locales" (12). The palimpsest is originally a genuine paleographic object, a parchment on which the initial writing has been erased to allow a new inscription to emerge. The editors borrow the notion of *palimpsestuousness* from Sarah Dillon, who understands the concept as "a simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation." They remind us that Dillon distinguishes "between 'a palimpsest' as a paleographic artefact and 'the palimpsest' as a metaphorical construct" (12). Fractals serve as a second metaphor, as the editors consider that the chapters "proceed *fractally*, exhibiting repetitive patterns" (12). Always guiding readers, the editors explain that "[f]ractals are characterized by their infiniteness, and their never-ending complex patterns feature *self-similarity*, i.e. an *expanding* or *unfolding symmetry*" (12). Thus relying on two metaphors linked with paleography and writing for the former and mathematics for the latter, the editors highlight "the protean complexity of ecopoetry" and the attention paid to nature by ecopoets who "keep on conversing with nature" (12). This stimulating introduction, which offers readers an abundance of information about ecocriticism and ecopoetry, while providing them with many useful definitions, concludes with a rich bibliography.

Beyond the introduction, the book is divided into three parts which gather scholarly essays and is rounded off by a coda. The first part, "Belonging: The Sacred Sense of Place," is comprised of two chapters. The first one, by Maria Antonia Mezquita Fernández, studies the influence of Dylan Thomas on Spanish poet Claudio Rodríguez. This examination of the affinities between the two poets, who demonstrate "a very similar view of nature and an ecocritical perspective" (25), is highly innovative. Rather than dealing with influence, the author refers to "connections between them" (42), as both poets shared a similar vision of nature. The

author mentions the influence of Romanticism in the works of both writers. This is reinforced by Kate Rigby, who claims in *Topographies of the Sacred* that “[s]ome aspects of ecological understanding and sensibility have their roots in this romantic rethinking of nature” (Rigby 28–29). The notions of “sacred nature” (25) and “the union between man and nature” (32) in the works of both poets are remarkably analysed through a number of useful examples.

The second chapter, by Leonor María Martínez Serrano, deals with “The Wisdom of Birds in Robert Bringhurst’s Poetry.” Being enabled to follow the Canadian poet’s vision through his luminous way of listening to the polyphony of the world and of subsequently conveying it in his poems, proves fascinating indeed. The chapter demonstrates how this poet “composed poems [...] that seek to mimic the polyphonic texture of the world” (44). The chapter explores the ways in which the poet looks at environmental degradation and the “destruction of the world,” while pointing out that his poems “imaginatively posit a way of dwelling on Earth and relating to the nonhuman with responsibility” (45). Through close-reading analyses of Bringhurst’s poems, the author highlights the “ecocentric ethics” (43) at work in his poems. Studying “the lessons of birds” (58), she reminds us that the poems she studies show Bringhurst’s “conversing with the physical world” (Felstiner 58). Considering that the notion of the “seeing animal” had apparently gone unnoticed by many philosophers, Martínez Serrano points out how the “Cartesian construct has been ‘historically instrumental in claims to racial, gender and species superiority, and has underwritten the separation of (human) being from (extra-human) environments as well’” (60). This echoes Huggan and Tiffin’s book, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (157). The chapter contends that Bringhurst’s poems “are an imaginary and salutary reminder that humans are not at the very centre of creation” (58).

The second part of the scholarly essays section, “Stubborn Materiality and Environmental Poli^(e)t^(h)ics,” opens with a chapter by Matilde Martín González, devoted to “The Agentic Power of Matter in Lorine Niedecker’s ‘Wintergreen Ridge’ and ‘Paean to Place.’” Studying the material elements in the American poet’s texts, the author indicates how some of her poems “can be construed in the light of Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann’s elaborations on the agentic potential of matter” (68). The demonstration of this point is supported by subtle analyses of the poems. The author underlines how poetic sounds reflect the “mood of the women

involved in the social activism in defense of the environment” (73). The connection between poetic constructions, sounds, the occupation of space, natural elements and humans, is examined in a convincing way.

The following chapter, “Of Lyric Temporality and Materiality: Alice Oswald’s Environmental Poetics,” by Heather H. Yeung, “examines the interconnectivity of poetic materiality and temporality” (91) as well as “landscape and voice” (90). The author argues that spatial presence in Oswald’s poetry “is not just of nature and landscape,” but presents to readers “a series of poetic events and ethical problems, which are spatialized though the figure of voice and the figuring of text” (94). The interrelationship of subject and object is particularly noticeable in *Weeds and Wildflowers* (104). In it, the focus on the formation of landscape together with “the placing of the voice, as well as the act of voicing itself” reveal an “attention to the margins” (108). Yeung thus sheds light on how “Oswald seeks to give graphic and graphemic representations of the phenomena to which her poetry gives birth” (108). Her poetry questions the nature of the landscape “both [as] our subject and the thing in which we exist,” as Rachel DeLue writes in “Elusive Landscapes and Shifting Grounds” (DeLue and Elkins 2, qtd. on page 109).

The following and last chapter of the second part, “The Political Is Personal: Juliana Spahr’s Political Ecology,” by Esther Sánchez-Pardo, analyses Spahr’s understanding of all environmental degradations, climate change and human exploitation as “part and parcel of the moral hazards of capitalism” (111). According to Juliana Spahr, the author argues, “everything is always already embedded in reading and writing practices, in the production of signification” (113). The chapter suggests that for Spahr, “close reading is a form of ethical responsibility” (114). Poetry allows engagement and interaction within “the public and cultural sphere” (114). To illustrate Spahr’s theory of reading, the author refers to her collection *Well Then There Now*. She explains that Spahr’s “nomadic existence” and her “continued movement from inland US to Hawai‘i” “have been primordial” (116) in the development of her thinking “about her engagement with the world at large, her active and activist responses to capitalism, decolonial theory, deep ecological awareness and ethical stance” (116). In her poems, she always insists on “collectivity, interconnection and vast multispecies interdependence” (119); Sánchez-Pardo competently demonstrates this political dimension by analysing some poetic sequences.

The third part of the scholarly essays section, “Postcolonial Resistance and Neoliberal Toxicity,” starts with a chapter by Rabia Zaheer and Aamir Aziz on Pakistani-American writer Zulfikar Ghose’s poetry: “Development as Deformation: Postcolonial Ecopoetics in Zulfikar Ghose’s Poetry.” This chapter examines how this writer’s “postcolonial aesthetics extrapolate the social, political and ethical repercussions of human intervention into nature to generate the narrative of sustainability against a planetary norm of disposability” (133). Leaning on many critics, including Crosby’s notion of “ecological imperialism,” the chapter draws parallels “between the nature/culture and colonized/colonizer binary” (133). Ghose’s works reveal his ecological awareness, which is “[i]nformed by a biocentric vision” (133). The essay’s analyses highlight the strength of Ghose’s poetry, as it depicts a dark world on a “dying Earth” (145). His works struggle against the damage done to this Earth, i.e. desertification and climate change, all his examples showing “a perverted natural world” (145) due to human actions. As the authors explain, this chapter attempts “to build a discursive critique of contemporary modes of development to explore their neocolonial ideology,” while also examining “the politics of subjugation that takes an eminent form in postcolonial environments” (147).

The following chapter, written by Cristina M. Gámez-Fernández, focuses on “Meena Kandasamy’s Contestation of Inherited Cultural Landscapes in *Touch*.” The author shows how this Dalit activist and writer “challenges the inherited, conflicted landscapes and narratives of her native Tamil Nadu, imbued with a history of sustained violence against disenfranchised Dalits” (151). Leaning on cultural geographer John Brinkerhoff Jackson’s distinction between “a *vernacular landscape*” and an “*official landscape*” in *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, the chapter considers Kandasamy’s poetic space. The vernacular landscape is “associated with an intimate relationship of individuals and communities with the land,” whereas the “official landscape” is “connected with imperial and colonial practices” (151). The chapter first surveys “Landscape, History and Ecopoetry” in the context of classical Sangam literature. It also includes a historical study of these poems linking their aesthetic modes and themes with specific landscapes and imagery. This enables the reader to understand the following detailed study of “Dalit History, Landscape and Poetic Imagination in *Touch*” (158). In this section, very subtle analyses of poems collected in *Touch* give readers insights into the ways in which these works speak about

“the dynamics of conquering a land” and also about the “concept of belonging to the earth” (161). The close study of the poems uncovers how, in *Touch*, the landscape becomes “an informing presence, revealed as an anthropomorphic world which either resists or yields to the unjust or brutal onslaught of official landscapes” (166). The author reminds us that Kandasamy “reclaims ancient Tamil literary tradition for her Dalit poetics as she pleads against caste practices and patriarchal subjugation of Dalit women” (166). She uses ancient poetic tradition and natural landscapes to fight for her land and for women in the present.

The last chapter of the volume, authored by Stephen Hock, is entitled: “‘Just Junk in a Safeway Cart I’m Pushing Down to the Recycling Center’: The Aesthetics of Ecology in Michael Robbins’s Poetry.” In his analysis of poems from Robbins’s *Alien vs. Predator* and *The Second Sex*, the author convincingly argues that his works engage with ecology. One of the innovative features of his poetry consists in suggesting the possibility of “an ecological ethics of recycling” (171). The figure of the recycler, which lies at the core of his poetry, serves as the image of the poet. Textual analyses suggest that a specific form of ecology emerges from Robbins’s poem, an ecology, the author mentions, which is described by Patricia Yaeger as “rubbish ecology”: “If ecology has been defined as the study of organisms and their environments and has evolved to mean environmental preservation or conservation, then rubbish ecology can be defined as the act of saving and savoring debris” (Yaeger 329, qtd. on page 177). The posture of Robbins’s poems is compared with that of the angel facing a pile of debris “generated by the catastrophe of progress,” (184), in a painting by Klee, “Angelus Novus,” analysed by Walter Benjamin in the ninth chapter of his “Thesis on the Philosophy of History.” Hock claims that Robbins’s poems are “faced with the cultural detritus of high- and pop-cultural traditions, as well as with the physical junk produced by the engines of capital” (184).

The book ends with a coda entitled “Against Use: (The Difficulty of) Writing Nature Poetry in an Age of Environmental Crisis.” In this beautiful contribution, Catherine Woodward offers “a piece of hybrid writing combining criticism, poetic theory and prose poetry” (189). She seeks to analyse her “own practice and environmental aesthetic as an ecopoet/nature poet/political poet, as a way of engaging with the question of how contemporary poets write, must write, might write about ‘the natural world’” (189). She adds that “[t]his chapter is at once anxious and positive, constructive and critical” (189). The same could be

said about *Modern Eco-poetry* as a whole, a beautiful book both showing the damage done to the Earth and its human and nonhuman inhabitants and presenting poetry as an art of resistance, an art that might “save the Earth.”

However, some of Woodward’s conclusions could be challenged. For instance, she writes that “realistically, poetry has relatively little influence as a discrete art form or as a collection of discrete artistic productions. Wherever it seems to have influence it usually gets reabsorbed into destructive institutions as public art” (204). Do the analyses composing this book not suggest precisely the contrary? Poetry is discrete. But if poetry had relatively little influence, why would dictators fear poets and why would poets be murdered in totalitarian countries? Let it suffice to mention Ken Saro Wiwa, Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda... These poets’ voices are heard whenever they are read and their words can change things. Their voices have not been “reabsorbed into destructive institutions.” Rather, they have found a place in readers’ hearts.

The poems examined in *Modern Eco-poetry* share a political vision of poetry as far as the defense of the land, human and nonhuman communities are concerned. As the editors argue in the introduction, the volume offers many “representations of nature in worldwide modern poetry written in English in the postcolonial, global world” by poets “dwelling on the lessons learnt from the green world in the vein of the Romantics and the Transcendentalists or against them” (13). They establish the status of “nature as a polyphonic place and poetry as a place for multiple discursive voices,” including “reflections on anthropocentrism versus biocentrism” (13). Summing up, *Modern Eco-poetry* is an important book about contemporary poetry, ecology, and soft power. It sheds light on lesser-known poets, who vividly suggest it is possible for everyone to improve the world through the simple act of writing or reading a poem.

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**Mads Rosendahl Thomsen and Jacob Wamberg,
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L'ouvrage collectif *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Posthumanism*, dirigé par Mads Rosendahl Thomsen et Jacob Wamberg, offre un panorama critique de la variété des thèmes, des réflexions et des positions qu'implique le champ actuel du posthumanisme. L'objet retenu appelle en effet une approche particulièrement large : tel qu'il est ici entendu, le posthumanisme regroupe de nombreuses tendances qui, malgré des tensions, voire des oppositions, ont en commun de penser une rupture avec la thèse de l'exception humaine, suivant laquelle l'homme est séparé du reste de l'univers. Il en résulte que le posthumanisme ne se limite pas au posthumain – les figures et discours de l'humanité augmentée, modifiée par la technologie. Il inclut également des courants qui développent une vision moins anthropocentrique du monde – on peut à ce titre parler d'une sorte de post-anthropocentrisme qui recouvre notamment les modélisations de l'anthropocène et les branches du néo-matérialisme.

Dans leur ensemble, les contributions présentées font ainsi lire le posthumanisme comme un champ d'études qui n'est pas uniforme. Elles actualisent des discours parfois très différents qui amènent le lecteur à percevoir la vitalité des débats critiques animant ce champ. La richesse de ces débats est également soulignée par le caractère résolument interdisciplinaire de l'ouvrage. Au fil des essais, le posthumanisme se voit en effet institué comme un objet transversal qui met en dialogue bien des domaines du savoir – les études littéraires, la philosophie, les sciences du jeu vidéo, le droit, les études culturelles, les sciences politiques, les sciences

de l'éducation, les humanités numériques, l'histoire de l'art, les études féministes, les sciences de l'information et de la communication – et qui se retrouve dans de nombreuses formes d'expression artistique – la littérature, le cinéma, les séries télévisées, les jeux vidéos, la musique, le bio-art, les *comics*, les *anime*. Comme on le voit, la perspective interdisciplinaire et intersémiotique prend ici une ampleur impressionnante. Il faut ajouter qu'elle se révèle aussi d'une pertinence remarquable : pour qui s'intéresse plus particulièrement à la littérature, il est par exemple indispensable de prendre en compte les modélisations et théorisations que d'autres branches donnent du posthumanisme et qui nourrissent les figurations romanesques du posthumain et du post-anthropocentrisme.

Par le vaste panorama qu'il dessine, l'ouvrage a également le mérite de montrer qu'il existe désormais une véritable bibliothèque de référence du posthumanisme. Malgré la diversité des perspectives et des positions exprimées, on constate ainsi qu'une série de chercheurs et de travaux reviennent de façon récurrente dans les essais et dans leurs bibliographies respectives. En d'autres mots, ces chercheurs et ces travaux se trouvent instaurés comme des balises pour tout le champ et toutes les disciplines du posthumanisme. Comme le formalise très bien l'introduction de Mads Rosendahl Thomsen et Jacob Wamberg, le *Bloomsbury Handbook of Posthumanism* permet alors de regrouper ces balises en un seul espace et d'en offrir un classement systématique : les posthumanistes critiques – Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe, Timothy Morton, Ursula K. Heise – ; les transhumanistes – Nick Bostrom, Ray Kurzweil, Max More, Natasha Vita-More – ; les critiques néo-matérialistes – Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Graham Harman.

Suivant une perspective proprement posthumaniste, le panorama proposé n'impose nullement une lecture linéaire – qui demeure néanmoins possible. Il autorise au contraire chacun à dessiner sa propre carte du posthumanisme et à voyager entre les essais en fonction de ses intérêts et de ses questionnements. Dans cette optique, le découpage en sections se révèle utile : il trace de premières constellations critiques qui permettent d'identifier les articles tournant autour d'une même problématique générale.

De cette façon, la première section regroupe une série d'essais qui se présentent comme autant de mises au point critiques portant chacune sur un concept ou un paradigme central dans les discours posthumanistes. En tant que telle, cette section paraît aujourd'hui fondamentale : par

le nombre et, parfois, la polysémie de ses termes, le posthumanisme se donne encore trop souvent comme une nébuleuse conceptuelle susceptible de générer des difficultés, voire des incompréhensions, dans les échanges scientifiques. Aussi, une telle nébuleuse appelle-t-elle un effort de clarification terminologique, que vient justement réaliser la première partie de l'ouvrage.

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht retrace ainsi l'histoire de la conception de l'humanisme qui a dominé en Occident aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles. Il montre également comment cette conception de l'humanisme a commencé à être fragilisée à partir du XX^e siècle. Pour sa part, Karin Kukkonen nuance l'opposition usuellement établie entre le posthumanisme et les Lumières, en soulignant que celles-ci questionnaient déjà certaines préoccupations que l'on dit aujourd'hui posthumanistes – l'imbrication du sujet et du monde, les liens entre les expériences humaine et animale, le devenir de la subjectivité dans un contexte technologique. Stefan Lorenz Sorgner s'intéresse au destin du transhumanisme, depuis sa première mention sous la plume de Julian Huxley en 1951. Il explique comment le courant transhumaniste a pris une importance croissante au fil des années, grâce à l'action de diverses figures telles que Nick Bostrom ou Natasha Vita-More. Il parcourt également les grands débats philosophiques qui sont reliés à ce courant – notamment la vision politique et la définition du bien qu'implique le transhumanisme. Rick Dolphijn discute les principaux mouvements qui, depuis les années 1970, critiquent tant la thèse de l'exception humaine que les dualismes de la modernité fondant une telle thèse – les théories des systèmes, le néo-matérialisme, qui réévaluent la place du non-humain. Dans son essai, Pieter Vermeulen aborde l'anthropocène comme reconnaissance des effets de l'action humaine sur l'environnement. Il détaille les quatre grands récits qui disent cette reconnaissance et qui se construisent chacun à partir d'un point de départ différent dans le temps. Il explore ensuite brièvement l'imaginaire de l'anthropocène dans la fiction. Patricia MacCormack aborde l'ahumain qu'elle a contribué à théoriser et qu'elle présente comme une façon d'éliminer la domination humaine sur le monde, d'ouvrir celui-ci à toutes les formes de la vie. David Roden modélise, quant à lui, un posthumanisme de l'abstraction biomorphique, engageant à penser le décentrement dans le décentrement – et non depuis une position extérieure ou surplombante, qui mettrait à mal ce décentrement. Jacob Wamberg conclut la première section en dessinant une carte des positions posthumanistes contemporaines. Cette carte se veut une espèce de métarécit qui convoque des strates temporelles de la

culture humaine, de la vie non humaine et de l'univers inorganique – elle croise des coordonnées reprises aux séquences évolutionnistes et aux positions dans la biosphère.

La deuxième section rassemble des essais qui envisagent les nouvelles considérations éthiques engagées par le développement technologique et la sortie de l'anthropocentrisme que suppose le posthumanisme. Ursula K. Heise détaille ainsi trois grandes questions où la pensée environnementale rejoint le posthumanisme – la valeur de la nature vierge au regard des écosystèmes altérés par l'humain ; l'impact de l'homme sur l'environnement ; les inégalités humaines face aux conséquences des changements environnementaux. Iwona Janicka explique, de son côté, en quoi la prise en compte des non-humains amène à repenser la notion même de politique – qui est largement anthropocentrique et qui génère de nombreuses exclusions ontologiques, y compris au sein de l'humanité. Elle expose en ce sens les perspectives politiques novatrices que l'on peut trouver chez différents penseurs néo-matérialistes – Latour, Marres, Puig de la Bellacasa, Papadopoulos. Dans sa contribution, Francesca Ferrando souligne le lien qui existe entre les éthiques posthumaniste et féministe, qui s'attachent toutes deux à déconstruire les pensées dualistes. Sur cette base, elle indique comment l'éthique féministe posthumaine dessine une nouvelle façon de vivre, qui permet de redéfinir son rapport au monde. Holly Flint Jones et Nicholas Jones développent une approche posthumaniste de la race. Ils montrent qu'en assimilant celle-ci à une technologie, il est possible de mieux comprendre son fonctionnement – la race est un outil fluide qui permet aux dominants de garder le pouvoir. Dans la même lignée, Steve Fuller interroge la paradoxale unité de l'humanité. Il relève que la notion même d'humain est ambiguë en ce qu'elle peut renvoyer à deux référents distincts – une qualité spécifique ou un ensemble d'individus. De là, il précise comment, à la suite de la religion et de la race, différents vecteurs transhumanistes et posthumanistes ont effectivement déstabilisé l'unité du genre humain posée par les Lumières. Upendra Baxi déplace le posthumanisme sur le terrain légal. Il démontre la nécessité de repenser les droits pour qu'ils ne s'appliquent plus seulement aux humains, mais qu'ils défendent aussi les intérêts des non-humains – à la fois les animaux et les machines évoluées. David T. Mitchell et Sharon L. Snyder fournissent les grandes lignes de la théorie posthumaniste de l'invalidité, qui invite à percevoir celle-ci non plus comme la trace d'un dysfonctionnement, mais comme la possibilité même d'explorer des modes alternatifs d'être. Dans une

optique relativement proche, Sarah Chan s'intéresse à la manière dont le posthumain – entendu comme augmentation de soi par la technologie – vient interroger la notion même d'amélioration. Elle signale que, suivant la perspective posthumaine, cette notion revêt une définition contextuelle qui déconstruit la distinction usuelle entre thérapie et augmentation.

La troisième section offre un aperçu des technologies susceptibles de profondément modifier la condition humaine. Dans cette optique, Nicholas Agar montre en quoi l'historicisation de l'eugénisme posé par Francis Galton en 1883 permet d'éclairer les enjeux contemporains de la modification génétique. Søren Holm envisage les voies et les critères suivant lesquels vont se jouer les interactions entre la transformation posthumaine et les sciences biomédicales. Andy Miah réfléchit, quant à lui, sur les implications philosophiques, morales et sociales de l'extension de la vie et de la poursuite de l'immortalité, qui sont au centre de bien des discours posthumains. Dans son essai, Rayvon D. Fouché identifie un désir posthumaniste dans le sport : il analyse comment, avec leurs prothèses technologiques, Oscar Pistorius, Markus Rehm et Blake Leeper ont mis à mal la vision usuelle du corps que promeut la compétition sportive – ces athlètes poussent le sport vers un avenir posthumaniste qui inclurait la multiplicité des physicalités. David Chandler décrit le sensorium posthumain comme un nouveau mode de régulation ouvert par l'application des nouvelles technologies à l'analyse des données. Pour sa part, Johanna Seibt expose les fondements de la « robophilosophie » : elle explique qu'en plus de déconstruire le corps comme concept biologique ou phénoménologique, les robots et les intelligences artificielles questionnent le modèle cartésien traditionnel de la subjectivité. La contribution de Cathrine Hasse vient conclure cette section, en détaillant comment les théories et les pratiques de l'apprentissage et de l'éducation se voient modifiées tant par les discours posthumanistes qui critiquent la centralité de l'humain que par ceux qui défendent un être amélioré par les technologies.

La quatrième et dernière section adopte une perspective esthétique : elle présente des essais consacrés à la manière dont différents arts traitent du posthumanisme. En reprenant le discours de Leibniz sur la connaissance indistincte, qu'il actualise à l'aide des théories thermodynamiques contemporaines de la connaissance évolutive, Alexander Wilson développe une appréhension posthumaniste de l'esthétique même. À sa suite, Mads Rosendahl Thomsen expose les différents liens qui nouent la littérature au posthumanisme – le dispositif communicationnel

spécifique de la littérature ; la division, inhérente à la littérature, entre les figurations d'un sujet autonome et d'un sujet connecté au monde ; la longue tradition littéraire qui consiste à donner une voix aux non-humains ; les figurations romanesques des possibles futurs posthumains et de leurs implications. À partir d'œuvres signées notamment par Kratz et Orlan, Pernille Leth-Espensen analyse comment le bio-art – entendu comme l'art créé avec des technologies et des processus repris aux sciences naturelles – manipule la temporalité biologique et ébranle la frontière entre la vie et la mort. Stefan Lorenz Sorgner précise que la musique n'échappe pas non plus au tournant posthumaniste. Repartant du drame musical de Wagner, il institue les compositions posthumaines comme des œuvres totales non totalitaires, qui dissolvent la séparation entre le sujet et l'objet. Il montre en outre que le tournant posthumaniste se joue également par l'introduction de nouvelles technologies dans le processus de création musicale. De son côté, Ivan Callus propose d'approcher les films et les séries télévisées comme des outils herméneutiques qui permettent d'éprouver et d'explorer le potentiel de différents scénarios posthumanistes. Après avoir mis en évidence que les *comics* se sont développés dans un lien fort avec la pensée posthumaniste, Edward King se centre plus spécifiquement sur les *comics* numériques : ceux-ci sont présentés comme des formes proprement posthumanistes, puisqu'ils engagent un sentiment de désunion chez le lecteur qui, par le flux intermédial, se voit privé de son sentiment de contrôle sur l'œuvre. Dans le même ordre d'idées, Jaqueline Berndt détaille le lien fort entre les *anime* et la pensée posthumaniste, qu'ils autorisent notamment à travers la synthèse disjonctive qu'ils font ressentir aux spectateurs. Kelly I. Aliano explique que, dans les jeux vidéos – et sur les réseaux sociaux –, l'avatar devient une réelle extension de soi, qui aboutit à la constitution d'une nouvelle subjectivité hybride – à la fois matérielle et numérique. Pramod K. Nayar s'attache enfin à caractériser le traitement que la fiction, essentiellement littéraire, réalise du biocapitalisme – défini comme la conjonction des sciences de la vie et du régime de marché. Il modélise plus particulièrement la précarisation des corps et la judiciarisation de la vie qu'implique la figuration fictionnelle du biocapitalisme.

Comme le montre le résumé plus que succinct que l'on vient de proposer des différentes contributions, l'ouvrage dirigé par Thomsen et Wamberg se révèle aussi florissant que le champ du posthumanisme, dont il rend compte. Par là même, il offre une remarquable synthèse de

l'état actuel de ce champ. Il fournit aussi, et peut-être surtout, une base précieuse pour des travaux ultérieurs qui, depuis la littérature ou d'autres domaines, vont continuer à modifier le devenir du posthumanisme. Autrement dit, cet ouvrage doit lui-même se concevoir comme un vecteur de la mutation posthumaniste en cours.

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Eugene Chen Eoyang (1939–2021)

Eugene Eoyang was a friend, mentor, teacher, scholar and citizen in the republic of letters and in English Studies and Comparative Literature in Hong Kong, where he was born and later taught, the United States, where he went to school from 1946 in New York, and internationally, where he was known and admired. Eoyang was a dedicated and generous friend to Comparative Literature and to those of us who knew him at the American Comparative Literature Association, of which he was Vice-President then President, and the International Comparative Literature Association, where I knew him on the Executive and other key committees. His dedication took many forms: Eugene Eoyang was the organizer of the 2004 ICLA Congress, which took place in Hong Kong and which was originally planned to meet in 2003 but was postponed because of the SARS epidemic. I remember him at various congresses of the ICLA, including those in recent decades in Rio de Janeiro and Vienna, where he chaired a session to which I contributed and which led to an edited collection, *Comparative Literature Around the World: Global Practice*, that Gang Zhou and I had the pleasure and honour to edit with him and that was published in Jean Bessière's distinguished series with Honoré Champion in Paris in 2021. Eugene Eoyang was an example of someone who contributed in so many ways, a humane teacher, scholar and colleague whose journey was exemplary. He always had something wise to say at conferences and meetings and in his books and other publications. Eoyang dared us to think in new ways and to push back constraints and extend, re-define and even efface boundaries.

From the start, Eugene Eoyang showed a wide range of interests in English literature, Chinese literature and translation. As an undergraduate at Harvard, Eoyang wrote a dissertation in 1959 on the fictive and the actual as poles of reality in the poetry of Wallace Stevens. In 1959–1960, Eugene studied for an A.M. at Columbia and wrote on Sir Thomas Browne and the quincuncial mind in 1960. An editorial trainee at Doubleday and Company in New York in 1960–1961 who became an editor with Doubleday's Anchor Books, 1961–1966, Eoyang

then taught at Indiana University from 1969, completing his doctoral dissertation, “Word of Mouth: Oral Story-telling in the Pien-Wen,” in 1971 and becoming Chair Professor, Lingnan College / University, Hong Kong in 1996. Eoyang made important contributions to the study of English, Chinese and Comparative literature, language and culture. His publications are varied and many of his books enduring. For instance, *The Transparent Eye: Reflections on Translation, Chinese Literature, and Comparative Poetics* (1993) explores theory and practice in translational and literary spaces. He explores similar topics in “*Borrowed Plumage*”: *Polemical Essays on Translation* (1993). *Coat of Many Colors. Reflections on Diversity by a Minority of One* (1995) argues for cultural diversity, the multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual. *The Promise and Premise of Creativity: Why Comparative Literature Matters* (2012) maintains the significance of reading and the literary in the context of culture and globalisation. *East-West Symbioses: The Reconciliation of Opposites* (2019) includes discussions of Matteo Ricci and Octavio Paz.

In 2011, Eoyang was a guest editor of a special issue of *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature (CRCL)*, “The Human, the Not Human and Cultural Contact,” including an article, “The Arrogance of the Species: Humanity, *Humanitas*, and the Chinese Notion of *Ren* (仁).” In 2012, Eoyang contributed to the special issue of *CRCL* on Douwe Fokkema, which begins: “Douwe Fokkema’s interest in China focused on the modern rather than the traditional period, but he and I shared a profound interest in China of all eras.” In 2013, I edited a forum in the *CRCL*, of which I was the editor, on Eoyang’s *The Promise and Premise of Creativity* that involved reviews by Kathleen Komar and Steven P. Sondrup. At the beginning of an essay, “Taste for Apricots: Approaches to Chinese Fiction” in 2014, Eoyang quotes Po Chii-yi, writing in 835: “The world cheats those who cannot read, / But I apply myself to the written word,” and one might say that Eoyang dedicated himself to learning and the word, having an interest in speech and writing.

Eugene’s wife Pat said how much his colleagues in Comparative Literature, the ACLA, and ICLA meant to Eugene and that he taught to the end, giving an online MA class in Translation for Hong Kong Baptist University this semester, asking how the class was just before he left us, going out doing what he loved best. We remember, thank and miss him.

Jonathan Locke Hart

Shandong University/University of Toronto/Harvard University

Obituaries of Recently Deceased Members of the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI)

Professor Manabendra Bandyopadhyay, a respected comparatist from Jadavpur University, passed away on August 5, 2020. He was one of the first batch of CL students at Jadavpur University, the first university in India to offer Comparative Literature, and he later taught in the same department for many decades. He was a creative writer and a prolific translator. He was honoured with the Vidyasagar Puraskar for Children's Literature; the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize, and the Lila Ray Puraskar. He introduced to the Bangla-speaking world writers from Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. He also pioneered the intra-Indian language translation and is perhaps best remembered for his epoch-making five-volume *Adhunik Bharatiyo Galpo*, an anthology of modern Indian short stories in Bangla translation.

Professor Jayanti Chattopadhyay passed away on April 26, 2022. She was professor of Bengali and Comparative Literature in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi. She made a remarkable contribution to the development of Comparative Indian Literature at the M.Phil and Ph.D levels. She presented and published numerous papers on Bengali Literature as well as on Comparative Literature in various national and international seminars.

Professor Nabaneeta Dev Sen, a pioneering figure of Comparative Literature in India, passed away on November 7, 2019. She was an acclaimed creative writer, one of the first generation of CL scholars in India, and a feminist activist. Her *Counterpoints* was one of the pioneering anthologies of essays on Comparative Literature. She was honored with the Padma Shri, Ravindra Puraskar, Kabir Samman, and the Samskriti Award. She held executive positions in the International Comparative Literature Association, was office-bearer of the Indian National Comparative Literature Association and deeply involved with the Comparative Literature Association of India.

Professor Swapan Majumdar, the doyen of Comparative Literature in India, passed away on November 25, 2020. He taught Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University for several decades and was also Director of Rabindra Bhavan, Visva Bharati. Professor Majumdar played a leadership role in CLAI. He will be remembered for his pioneering work in Comparative Literature, translation and theatre. His book, *Comparative Literature: Indian Dimensions*, remains an essential reading for comparatists in India.

Professor Tutun Mukherjee, who pioneered Comparative Literature at the University of Hyderabad, passed away on January 7, 2020. She was coordinator of the CLAI International Comparative Literature Conference held jointly with the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. Along with Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, she edited the *Cambridge Companion to Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies*. She was also an avid translator and translated a number of texts from Bangla into English.

Dr Devika Narula, an active CLAI member and academic, passed away on April 23, 2022. Her creative and critical writings focus on post-colonial, gender and cultural studies. She made a significant contribution to CLAI meetings and ICLA conferences at the Sorbonne, Paris, the University of Vienna, and Louisiana State University, Shreveport (USA). She is author of a social novel titled *Women beyond The Veil*. Her academic publications include *The South Asian Canadian Diaspora: Summer Blossoms in Winter Garden – History, Memory and Identity*, and *Gender and Diversity* (co-ed). She has to her credit several poetry collections.

Professor Awadhesh K. Singh, a renowned scholar of Comparative Literature in India, passed away on August 12, 2019. He organized an international conference on Comparative Literature at Saurashtra University, Rajkot. He also organized a workshop for framing academic courses on Comparative Literature when he was vice-chancellor of Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad. He has left an indelible mark on scholarship in Comparative Literature, Indian Literature and Translation Studies. He was at the helm of *Critical Practice*, an influential journal, for many years.

Chandra Mohan and Sayantan Dasgupta
Comparative Literature Association of India

Notices biographiques / Notes on Contributors

Daniel Acke est professeur émérite à la Vrije Universiteit de Bruxelles (VUB). Spécialiste de la littérature française à partir du surréalisme, il étudie le mysticisme non religieux, dans le prolongement de ses travaux sur Yves Bonnefoy (*Yves Bonnefoy essayiste. Modernité et présence*, 1999). Il s'intéresse à la place de la ville dans la littérature et a dirigé avec Elisabeth Bekers l'ouvrage bilingue *Brussel schrijven / Écrire Bruxelles : De Stad als inspiratiebron sinds de 19^{de} eeuw. / La ville comme source d'inspiration depuis le XIX^e siècle* (2016). Enfin, en tant que dix-huitiémiste, il travaille sur la tradition des moralistes. Il a collaboré à l'édition des œuvres de Ch.-J. de Ligne et est associé à celle, en préparation, de Vauvenargues.

Sylvie Arlaud est Maître de conférences à l'UFR d'études germaniques et nordiques de Sorbonne Université. Ses recherches portent sur les études interculturelles et intermédiaires, les transferts culturels entre les pays germanophones, francophones et anglophones et les littératures et arts germanophones du XIX^e au XXI^e siècle. Elle a récemment co-édité, en collaboration avec Bernard Banoun, Bénédicte Terrisse et Stephan Pabst, *Wolfgang Hilbig's Lyrik: eine Werkexpedition* (2021).

Eugene Arva, author of *The Traumatic Imagination: Histories of Violence in Magical Realist Fiction* (2011), is an independent scholar living in Germany. He has taught modern and postmodern American and World Literature at the University of Miami, and his research focuses on magical realism in literature and film, literary trauma theory, Holocaust studies, intermediality, and film philosophy. Arva has recently contributed to three collections of essays on magical realism: *Magical Realism and Literature* (2020), *The Palgrave Handbook of Magical Realism in the Twenty-First Century* (2020), and *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban Literary Studies* (2019). He was co-editor (with Hubert Roland) of *Magical Realist Writing as Narrative Strategy in the Recovery of Historical Traumata* (2014).

Annelies Augustyns defended her PhD thesis entitled “Überall Einengung des jüdischen Lebensraums. Städtische Erfahrung in Deutsch-jüdischen Selbstzeugnissen aus Breslau im ‘Dritten Reich’” on October 6, 2021 at the University of Antwerp and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). Her main interests revolve around German-Jewish literature, Holocaust literature, Jewish history and culture, Breslau, autobiographical writing, identity and spatiality.

Yunfei Bai is an Assistant Professor in Translation Studies at Lingnan University. He previously worked as a postdoctoral fellow of the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at the University of Hong Kong.

Franca Bellarsi teaches at the Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium. She equally divides her research between the Beat Generation, ecocriticism and ecopoetics, and English Romanticism. To date, she has written a variety of articles on the Beats – including but not limited to their debts to European Romanticism – and guest-edited four special issues in the field of ecocriticism (one in co-edition with Judith Rauscher). With the research assistance of Gregory Watson, she authored the chapter on Belgium for *The Reception of William Blake in Europe* (2019). Her recent article, “A Cosmopolitan Case Study: Countercultural Blake in the Therapoetic Practice of Maelström Revolution,” features in the special issue of *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* devoted to Blake and the counterculture (2022).

Olga Beloborodova is a postdoctoral researcher and teaching assistant at the University of Antwerp (Centre for Manuscript Genetics). She has published several articles and book chapters on Beckett, genetic criticism and genetic translation. Her first monograph, *The Making of Samuel Beckett’s “Play” / “Film,”* was published in 2019. Her second book, *Postcognitivist Beckett*, came out in 2020.

Françoise Besson is Professor Emerita of Anglophone literatures at the Université de Toulouse 2-Jean Jaurès. Her research focuses on the relation between landscape and the writing process and between literature and ecology in anglophone and francophone literatures, most particularly in travel and nature writing. She recently authored *Ecology and Literatures in English. Writing to Save the Planet* (2019) and co-edited *Reading Cats and Dogs: Companion Animals in World Literature* with Scott Slovic, Zelia Bora and Marianne Marroum (2021). She was the editor of the journal

Caliban from 2011-2019 and President of SELVA (“Société d’Étude de la Littérature de Voyage Anglophone”) from 2015-2019.

Diana Castilleja holds a doctorate in Hispanic studies from Sorbonne University and is Professor of Hispanic Literature at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and the Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles. She is also President of the Hispanist Association of Benelux AHBx (www.ahbx.eu) (2020-2025). She is currently co-directing two research projects: “CROS: Crossing the Border between English and Spanish” with R. Enghels (UGent) and “Networks and Routes” about Hispanic women and exile (with E. Houvenaghel, U. Utrecht and Carmen Alonso, U. Oviedo).

Amaury Dehoux est docteur en littérature comparée de l’Université catholique de Louvain. Il est actuellement chargé de cours invité au sein de cette même université. Travaillant essentiellement sur les littératures francophones et anglophones, il centre ses recherches sur le roman contemporain international (1980-2022) qu’il étudie dans ses perspectives anthropologiques et ses rapports à la globalisation. Il a notamment publié *Le Roman du posthumain. Parcours dans les littératures anglophones, francophones et hispanophones* (2020).

Anne-Rosine Delbart est licenciée en Philologie romane (Université libre de Bruxelles, ULB, 1990), agrégée de l’Enseignement secondaire supérieur (ULB, 1990) et docteur en Lettres (Université de Limoges, 2002). Elle est actuellement Premier maître de langue et titulaire de cinq cours au Département de Langues et Lettres de l’ULB. Elle a obtenu le Prix Constant de Horion (1990) pour son mémoire de licence sur l’œuvre de Charles Bertin ainsi que le Prix Jean-Claude Cassaing (2003) pour sa thèse de doctorat intitulée *Les exilés du langage : un siècle d’écrivains français venus d’ailleurs (1919-2000)*. Le livre tiré de cette thèse, *Les exilés du langage*, a en outre reçu le Prix Jean-Humblet (2007).

Frank England studied theology, literary theory and art history. He is an honorary research associate at the University of Cape Town, South Africa and has authored *Fictions of God* (2020).

Dorothy Figueira is a Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Georgia (USA). She received her education from Vassar College (BA 1976), École Pratique en Sciences Sociales (MA 1977), Harvard University (MTS 1979) and the University of Chicago (PhD

1985). Her scholarly interests include religion and literature, translation theory, exoticism, myth theory, and travel narratives. She is the author of *Translating the Orient* (1991), *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (1994), *Aryans, Jews and Brahmins* (2002), *Otherwise Occupied: Theories and Pedagogies of Alterity* (2008) and *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (2015). She edited *La Production de l'Autre* (1999), *Cybernetic Ghosts* (2004), *Art and Resistances: Studies in Modern Indian Theatres* (2019), and *Rebuilding the Profession* (2020). She is an Honorary President of the International Comparative Literature Association.

Alexandre Gefen, Directeur de recherche CNRS au sein de l'unité Théorie et histoire des arts et des littératures de la modernité (UMR7172, THALIM, CNRS / Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3), est historien des idées et de la littérature. Il est l'auteur de nombreux articles et essais portant notamment sur la culture, la littérature contemporaine et la théorie littéraire. Parmi ses dernières publications figurent *Territoires de la non-fiction* (2020), *Best-sellers. L'industrie du succès* (2021, avec Olivier Bessard-Banquy et Sylvie Ducas), *L'idée de littérature. De l'art pour l'art aux écritures d'intervention* (2021) et *La littérature est une affaire politique* (2022).

Sabina Gola enseigne les langue et culture italiennes à l'Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB). Dans le domaine littéraire, ses recherches portent principalement sur l'étude de l'image et des modèles culturels et littéraires, plus particulièrement des représentations de l'Italie au XIX^e siècle, et sur l'étude de la littérature italienne, en relation avec les questions de mémoire et d'identité.

Adam Grener is Senior Lecturer in the English Programme at Victoria University of Wellington. He is the author of *Improbability, Chance, and the Nineteenth-Century Realist Novel* (2020) and the co-director, with Anna Gibson, of the Digital Dickens Notes Project.

Ilka Kressner is Associate Professor of Spanish at the State University of New York-Albany. Her scholarship and teaching examine Latin American literature, film, and visual arts (20th–21st century) from a variety of cultural and national contexts, often from a comparative perspective. She is also interested in theoretical approaches to concepts of space in art, intermediality, and ecocriticism.

Anqi Liu is a Ph.D. Candidate at University of Georgia, Department of Comparative Literature. She holds a B.A. in Chinese Literature from Central China Normal University, an M.A. in English from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and is a fellow at the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University. Her dissertation, tentatively titled “Entangled Self-Referentiality: Ha Jin, Confessional Ethnography, and Chineseness,” probes into the autobiographical and ethnographical nature of Chinese diaspora literature by theorizing the concept of confessional ethnography.

Marc Maufort, the current editor of *Recherche littéraire/Literary Research*, is Professor of Anglophone literatures at the Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium (ULB). He has written and (co)-edited several books on Eugene O’Neill, to whose works his doctoral thesis was devoted. He has also authored and (co)-edited a number of volumes on Anglophone postcolonial theatre and multi-ethnic American drama, among which one can list *Crucible of Cultures: Anglophone Drama at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (2002); *Transgressive Itineraries: Postcolonial Reconstructions of Dramatic Realism* (2003); *Performing Aotearoa: New Zealand Theatre and Drama in an Age of Transition* (2007); and *Labyrinth of Hybridities. Avatars of O’Neillian Realism in Multi-ethnic American Drama 1972-2003* (2010). His most recent book publication is *Forays into Contemporary South African Theatre. Devising New Stage Idioms* (co-edited with Jessica Maufort, 2020).

David O’Donnell is Professor of Theatre at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand. He is an award-winning director whose productions have been staged throughout New Zealand. He has published widely on New Zealand and Pacific theatre, including co-editing the book *Performing Aotearoa* (2007) with Marc Maufort, and co-writing *Floating Islanders: Pasifika Theatre in Aotearoa* (2017) with Lisa Warrington. Since 2010, he has edited 22 books and play collections as editor of the Playmarket New Zealand Play Series.

Magdolna Orosz is Professor of Modern German Literature at Eötvös-Loránd-University Budapest (Hungary). Her research focuses on Austrian literature and the culture of Classical Modernism, German Romanticism, literary theory, as well as German and Hungarian comparative literary studies. Her latest book publications include the following titles: *Identität – Erzählen – Erinnerung. Studien zur*

deutschsprachigen und ungarischen Literatur 1890–1935 (2016); *Nyelv – emlékezet – elbeszélés. A századforduló bécsi és budapesti modernisége az irodalomban* [Language – Memory – Narrative. Turn-of-the-century Viennese and Budapest Literary Modernity] (2019); *Textwelten – Weltentwürfe. Österreichische Literatur in Wendezeiten* (2021).

Crystal Pinçonnet est professeure émérite de Littérature Générale et Comparée à Aix-Marseille Université. Dans le prolongement de ses travaux sur le roman urbain (*New York, mythe littéraire français* [2001] ; *Paris, cartographies littéraires* [2007]), ses publications les plus récentes portent sur les littératures des minorités, en France et aux États-Unis (*Endofiction et Fable de soi. Écrire en héritier de l’immigration* [2016]).

Fabrice Preyat est Chercheur qualifié honoraire du F.R.S-FNRS et Professeur à l’Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) où il enseigne l’histoire et la sociologie de la littérature française (XVII^e–XVIII^e s.) et des littératures graphiques. Après une thèse consacrée au *Petit Concile de Bossuet et la christianisation des mœurs et des pratiques littéraires sous Louis XIV* (2007), il a dirigé, ou co-dirigé, une dizaine de collectifs consacrés aux relations entre littérature, art, religion, philosophie et mécénat, notamment *La Croix et la bannière. L’écrivain catholique en francophonie (XVII^e–XXI^e s.)* (avec F. Gugelot, C. Vanderpelen, 2007), *Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685-1712). Duchesse de Bourgogne, enfant terrible de Versailles* (2014), *L’apologétique littéraire et les anti-Lumières féminines* (2013) et *Femmes des anti-Lumières, femmes apologistes* (2016).

Raluca Rădulescu has been Professor of Intercultural German Studies at the Institute of Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest, since 2019. Her research interests include exile literature, migration literature, cultural theory, modernist poetry, and intermediality. Since February 2021, she has been a fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Trier and Flensburg, where she is developing a project on colonial sea voyages in the German-language literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. Her publications comprise *Monologe und Dialoge der Moderne. Gottfried Benn, Paul Celan, José F. A. Oliver* (2016) and *Interkulturelle Blicke auf Migrationsbewegungen in alten und neuen Texten* (with Lucia Perrone Capano, et al. 2018).

Matthew Reynolds is Professor of English and Comparative Criticism at Oxford, and Chair of the Oxford Comparative Criticism and Translation

Research Centre (OCCT). Among his books are *Prismatic Translation* (2019), *Translation: A Very Short Introduction* (2016), *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (2011), as well as the novels *Designs for a Happy Home* (2009) and *The World Was All Before Them* (2013); he also leads the Prismatic *Jane Eyre* project: <https://prismaticjaneeyre.org/>.

Rebecca Romdhani is a lecturer at the University of Liège, Belgium. She works primarily on Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora literature and her research focuses on emotion, violence, children, gender, and literary genres. Her recent work includes a chapter on Caribbean speculative fiction in *Caribbean Literature in Transition, 1970-2020* (2020), and a co-edited volume *Narrating Violence in the Postcolonial World* (2022), in which she has a chapter on symbolic violence in Tiphonie Yanique's *Land of Love and Drowning*.

Seth Strickland is the Joseph F. Martino 53 Lecturer in Undergraduate Teaching at Cornell University, where he studies book history, medieval allegorical poetry, and medieval English science.

Marek Tomaszewski est Professeur des universités et responsable des Études polonaises à l'INALCO. Il a publié *Pologne singulière et plurielle* (1993) et *Od Chaosu do Kosmosu* (Du Chaos au Cosmos, 1998). Il est également l'auteur de nombreux articles et études sur le XVIII^e, le XX^e et le XXI^e siècles, ainsi que d'un livre sur les motifs littéraires et les signes culturels intitulé *Écrire la nature au XX^e siècle : les romanciers polonais des confins* (2006). Il a co-dirigé le livre *Mémoire(s) des lieux dans la prose centre-européenne après 1989* (2013), et a préparé, avec Malgorzata Smorağ-Goldberg (Paris-Sorbonne), l'ouvrage collectif *Schulz lu et interprété en Europe centrale : entre modernisme et modernité. Poétique, réception, regards croisés* (2018).

Vera Viehöver, professeure de littérature allemande à l'Université de Liège depuis 2013, a fait des études de langues et lettres germaniques et romanes ainsi que de philosophie à la RWTH Aachen, à l'Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) et à la Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf. Sa recherche porte sur la littérature et culture du long XVIII^e siècle, le genre du Life Writing (écritures autobiographiques et diaristiques), les théories et poétiques de la traduction, en particulier chez les écrivaines judéo-allemandes, ainsi que la poésie contemporaine.

Jenny Webb is a doctoral student in Religion and Philosophy at Bangor University. Her work has appeared in *Dialogue*, *The Comparatist*, and *The Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, and she has contributed chapters to several volumes on scripture and theology. She is a past president of Mormon Scholars in the Humanities and a current member of the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar executive board.

Literary Research Stylesheet

SUBMISSIONS IN ENGLISH

1. General Formatting

All works should be submitted in Microsoft Word or .rtf format. Images should be sent preferably in jpeg format with a minimum quality of 300 dpi. Please use Times New Roman font throughout the text, size 12 point, and 1.5 line spacing.

Indent each new paragraph; do not insert a blank line between paragraphs.

The first page should feature the title of the submission, an approximately 250-word abstract in English, and 5 to 6 keywords in English. Please send a short biography in a different file.

2. Spelling Conventions

Submissions in English must choose British or American spelling conventions (e.g. “-ize” vs “-ise”) and follow them consistently throughout.

Use only **one space** after periods and colons. Do not capitalise the word following colons.

Numbers up to twenty should be written out in full. After twenty, please use figures.

Centuries should be written out in full as well. For decades, give full number: 1930s (not 30s or '30s, “thirties,” or “Thirties”)

3. In-text Citations

Please place the quoted passage/word(s) within double quotation marks. Reference the name and the page reference(s) of the author(s) within parenthesis. Examples:

It was perhaps first put into circulation 30 years ago by Salman Rushdie in his observation that “having been borne across the world, we are translated men” (Rushdie 17).

Intersectionality has been accused of breaking “groups into even-smaller sub-groups” (Collins and Bilge 127).

In case of several sources by the same author(s), indicate in the parenthesis the first word or group of words of the work cited. Books are italicised; articles are placed within double quotation marks:

(Hall *Theorizing* 244)

(Hall “Cultural” 235; qtd. in Smith 257)

(Fairbank *Trade and Diplomacy* 27)

Please **indent** quotes of 5 lines and more.

Indicate **n.p.** in case of no pagination. Ellipses in quotes are marked by [...].

Please do not use “*Id.*,” “*Ibid.*,” “*Op.cit.*” and other similar abbreviations to refer to a previously cited source. For clarification’s sake, please **repeat the source** (name and/or title).

Footnotes are for additional comments only and should be used sparingly. Do not use endnotes.

4. List of Works Cited

The list of works cited appears at the end of the article (not in the notes). The works are sorted in alphabetical order by author and in chronological order of publication in the case of several sources by the same author(s). The first and last names of all authors should be included in full.

For sources written in **French**: use “et” to associate two or several co-authors/co-editors, and “dir.” to refer to the editor(s).

For formatting and punctuation standards, please see the following examples:

Books:

Alayrac-Fielding, Vanessa. *La Chine dans l'imaginaire anglais des Lumières, 1685–1798*. Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2016.

Deleuze, Gilles et Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*. Paris: Minuit, 1975.

Brown, Wendy. *States of Inquiry: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Parker, Richard and Peter Aggleton. *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*. London: University College London Press, 1999.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *In Other Words*. Trans. Ann Goldstein. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

Edited Books:

Alayrac-Fielding, Vanessa, dir. *Rêver la Chine. Chinoiseries et regards croisés entre la Chine et l'Europe aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Tourcoing: Invenit, 2017.

Dominguez Leiva, Antonio et Muriel Détrie, dir. *Le Supplice oriental dans la littérature et les arts*. Dijon: Éditions du Murmure, 2005.

Carroll, John B., ed. *Language, Thought, Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1956.

Maryks, Robert A. and Jonathan Wright, eds. *Jesuit Survival and Restoration: A Global History, 1773–1900*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Book Chapters:

Marx, Jacques. « La Chine des physiocrates ». *Le Mythe de la Chine impériale*. Dir. Colette Camelin et Philippe Postel. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013. 23–58.

Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. 222–37.

Rattansi, Ali. “Just Framing: Ethnicities and Racisms in a ‘Postmodern’ Framework.” *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*. Eds. Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 250–86.

The name of publishers is written in full:

Berkeley: University of California Press

Journal Articles:

Moura, Jean-Marc. « Anti-utopie et péril jaune au tournant du siècle. Quelques exemples romanesques ». *Orients extrêmes. Les carnets de l'exotisme* 15–16 (1995) : 83–92.

Ibrahim, Hanan. “The Question of Arab ‘Identity’ in Amin Maalouf’s *Les Désorientés*.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54.6 (2018): 835–47.

O’Brien, Michelle. “English as Racial Embodiment in Shirley Lim’s *Joss and Gold*.” *Postcolonial Text* 12.2 (2017): 1–19. <http://postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/2176/2087>. Accessed 15 Aug. 2020.

Normes de présentation de *Recherche littéraire*

SOUMISSIONS EN FRANCAIS

1. Présentation et mise en page

Tous les manuscrits doivent être soumis au format Microsoft Word ou .rtf. Les images doivent être envoyées de préférence au format jpeg avec une qualité minimale de 300 dpi. Veuillez utiliser la police Times New Roman dans tout le texte, taille 12 points et interligne 1,5.

Chaque nouveau paragraphe doit être mis en retrait ; n'insérez pas de ligne vide entre les paragraphes.

Sur la première page doivent figurer le titre de l'article, un résumé d'environ 250 mots et 5 ou 6 mots-clés, le tout **en français et en anglais**. Une courte biographie en français devra être envoyée séparément.

2. Conventions orthographiques

Les nombres jusqu'à vingt doivent être écrits en toutes lettres. Après vingt, veuillez utiliser des chiffres.

Les siècles sont écrits en chiffres romains (« XX^e siècle »). Pour les décennies, indiquez le nombre complet : « les années 1930 » (et non « les années 30 »).

Le mot suivant deux points ne prend pas de majuscule.

3. Citations dans le corps du texte

Placez le(s) passage(s) cité(s) entre guillemets. Faites référence au(x) nom(s) et à la /aux page(s) entre parenthèses. Exemples:

La Loubère (1642–1729), envoyé extraordinaire de Louis XIV auprès du roi du Siam : « Un Ambassadeur par tout l’Orient n’est autre qu’un messager de Roy : il ne représente point son Maistre. On l’honore peu à comparaison des respects, qu’on porte à la lettre de créance, dont il est porteur » (La Loubère 327–28).

« Tout peut coexister avec tout », proclamait crânement Haroldo de Campos dans l’une de ces formules incisives qui ont fait sa réputation (Campos « Da razão antropofágica » 244)

En cas de plusieurs sources du/de la/des même(s) auteur-e-s, indiquez entre parenthèses le premier mot ou groupe de mots de l’ouvrage cité. Les livres apparaissent en italique; les articles sont placés entre guillemets:

(Hall *Theorizing* 244)

(Hall “Cultural” 235; cité dans Smith 257)

(Fairbank *Trade and Diplomacy* 27)

Les citations de 5 lignes et plus sont mises en **retrait**.

L’absence de pagination est indiquée par **n.p.** Les ellipses dans les citations sont marquées par [...].

Veillez ne pas utiliser « *Id.* », « *Ibid.* », « *Op.cit.* » et autres abréviations similaires pour faire référence à une source précédemment citée. Pour des raisons de clarté, veuillez **répéter la source** comme décrit ci-dessus (nom, titre si nécessaire, et page).

Les **notes de bas de page** sont uniquement destinées à des commentaires supplémentaires et doivent être utilisées avec parcimonie. N’utilisez pas de notes de fin.

4. Bibliographie

La liste des ouvrages cités figure en fin d’article (et non dans les notes). Les ouvrages sont triés par ordre alphabétique des auteur-e-s et par ordre chronologique de parution en cas de plusieurs sources par le/la/les même-s auteur-e-s. Tous les noms et prénoms sont repris dans leur intégralité.

Dans les sources en français, « et » associe deux ou plusieurs contributeur-e-s; « dir. » se réfère à la/au(x) rédacteur-ric-e-s. Inversement, « and » et « ed./eds » sont utilisés pour les sources rédigées en anglais.

Pour les normes de présentation et ponctuation, veuillez consulter les exemples ci-dessous :

Livres (à seul-e auteur-e ou avec co-auteur-e-s) :

Alayrac-Fielding, Vanessa. *La Chine dans l'imaginaire anglais des Lumières, 1685–1798*. Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2016.

Deleuze, Gilles et Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*. Paris: Minuit, 1975.

Brown, Wendy. *States of Inquiry: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Parker, Richard and Peter Aggleton. *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*. London: University College London Press, 1999.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *In Other Words*. Trad. Ann Goldstein. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

Ouvrages collectifs:

Alayrac-Fielding, Vanessa, dir. *Rêver la Chine. Chinoiseries et regards croisés entre la Chine et l'Europe aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Tourcoing: Invenit, 2017.

Dominguez Leiva, Antonio et Muriel Détrie, dir. *Le Supplice oriental dans la littérature et les arts*. Dijon: Éditions du Murmure, 2005.

Carroll, John B., ed. *Language, Thought, Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1956.

Maryks, Robert A. and Jonathan Wright, eds. *Jesuit Survival and Restoration: A Global History, 1773–1900*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Chapitre de livre :

Marx, Jacques. « La Chine des physiocrates ». *Le Mythe de la Chine impériale*. Dir. Colette Camelin et Philippe Postel. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013. 23–58.

Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. 222–37.

Rattansi, Ali. “Just Framing: Ethnicities and Racisms in a ‘Postmodern’ Framework.” *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*. Eds. Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 250–86.

Le nom des éditeurs est écrit en toutes lettres:

University of California Press ; Presses Universitaires de France

Article dans une revue périodique:

Moura, Jean-Marc. « Anti-utopie et péril jaune au tournant du siècle. Quelques exemples romanesques ». *Orients extrêmes. Les carnets de l'exotisme* 15–16 (1995) : 83–92.

Ibrahim, Hanan. “The Question of Arab ‘Identity’ in Amin Maalouf’s *Les Désorientés*.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54.6 (2018): 835–47.

O’Brien, Michelle. “English as Racial Embodiment in Shirley Lim’s *Joss and Gold*.” *Postcolonial Text* 12.2 (2017): 1–19. <http://postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/2176/2087>. Accessed 15 Aug. 2020.

Brève présentation de l'AILC

Fondée en 1955, l'Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée (AILC) offre un lieu d'accueil à tou-te-s les comparatistes du monde et encourage les échanges et la coopération entre les comparatistes, tant à un niveau individuel que par des collaborations avec diverses associations nationales de littérature comparée. Dans ce but, l'Association promeut les études littéraires au-delà des frontières linguistiques et des traditions littéraires nationales, entre les cultures et les régions du monde, entre les disciplines et les orientations théoriques, et à travers les genres, les périodes historiques et les médias. Sa large vision de la recherche comparatiste s'étend à l'étude d'espaces de différence tels que la race, le genre, la sexualité, la classe sociale, l'ethnicité et la religion, à la fois dans les textes et dans l'univers quotidien.

L'Association vise à être inclusive et est ouverte à tou-te-s celles et ceux qui s'intéressent à la littérature comparée, y compris les écrivain-e-s et les artistes. Elle encourage la participation d'étudiant-e-s de master et doctorat et de jeunes chercheuses et chercheurs en début de carrière.

L'Association organise un Congrès international tous les trois ans. Elle supervise et apporte son soutien à des comités de recherche qui reflètent les intérêts actuels des membres et qui se réunissent plus régulièrement pour mettre en œuvre des programmes conduisant à des publications dans des périodiques et des livres. La revue annuelle de l'Association, *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research* publie des essais de recherche et propose des comptes rendus d'un grand nombre de travaux scientifiques dans le domaine.

ICLA Mission Statement

Founded in 1955, the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) offers a home to all comparatists in the world and encourages exchange and cooperation among comparatists, both individually and through the collaboration of various national comparative literature associations. To that end, the Association promotes literary studies beyond the boundaries of languages and national literary traditions, cultures and world regions, among disciplines and theoretical orientations, and across genres, historical periods, and media. Its broad view of comparative research extends to the study of sites of difference such as race gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and religion in both texts and the everyday world.

The Association aims to be inclusive and is open to anyone with an academic interest in comparative literature, including writers and artists. It welcomes the participation of graduate students and early-career scholars. The Association organizes a world congress every three years. It also oversees and supports research committees that reflect the membership's current interests and meet more regularly to pursue an agenda leading to publications in journals and books. The Association's annual journal *Recherche littéraire / Literary Research* publishes research essays and reviews a wide range of scholarship in the field.

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For additional information about CHLEL, please consult:

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/chlel/about-chlel/websites/>

For information about publications, please consult John Benjamins' website: <https://benjamins.com/catalog/chlel>

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buchenberger@kanagawa-u.ac.jp

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tlassiter@unm.edu

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suzannenalbantian@gmail.com

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kmillet1@sfsu.edu

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